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What's in a name? The effect of congruent and incongruent product names on liking and emotions when consuming beer or non-alcoholic beer in a bar



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ABSTRACT

This study concerns the expectations, liking and emotions related to the consumption of conventional beer and non-alcoholic beer (NAB), which are related but different products. These beverages are derived from the same raw materials and have undistinguished visual sensory cues. However consumers acknowledge the differences between them in terms of flavour, functional and emotional conceptualisations. Of particular interest here is how prior experience with beer and NAB and the conceptual information this generates in a consumer, can influence his or her response to its consumption in an appropriate setting – a bar. The labelling of a sample as *beer* or *non-alcoholic beer* was employed as a prompt to study the effects on liking and emotions provoked, when drinking a beer or a NAB, in a bar. Over 4 sessions, 155 consumers drank a glass of beer or NAB under two different conditions, labelled either correctly or incorrectly with respect to the actual composition of the sample. Questionnaires were used to rate the liking and emotions prior to and after consumption. The naming of NAB as beer significantly increased the liking and changed one emotion towards a positive direction, namely participants felt more *fulfilled*. When beer was presented as NAB it did not affect the liking but did significantly reduce the intensity of six positive emotions. Participants felt less *comforted*, *exuberant*, *good*, *happy*, *joyful* and *loving*. This study showed that labelling and the conceptual information generated in consumers might influence their response after consumption of these beverages.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Beer and non-alcoholic beer

In the wide world of beverages non-alcoholic beer (NAB) is the closest beverage to beer in a sense that both are produced with the same raw materials and NAB provides visual sensory cues that simulate beer (Sohrabvandi, Mousavi, Razavi, Mortazavian, & Rezaei, 2010). However, the differences between these beverages in terms of flavour, functional and emotional conceptualisations

are acknowledged by consumers. BEER evokes positive high arousal emotional responses, such as *adventurous* and *energetic* whereas NAB is seen as a substitute and evokes mainly neutral or negative emotional responses, such as *rational*, *conscious*, and *disappointment* (Silva et al., 2016). This raised the question how product names, “BEER” and “NON-ALCOHOLIC BEER”, might affect the conceptualisation of these beverages and therefore consumers’ responses to their consumption. This study can be an important contribution from nutritional and social perspectives, to a better understanding of beverage choice, and particularly between alcoholic versus non-alcoholic beers. It can also be useful for marketing and product development purposes, in the beverage industry.

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1.2. Expectations, liking and emotions

Expectations are psychological anticipations that something will occur or be experienced (Cardello, 2007), affect reactions and decisions, sometimes at an unconscious level, and may improve or degrade the perception of a food/beverage even before it is tasted (Deliza & MacFie, 1996). Expectations may be derived from intrinsic properties of a product such as sensory attributes, in which sensory and perceptual systems are involved, or from extrinsic attributes such as product name, which operates via cognitive and psychological mechanisms (Cardello, 2007). When a food/beverage is consumed, the actual experience (AE) is compared by consumers to the expected experience (EE) and when hedonic evaluation of a product is the same as expected ($AE = EE$) confirmation occurs. However, in the case of discrepancy between experiences ($AE \neq EE$), the observed effects can be explained by the assimilation/contrast model proposed by Anderson (1973). Assimilation occurs when consumers adjust their perception of the product to what was expected, attempting to minimize the discrepancy between expected and actual experiences. Assimilation predicts positive disconfirmation when expectations are lower than the actual hedonic evaluation of a product ($EE < AE$) and negative disconfirmation when expectations are higher than the hedonic evaluation of a product ($EE > AE$) (Cardello, 2003). Contrast effects, on the other hand, occur when consumers magnify the discrepancy between expected and actual experiences (Yeomans, Chambers, Blumenthal, & Blake, 2008). Sensory expectations of food and beverages based on extrinsic cues have been studied widely (see Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence (2015) for a review). Previous studies suggested that preferences for specific beers, based on liking scores of blind samples of beers, are influenced primarily through expectations derived from different extrinsic attributes, such as brand (Allison & Uhl, 1964), information regarding manufacturing technology (Caporale & Monteleone, 2004) and information and timing when participants were informed about a secret ingredient added to beer (Lee, Frederick, & Ariely, 2006), rather than from the taste experience itself, i.e. from the intrinsic attributes.

The assessment of product-evoked emotions, rather than liking only, has recently gained popularity amongst researchers with the general aim of characterizing consumers' responses to food and beverages (e.g. Cardello et al. (2012), King, Meiselman, and Carr (2010), Porcherot et al. (2012), Spinelli, Masi, Zoboli, Prescott, and Monteleone (2015), Thomson, Crocker, and Marketo (2010)). Chaya, Pacoud, Ng, Fenton, and Hort (2015) studied the emotional response to beer in three different conditions: blind (liquid only), packaging (only) and informed (liquid plus packaging). The authors suggested that sensory properties drove the emotional responses in the blind condition, e.g. the more carbonated beers evoked more pleasant emotions and sweeter beers were associated with less engaging emotions. In the packaging condition this effect was even stronger, resulting in better differentiation between products in terms of emotion profiles. Information from the packaging related to alcohol content might have influenced emotional responses, as low alcohol beers were associated with less activated emotions and alcoholic beers were associated with more activated emotions. The study described was performed with consumers tasting a small amount of beer and it is not known what emotional change is triggered by drinking a whole glass of beer or NAB. Evaluating and comparing feelings before and after product experience can reveal which feelings are connected to the product and how they evolve (Meiselman, 2015). For example, Porcherot, Petit, Giboreau, Gaudreau, and Cayeux (2015) investigated feelings before and after drinking an alcoholic aperitif showing that the most familiar variant of the beverage was associated with a greater decrease in negative mood states. The measurement of emotions

before and after product experience is identified as a possible verification for the factual contribution of emotion measurement in consumer research (Köster & Mojet, 2015).

1.3. Aims and hypotheses of the study

The primary objective of this study was to assess how the product name, "BEER" or "NON-ALCOHOLIC BEER", influenced liking and the emotions elicited, before and after drinking either a BEER or NAB, when the beverages were given to consumers named correctly and incorrectly with respect to their composition. It was hypothesized that the product name "BEER" or "NAB" would have a stronger effect on consumers' responses than the actual flavour of the beverage. It was anticipated that the responses would follow the expectations triggered by the product name, which would be in line with either a positive or negative assimilation effect (Anderson, 1973).

The second objective was to investigate the emotional response induced by drinking either a BEER or NAB, i.e. comparing the emotional response before and after drinking BEER or NAB, when product name and beverage content were congruent.

When measuring self-reported emotions it is important that the emotion terms offered are relevant for the product category and culture (van Zyl & Meiselman, 2015). Therefore, different emotion lists have been developed for different beverages (e.g. for wine – Ferrarini et al. (2010), for coffee – Bhumiratana, Adhikari, and Chambers (2014) and for blackcurrant juice – Ng, Chaya, and Hort (2013)). The emotion terms used in the present study are the outcome of a previous qualitative study reporting the emotional associations of Dutch consumers with BEER and NAB consumption (Silva et al., 2016). Using this list in the present study allowed the validation of the methodology by measuring emotional associations with BEER and NAB, adding quantitative data and capturing variations between the beverages for different moments (before and after drinking).

Given the importance of context of consumption for liking and emotion measurements (de Graaf et al., 2005; Meiselman, 2006; Piqueras-Fiszman & Jaeger, 2014) and specifically for beer (Dorado, Chaya, Tarrega, & Hort, 2016), this study was performed in a realistic consumption context, a café/bar, as it is one of the main places where beer consumption occurs (Silva et al., 2015). The use of a realistic testing situation increases the validity of the measurements of a study (Köster, 2003).

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Participants

One hundred and fifty-five moderate beer consumers (between 1 and 16 glasses of beer/week), were recruited in Wageningen, the Netherlands for this study. Gender and age group were equally represented (50% males, 50% females, 50% 18–34 years and 50% 35–65 years old). Level of education varied from vocational education (seventeen participants, 11%), bachelor degree (forty participants, 26%) and post-graduate degree (master or higher) (ninety-eight participants, 63%). Eighty-two participants (53%) were familiar with NAB, drinking on average 3 glasses per month. All participants were healthy and had a normal (self-reported) ability to taste and smell. Pregnant or lactating women and people taking prescribed medication were excluded. Participants were allowed to register for the study alone or with others. One hundred and one (65%) participants performed the study with friends, family or partners and the group size varied from 2 to 4 people. The other 54 participants (35%) registered individually and performed the study alone. All participants signed an informed consent statement before the

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