

THE ODYSSEY OF GREEK YOGURT



Contract Testing Inc.



INTRODUCTION

The yogurt section has undergone one of the most prolific changes in the grocery aisles over the past ten years. The emergence of Greek style yogurts has brought new users and a new sense of competitive spirit to the dairy category. Yes, it's no myth that Greek yogurt has intensified the 'dairy wars' and provided consumers with a plethora of new choices. So we recently embarked on an odyssey of our own to explore the new world of yogurts and to find out if a Titan walks among them.

This research aims to explore whether there are perceivable differences between popular brands of Non-Fat Vanilla Greek Yogurt, and if so, what attributes help them stand apart.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

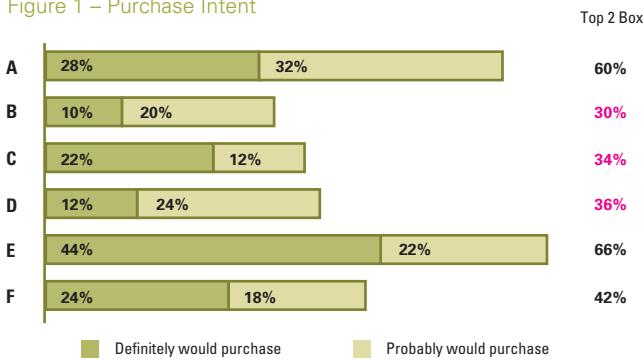
We asked 50 females from the Greater Toronto Area who regularly consume Greek yogurt to taste six brands of vanilla flavoured non fat Greek yogurts comprised of three national brands and three private labels. Each product was served in a 4 ounce cup and labelled with a 3-digit code and were presented in varied order.

The samples were evaluated blind with a fully rotated trial order, utilizing a combination of 9-point hedonic scales and 9-point intensity scales.

RESULTS

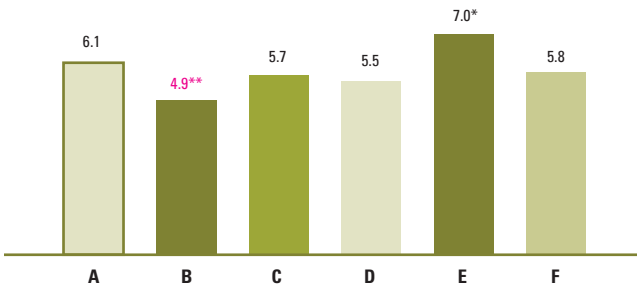
One of the six brands emerged as the almighty champion – both in terms of exceeding our category action standards, and by outscoring the other five brands on all key measures. In fact, with top box purchase intent of 44%, this product is well deserving of a Gold medal in the Greek yogurt category (Fig 1).

Figure 1 – Purchase Intent



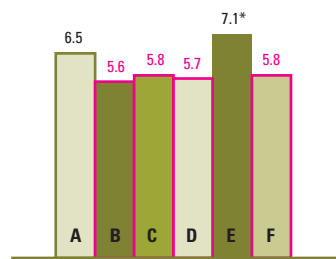
This winner also boasted the top scores for liking of Overall Texture and Overall Flavour – and in particular, had significant approval of the Vanilla flavour (Fig 2).

Figure 2 - Liking of the Vanilla Flavour



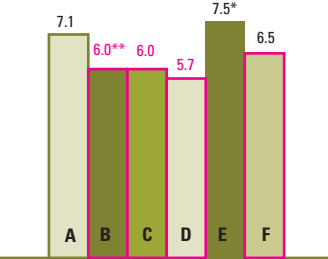
There was one worthy runner-up among our contenders, which came close to achieving our standards for Overall Liking and Purchase Intent, but the remaining four brands were far from it. In fact among these four underperforming brands, not one grasped a mean score above 6.0 for liking of the Overall Flavour – well below our comfort zone in most packaged food categories (Fig 3).

Figure 3
- Liking of the Overall Flavour



* Product E is significantly higher than products B, C, D & F at 95% confidence
** Product B is significantly lower than products A & E at 95% confidence

Figure 4
- Liking of the Overall Texture

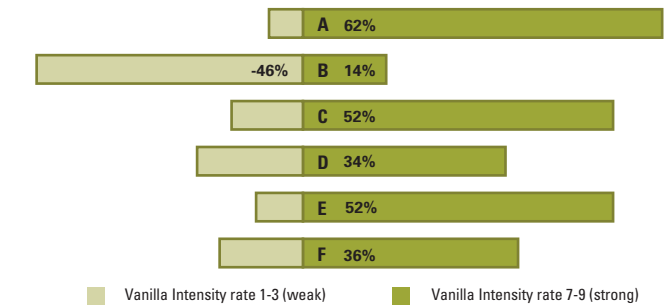


THE THICK OF THINGS

In this category, the textural attributes are the most defining aspects of the product. In fact, the most common descriptors for all our brands were Creamy, Smooth, and Thick – reaffirming the unique identity that Greek yogurt has carved out for itself in the broader world of ‘Yogurt’. And what all our brands shared in common was that texture and mouthfeel garnered higher liking scores than overall flavour – although not all textures were equally liked. As might be expected, the creamier and smoother the better.

And in terms of what specific aspects of the textural profile might explain differences in textural liking, two products stood apart with thinner consistencies than the others, Product B & F (Fig 5), while two Products, C & D, had some mentions of undesirable ‘grittiness’.

Figure 5 - Thickness Intensity

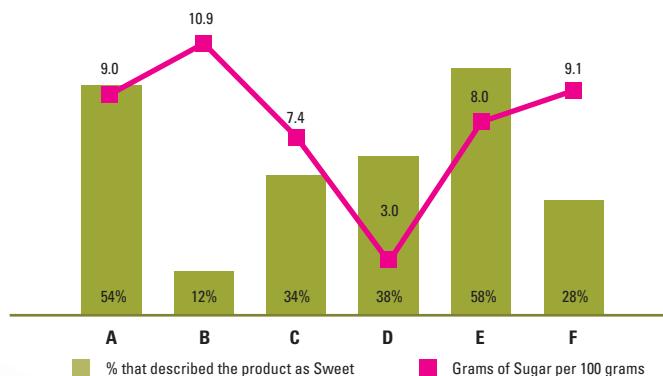


VICTORY IS SWEET...OR IS IT?

The perceived intensity of sweetness was one of the most differentiating aspects of the flavour profiles of our six brands, and while our winning brand was perceived as quite sweet, it was not the sweetest. On the other hand, at the other end of the sweetness spectrum the brand perceived as the least sweet did suffer the fate of having the lowest overall flavour appeal.

This led us to wonder whether perceived sweetness intensity was aligned with actual sugar content. Were our testers getting it right? In similar categories, consumers tend to be pretty good with this distinction – the higher the sugar content, the greater the perceived sweetness of the product. So we were quite surprised to find that the product with the most sugar, Product A – and considerably more than the other brands with nearly 11g of sugar per 100g, was also the least likely to be described as sweet.

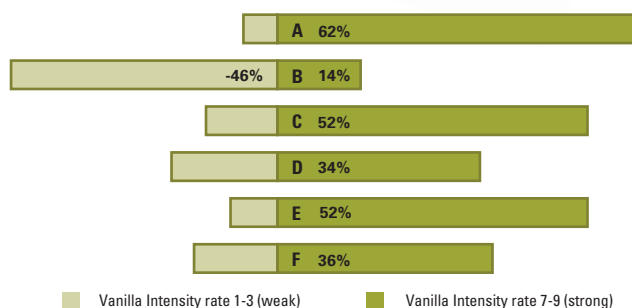
Figure 6 - Actual sugar content vs perceived sweetness



What might explain this disconnect? The low detection of sweetness may have been emphasized by the absence of other taste notes. For instance, this product also had a very low intensity of vanilla flavour – in fact, the vanilla flavouring was so mild that our testers could hardly detect it. So without the presence of vanilla flavour, the sweetness of the product was suppressed, an interaction of taste notes that highlights the complexity of the Greek yogurt flavour profile.



Figure 7 - Intensity of Vanilla Flavour



CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

For a product known for its unique and illustrious texture, there may be a tendency to focus development efforts on optimizing the textural qualities for competitive advantage. But our findings suggest that the Midas touch in this category may actually lie in the flavour. Our Gold medal brand found a successful balance for a complex flavour delivery: the right amount of sweetness, accentuated with the right balance of tartness, and brought to life with the optimal measure of vanilla.

While our focus was on one of many segments of the vast Greek yogurt market, Non Fat Vanilla, our results suggest that in this sensory landscape, texture may be Hercules... but flavour just might be the Achilles Heel.

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 nearly 30 years of experience, we are innovators in testing with consumers across all major food, beverage and household and personal care categories.



Contract Testing Inc.

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:

Grand Rapids, Michigan
Detroit, Michigan
Atlanta, Georgia
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