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Comparing Belgian and Hungarian preferences for chocolate pralines and their acceptance of product defects such as blooming and cracking

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Pralines are considered to be affordable luxury products that are liked by many people. Due to the complexity of the product, blooming or cracking can appear on the surface. The main aim was to study the effect of individual sensory attributes on the liking and acceptance of product defects in “praline lover” Belgium and “average praline eater” Hungary.

Based on the results of previous consumer tests, six variants of pralines were selected for the consumer test: dark and milk chocolate couverture with a high or low level of hazelnut filling, and dark chocolate couverture with a high and low level of alcoholic strawberry cream filling. For each selected variant, fresh and bloomed/cracked pralines were used. 120 Hungarian consumers and 102 Belgian consumers participated in the test. Analysis of Variance and Penalty Analysis were used to evaluate the results.

Results showed differences between countries in terms of preferences. Belgian consumers did not like the pralines with alcoholic filling, while Hungarian consumers found them appealing. Overall we can conclude that flavour and texture had a major effect on liking, but the perception of ‘too weak’ or ‘too strong’ levels can differ by country.

The perception and acceptance of product defects differed by country. Hungarian consumers were more willing to accept blooming than Belgian consumers, whereas Belgian consumers were more tolerant of product cracking.

Blooming had a pronounced effect on liking and resulted in lower levels of aroma and flavour intensity, and perceived hardness. On the other hand, in some cases, positive taste aspects emerged even if the product was bloomed: pralines that were bloomed but with high levels of nut filling (more intense nut flavour) received significantly higher scores for taste and overall preference than samples which were less bloomed but had a weaker nut flavour.

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