The Effect of Expectation of Brand-named Labels on Flavor Perception
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Introduction

- Research shows that peoples’ expectations of labels manipulate taste perception. When participants are aware of the contents of a drink due to the labels, they are more likely to enjoy the drink they expect to enjoy. However, when labels are the same and participants are not told of the contents they enjoy both drinks equally.
- Research also shows visual cues influence flavor intensity. When given two different M&Ms, participants chose brown M&Ms as chocolatier than green M&Ms.
- Research also shows that descriptions of a product can manipulate people’s taste perception of the product. Participants were assigned to one of four conditions manipulating various aspects of the product based on product information or taste treatment. Each participant tasted the same wine.
- The purpose of this study, then, was to examine participants’ perception of flavor intensity of generic and brand name cola based on labels and visual cues.
- It was hypothesized that participants would rate cups labeled Coca-Cola as having a higher flavor intensity than cups labeled generic cola.

Method

- Participants (N = 45, 23 females, M_age = 19.33) volunteered to participate in exchange for partial course credit.
- Next, participants tasted four different cups of soda and rated the flavor intensity after each trial.
- The contents and labels of the cups were varied in order to manipulate participants’ perception of flavor intensity.
- Cup 1 was filled with Coca-Cola and labeled correctly. Cup 2 was filled with generic cola and labeled correctly. Cup 3 was filled with generic cola and labeled incorrectly. Cup 4 was filled with Coca-Cola and labeled incorrectly.

Results

- As seen in Figure 1, participants rated the cup filled with Coca-Cola but labeled incorrectly as the highest for flavor intensity (M = 3.23, SD = 1.04) and participants rated the cup filled with generic cola labeled correctly as the lowest for flavor intensity (M = 2.93, SD = 1.17).
- The analysis showed that there was no statistically significant difference, F(3,132) = 0.97, p = .41, between colas and flavor intensity.

Conclusion

- The results suggest that there was no significant difference between expectations of brand labels on taste perception, thereby showing that participants’ perception could not be manipulated by expectancies derived from visual cues.

References