

NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENT DRINKS



Contract Testing Inc.



INTRODUCTION

The challenges of maintaining our health and nutrition increase as we get older – and for some, single-serve nutritional drinks or ‘shakes’ are a practical option – either for maintaining weight or getting the nutritional elements they lack in daily food intake.

This research aims to explore the differences in taste and textural profiles of nutritional supplement drinks and to determine which attributes drive overall liking among seniors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research recruited 50 respondents aged 55+, evenly split between men and women, to our Central Location Testing facility in the Greater Toronto Area. All were regular users of nutritional supplement shakes.

Respondents evaluated six different brands of chocolate nutritional shakes on a blind basis, including both National brands and Private Label brands. The samples were served one at a time in varied order with the first sample removed before the next sample was presented.

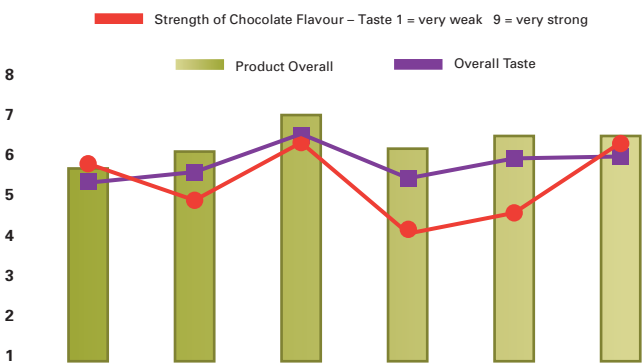
Respondents answered a series of questions relating to the aroma, appearance, taste, and texture. The questions were a combination of 9-point hedonic scales and 9-point intensity scales.

RESULTS

Drivers of Overall Liking

Only one of the six products tested scored above a “7” on overall liking, a key measure of consumer appeal. Taste was the most critical driver of overall liking, specifically the strength of the chocolate taste. The two products with the strongest chocolate taste also posted the best overall taste and the best product overall scores. (see Graph 1)

Graph 1 – Drivers of Overall Liking



Although not quite as important as taste, the texture of the shakes also played a big role. The top performers overall had the strongest scores for texture and were the creamiest and thickest. (see Graph 2)

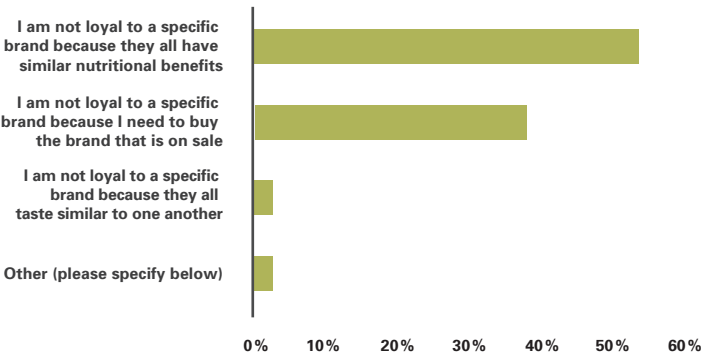
Graph 2 – Drivers of Liking of Texture



Attitudes towards Nutritional Supplement Drinks

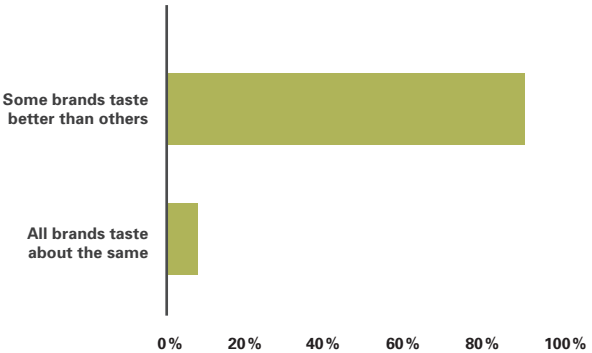
Prior to tasting the samples, we asked our testers about some of their current views on this category. Almost all of them, 94%, said they are not loyal to a specific brand, driven by perceived similarities in nutritional benefits and by promotional pricing. (see Graph 3)

Graph 3 – Reasons for Regularly Buying More than One Brand



However, their willingness to shop around is not because they think all products taste the same. In fact, 92% say some brands taste better than others – and our results suggest they were right. (see Graph 4)

Graph 4 – Difference in Taste



CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this research was to investigate the taste and textural profiles of nutritional supplement drinks and to determine which attributes drive overall liking among seniors.

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 chocolate taste and thickness and creaminess of texture. Consumers are not loyal to particular brands; however, mainly due to perceived similarities in nutritional benefits and promotional pricing.

The market for products geared towards improving the health and well-being of our aging population continues to grow. And while the needs and purchase motivations in this category may be primarily driven by health benefits, consumers will still expect great-tasting products. For now, taste standards in this category are lower than most – and with a growing market there's plenty at stake, so perhaps it's a good time to give it a shake...at least that's our take.



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.



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