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SENSORY ANALYSIS AND ACCEPTABILITY OF VITEX NEGUNDO L. GUMMIES

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ABSTRACT

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Vitex Negundo L., Functional Gummies, Gelling Agent, Honey Sweetener, Gummies

*Corresponding author: Belarmino Harold B., Candy is a popular treat for all ages and genders, with gummies being a well-known category known for their translucent, gel-like texture achieved through various ingredients. Concerns about high sugar and synthetic components in traditional gummies have led to research on healthier alternatives like honey-infused functional gummies, aligning with the health-conscious consumer trend. This study focuses on creating functional gummies flavored with Vitex Negundo L. and sweetened with honey, addressing the importance of consumer receptance through sensory evaluation. Confectionery manufacturers aiming to cater to evolving consumer preferences by using natural ingredients may benefit from this study. The findings suggest that Vitex Negundo L. has potential as a natural component for appealing Lagundi-flavored gummies, with color playing a significant role in sensory appeal. Consumers prefer gummies with a touch of honey-induced sweetness, emphasizing the importance of sensory aspects in product development. The results indicate that gummies containing Vitex Negundo have potential due to improved color, aroma, and taste. To maximize the product's appeal, targeting the right market and combining microbiological analysis and palatability assessment is crucial. This study highlights the versatility of Vitex Negundo L. as an ingredient, extending its use beyond traditional medicine, potentially appealing to health-conscious individuals and nutrition-focused women.

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INTRODUCTION

Candy is highly popular with all ages and all genders (Egunjobi, 2021). Candies can be classified namely as hard candy and chewy candy. Jelly candy or gummies belong to chewy candy which is made from water or contains juice and a gel-like forming structure that looks translucent with a texture and elasticity, it is incorporated with gelling agents, acids, fragrance, and food colorants (Hidayati& Pereira, 2017; Teixeira-Lemos et al., 2021). It is widely consumed due to its chewable texture and sweetness. However, excessive intake of gummies has been reported that it could have a negative impact on human health due to having high amounts of sugar and food additives, including also the non-desirable compounds produced by the heat treatment (Cano-Lamadrid et al., 2020; de Moura et al., 2019). With this, replacing sugar with other types of sweetener products such as honey could be a healthier alternative in the production of gummies (Mutlu et al., 2018). Functional gummies are a kind of candy that is new. It is made with natural ingredients without added sugar, which labels them a healthy alternative to the traditional gummies available (Marwa, 2022). Consumers are increasingly engaging in foods with functional properties that are good for the body and support a healthy lifestyle, with this confectionary market influences to improve and enhance their products with ingredients to better satisfy consumer demands (Yadav et al., 2021). Several studies established that the production of gummies with added healthier ingredients is accepted as an engaging,

palatable, and healthier alternative rather than the available gummies in the market (Achumi *et al.*, 2018; Gaytos *et al.*, 2019; Guine *et al.*, 2018; Rivero *et al.*, 2020; Teixeira-Lemos *et al.*, 2021). Taking this into account, this study aims to develop functional gummies made with Vitex Negundo L. as flavor and honey as the type of sweetener. Acceptance of consumers is the central key in food development with this, a sensory evaluation will be accomplished to allow concluding the possibility of acceptance of this innovative product. The results could be useful for other confectionary companies producing and selling gummies to improve and take into consideration using natural ingredients to meet consumer demands.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a true experimental research design, combining laboratory analysis with sensory acceptability evaluations during the development of Vitex Negundo L. gummy bears. The controlled variables were honey and water, while the manipulated variables involved the Vitex Negundo L. extract. A trial-and-error approach was employed to determine the appropriate ingredient quantities, desired texture, and flavor of the gummies. To assess the acceptability of different formulations, a 9-point Hedonic scale was used with subjects aged 18 and above who resided in various locations in Laguna. The sensory panelists were required to be in good physical health without allergies, taste or smell impairments, or medications affecting bodily functions. The sample size included 136 respondents, selected based on specific parameters and health criteria, ensuring their suitability for participation in the study. This research employs two data gathering methods: Primary Data Gathering Method, including surveys and taste tests, and Secondary Data Gathering Method, involving existing data and sources.



Primary data is gathered through a letter of intent submitted to the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management, ensuring clear and controlled information collection. Secondary data is sourced from articles, books, and internet food statistics, providing comprehensive product information. In terms of ethics, subjects are informed about the research process, and their consent is obtained through a letter that explains the study's objectives and confidentiality of their data. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

Data analysis involves a sample size of 136, using a 0.10 alpha error, 0.90 power, and a 0.30 effect size. Microbiological and sensory tests will be conducted for product development. Statistical tools, such as frequency/percentage, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, and ANOVA, will be employed to assess demographic profiles and significant differences based on hedonic scale results. Microbiological analysis will be conducted with the assistance of the Lipa Quality Control Center.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Figure 15, three different Vitex Negundo L. flavor gummy bear formulas were evaluated. Formula C was the top choice in terms of appearance, with an average score of 8.04, while Formula A scored lower at 7.85. This preference for Formula C aligns with the importance of color in sensory evaluation, as found by Hidayati& Pereira (2017). For smell, the three formulas had no significant difference, with Formula B scoring the highest at 5.99 and Formula A scoring the lowest at 5.79. Subjects preferred the aroma of Formula B, consistent with Maina's insights (2018) on smell and food edibility. In terms of texture, subjects favored Formula B, scoring 7.76, while Formula A received the lowest score at 7.68. Texture is crucial in sensory evaluation, with subjects valuing the firmness and chewability of Formula B, in line with Mahat et al.'s findings (2020). Taste is a critical factor for overall acceptability, with Formula C being the top choice at 7.79, and Formula A scoring the lowest at 7.49. Taste is typically prioritized in food evaluation, as noted by Byrne and An (2020). As indicated in Table 1, the majority of participants fell into the Gen Z category (ages 18-22), comprising 48.5% of the total, followed by Millennials (ages 23-41) at 38.2%. Gen X (ages 42-57) made up 11.8% of the participants, while only 1.5% belonged to the Boomer generation (ages 59-97). The study required that participants met certain criteria, such as not taking medications and having no allergies, ageusia, color blindness, or anosmia. Individuals with comorbidities were excluded. Table 2 shows the frequency and percent distribution of the respondents'

Table 1. Demographic Profile in terms of Age

Age group	Frequency	Percent	Rank
Gen Z (18-22)	66	48.5	1
Millennials (23-41)	52	38.2	2
Gen X (42-57)	16	11.8	3
Boomers (59-97)	2	1.5	4

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Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	71	52.2
Female	65	47.8
Total	136	100

Table 3. Preferred formulation

Preference	Frequency	Percent
Formula A (501)	56	41.2
Formula B (702)	35	25.7
Formula C (903)	45	33.1
Total	136	100

Table 4. Preferred Formulation in terms of Age Group

	Sample 501		Samp	le 702	Sample 903	
Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gen Z (18-22)	25	18.4	14	10.3	27	19.9
Millennials (23-41)	23	16.9	15	11.0	14	10.3
Gen X (42-57)	7	5.1	5	3.7	4	2.9
Boomers (58-97)	1	0.7	1	0.7	0	0
Total	56	41.2	35	25.7	45	33.1

profiles in terms of sex. Most of the participants in the study were male with a total number of 71 (52.2%). On the other hand, there were 65 female respondents (47.8%). In total, 136 individuals participated in the experimental research on Vitex Negundo L. flavor of gummy bears. The majority of the respondents were men. As shown in Table 2, more male participants agreed to be part of the study than females. Nevertheless, (Livingstone et al., 2020), in a related study, found that more females preferred nutritional value over other elements. Thus, the researchers could not verify the stated conclusion as the current study has more male respondents. The table illustrates the preferences of respondents for Vitex Negundo L. Flavor Gummy bears. Formula A (501) was the most preferred, with 41.2% of respondents favoring it, followed by Formula C (903) at 33.1%, and Formula B (702) at 25.7%. In this sensory evaluation, Formula A (501) was the top choice, indicating that it was well-received across all four senses. Appearance and taste are crucial factors in food preference. Table 4 displays the preferred Vitex Negundo gummy bear formulations among different age groups. Among Gen Z (18-22 years old), the majority (19.9%) preferred sample 903, followed by (18.4%) who preferred sample 501, while a lower percentage (10.3%) favored sample 702. In the Millennial group (23-41 years old), (16.9%) preferred sample 501, followed by (11%) who preferred sample 702, with (10.3%) indicating a preference for sample 903.

For the Gen X group (42-57 years old), (5.1%) favored sample 501, (3.7%) preferred sample 702, and (2.9%) chose sample 903 as their preferred formulation. Among the Boomer group (58-97 years old), the preferences for sample 501 and sample 702 were the same at (0.7%), while none of the respondents from this age group preferred sample 903.

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