

The importance of taste in the adjustment of  
new food product supply and demand

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Introduction

As the title of our paper indicates, we are going to discuss the adjustment between supply and demand in new food products, with a view to answering the following question: what is the importance of taste in this adjustment \_ meaning both the taste of the product and the consumer's taste for certain products? But first we wish to touch on the reasons which prompted us to ask this question.

Our work on a French Agriculture Ministry research programme on tomorrow's food supply included the study of foods whose production involves innovative technologies for ensuring food safety. The products in question consisted of a range of pure fruit juices, a range of fruit-flavoured drinks, and several ranges of cooked pork meats. When we started our field work the fruit-juice packaging firm had just launched its pure fruit juice and fruit-flavoured drink ranges in new plastic bottles. According to our interlocutors, these bottles were sufficiently chemically inert to ensure the highest level of preservation of the product ever achieved. After a long period of decline in the market, the firm was staking its all. The meat firm, on the other hand, was on an even keel. Because of the downward curve of the demand for cooked pork meat in recent years, it had been forced to regularly enhance its product ranges. This enabled us to witness a multitude of transformations, including the creation of products for selling by the portion and the development of new packaging for selling on the shelf. In both firms we were struck by the importance of tasting. The actors we met spoke about the tasting sessions, both formal and spontaneous, which took place throughout the creation and marketing of the new pure fruit juices and fruit drinks. We were surprised by the proliferation of these tasting sessions within the firm; some regular, others occasional, some explicitly organized, others ad hoc, etc. We even noted a kind of obsession with tasting, both in the discourse \_ "Unfortunately we haven't got time for everyone to taste it", said an engineer-formulator \_ and in the material organization of the premises \_ "rooms equipped with individual tasting booths at the group's main laboratory" reported an interlocutor, but also, more surprisingly perhaps, an immense bar dominating one end of a conference room at the firm's headoffice. The cooked pork firm similarly granted particular importance to tasting: sessions every morning, both with a regularly renewed segment of the staff and with permanent tasters; round-tables for tasting, carefully organized with uninformed consumers, etc. Naturally, we wondered what exactly happened in these tasting sessions and what the firms did with the resulting judgements on taste (in both senses of the word)?

This is an original question in the socio-economics of innovation. Very few existing studies have focused on the role of the senses in the adjustment between products and

consumers. More exactly, the constitution of comfort, taste or aesthetics as properties shared by products and consumers has seldom been analysed (1). On the other hand, many other disciplines have studied taste, from physico-chemistry to social and cultural history, physiology, the sociology of perception, and the economics of quality, among others. A presentation of the different approaches proposed by these disciplines would largely exceed the scope of this paper but we can, rather simplistically, say that they focus either on the object or on the person in an attempt to grasp the formation and transmission of taste. These approaches thus help on the one hand to reify taste and, on the other, to purify the processes used to analyse it. Hence their usefulness, not only for theoretical discussion but also for economic practice. Industrial firms and marketing experts (2) apply the methods developed by these disciplines and the lessons learned from their case studies, to define the protocols and tools used in their work on products and markets (3). Tasting sessions are one way in which they do so. Our aim is to characterize the manner in which, through these tasting sessions, firms create and experience the hold that products and consumers have over one another. The socio-economics of taste that we tend towards is therefore slightly out of line with the theoretical corpus mentioned above. Its object consists of the operations and procedures which perform the taste of products and consumers, and which involve numerous intricacies between the methods developed by the firms and those proposed by different disciplines and professional practices.

To limit the length of this paper we refer mainly to the tasting sessions of the pure fruit juice and fruit drink ranges. However, our results also apply to the tasting of cooked pork meat. The sessions we attended or that were described to us had different formats and objectives. For example, in the design stage of a range tasting is used to define the formula of the product; during the product's life, it is intended, among other things, to guarantee its stability in a context of change (primarily due to raw material fluctuations). Thus, it helps to ensure the continuity of the product and its market. Sessions for generating descriptors have an entirely different purpose: they aim to create a collective capacity for differentiating products and putting these differences into words. As we shall see, this transforms not only the competencies of the tasters but also the qualities of the products. Thus, the sessions constitute tools for active competitive intelligence. Of course, they are not the only devices used to achieve these different objectives, but they participate in their expression and realization by establishing a certain type of relationship between products and consumers that we shall call "adjustment on a level of familiarity". We are going to show:

- (i) that tasting sessions help to incorporate some of the consumer into the product and to introduce the product into the consumer's life;
- (ii) that tasting sessions are framed in such a way that they constitute collective experiences for products and consumers alike, and therefore help to develop their relationship of familiarity.

We conclude this presentation with some thoughts on the consequences of our observations for socio-economic analysis.

### 1. Tasting, or how to experience a feeling of familiarity between product and consumer

In this section we use a specific example to show that tasting sessions fall into a category of operations which create a sort of intimacy - in the truly physical sense of the term - between products and consumers, and that in this sense they are more than tests.

Our example concerns the new launch of the range of fruit drinks. Although the brand enjoyed lasting renown, its market share had been progressively declining. Our interlocutors suggested two reasons. The first was the unsuccessful change, almost 15 years earlier, from glass to plastic bottles. The brand's main rival had been the first to make the change and the resulting loss had never been recovered. The firm was caught in a downward spiral in which the range gradually disappeared from the market as its sales dropped and distributors favoured other products. The second reason for the decline was the shrinking fruit drink market. All our interlocutors agreed that fruit-flavoured drinks had for a long time been a substitute for fruit juices which were too expensive for the market. Now that fruit juice was affordable, fruit-flavoured drinks were being squeezed out of the market. But although these drinks were cheap, this was often at the expense of the products themselves – "Some drinks contain 0% fruit" – and of their image. Faced with this collective slump and a relatively disastrous individual situation, the firm decided that it had, at all costs, to save what it still had of value: its brand.

A huge effort was undertaken (4). The various market studies commissioned by the firm showed that fruit-flavoured drinks in general, caught somewhere between pure fruit juice and sodas, were pushed to the bottom of the range where they had difficulty surviving. We were told that this type of drink was being sold at 4F for 2 litres – a price which hardly encouraged producers to invest in quality or consumers to distinguish between products in an abundant supply. Because existing brands were unable to curb the slump in the market, and the one in question here had remained in second position for many years, the firm decided to distinguish its brand by repositioning its range. Taking advantage of the restructuring of the firm underway, it made an extensive analysis of the situation. The main conclusion drawn was the total failure of all attempts to enhance the range (5). Even the recent launch of fruit nectar with a guaranteed vitamin content – increasingly popular on the market, according to analysts – changed nothing. Was it because the packaging had remained the same for twenty years, wondered the engineer-formulator, especially in view of the success of the pure fruit juice range after its launch in new plastic bottles? Was it because these new formulae were not enough in any case to stimulate a shrinking market that could barely absorb the proliferation of new ranges and sub-ranges? The firm grappled with the problem and finally concluded that it had to find a new target for the range.

According to the marketing director for children's products, even though fruit-flavoured drinks had progressively become bottom-of-the-range sweat drinks for "camping and picnics", they had a specific quality compared to fruit juices, i.e. they were appreciated by children because their taste was not too strong. The firm had already launched a highly successful fizzy apple drink for children. On the strength of this experience and supported by market studies which showed that children are not only prescribers but also consumers in their own right, the firm decided to enhance its range of fruit-flavoured drinks with a children's range. At that stage no similar range existed in the market (6). But what is a drink for children? Summarizing the firm's reflection on the subject and, once again, supported by numerous market studies, our interlocutor explained that it could be defined as a drink that children asked for and drank: « In products for children there are two poles: a game-oriented-pleasure pole and a health-growth-natural values pole – We decided to make something oriented entirely towards pleasure and enjoyment (7). We decided it would be a nectar. Because children don't like pure juice, it's too sour, not sweet enough – We worked on flavours for kids: grape/raspberry and apple/apricot – We checked what flavours children like and we

tested them. We looked at the flavours of yoghurts, things that are easy to make, that don't require too much segmentation ».

In other words, the challenge was to create a drink which, by its colour, flavour, texture and taste, is recognized by children as a drink specifically intended for them. These were the indications given to the engineer-formulator to work on. He had been with the firm for twenty years, since shortly after the launch of its fruit drink range. His knowledge of the products and their markets was extensive, as was his know-how, about which he was visibly proud. In his own words, he was the firm's "nose". During his career he had tested hundreds of formulae and he said he was particularly upset about the failure of the fruit drinks that changes in the range had not helped to curb. Taking as his own the ideas of the marketing division, he explained:

« I thought about it and asked myself: what do kids like? They like cordials, colours. I spoke about it at home. My daughter \_ at home we like testing things \_ had tried mixing grapefruit juice and mint cordial. It was really nice. Kids like the taste of acid drops, hence the idea to mix cordials and fruit drinks ».

The engineer-formulator's daughter was not the only one to like the mixture. The "marketing girls", as he affectionately called his colleagues in the marketing division, were also convinced. They came to the factory with numerous bottles of different cordials to try other mixtures. That was how the range of fruit drinks for children was born, with its bright colours and candy taste. The products were tasted by the management committee, their shelf-life was tested and they were put into new plastic bottles with a particular design (8) \_ although this had not originally been planned. Their positioning was fine-tuned by the advertising strategy which found a name for them \_ BoissonsDingue ("crazy drinks") \_ and created slightly "naughty" stickers (transfers of insects to stick on plates, for example). But the point we wish to highlight is the decisive role of tasting in this process.

Tasting, and the example speaks for itself, carries out a particular operation: it physically inscribes a bit of the consumer in the product and thereby makes the product an accomplice of the consumer. Of course the consumer, as innovation studies have shown, is always represented \_ by the engineer-formulator's daughter who, with her father, experiences her taste and that of the mixtures she prepares or by the "marketing girls" who have in mind children's taste for strawberry toothpaste and striped combinations of mayonnaise and ketchup. But what distinguishes tasting from the process of inscription generally described by the socio-economics of innovation, is the engagement of the senses and thus the mutual impregnation of product and consumer. The resulting judgement, often reduced to a hedonistic dimension (liking or disliking), describes, in broader terms, a certain quality of the adjustment between product and consumer.

This type of judgement and the operations underlying it are frequent throughout the production and marketing of the product. Tasting sessions display their irreducible dimension, but other operations aim at creating the feeling of familiarity between product and consumer. A case in point is the calculation of the screwing on and off of the cap on the new pure fruit juice bottle. This calculation incorporates a number of technical parameters, such as the mechanical resistance of the material of the bottle and of the cap, the deformation of the bottle in time, the required level of preservation of the juice, etc. If the cap is screwed on too tightly, as was the case with certain batches, the consumer is forced to use pliers to open the bottle. On the other hand, if it is not tight

enough the product could be affected and the consumer, used to a certain resistance (accompanied, for certain products such as jam jars, by a familiar sound), may have doubts about its quality. Thus, the screwing on and off of the cap must be adjusted so that the consumer feels the right resistance characteristic of a good product.

The above comments are particularly important for socio-economic analysis. We are familiar with the criticism of the neo-classical model which, by imposing strong hypotheses on the characteristics of supply and demand (homogeneous and perfectly defined goods, economic actors who have clear preferences and perfect information on the products), sees the adjustment between them as a confrontation regulated by prices and quantities. Many studies have shown that price is a complex variable, and that adjustment through price is not the only mechanism linking supply and demand or, more exactly, that it does not capture all the mediations in this relationship (particularly in cases where uncertainty exists on the quality of the goods). In our view, the examples mentioned here go a step further. They show that firms and marketing experts constantly strive to ensure that products and consumers physically share a number of properties. In other words, they try to ensure that the world of the product and that of the consumer are not two separate worlds with a few more or less sophisticated catchers here and there, but a space made of a multitude of "areas of adhesion" between product and consumer.

## 2. Tasting or how to frame the adhesion between product and consumer

The geography of this space is obviously a central question. We cannot describe it fully here, but we are going to suggest some elements on which to base a description. We first show that the areas of adhesion between product and consumer are framed precisely and that tasting sessions constitute such frames. We then see that these tasting sessions produce collective experiences intended to expand singular relations between taster and product into broader relations between supply and demand. Finally, we see that during this experience, and because it is collective, the feeling of familiarity between product and consumer is transformed, and hence the qualities of both of them as well.

The spontaneous and barely formalized nature of the tasting described in the preceding section must not let us forget the important framing work underlying it (copy strategy for the fruit drink range; definition of the child target; know-how embodied in the engineer-formulator; etc.). We are going to take a more explicit example to demonstrate this framing: a tasting session, which we attended, organized by the firm to generate descriptors of pure orange juice. As we shall see, the idea was to produce a vocabulary as close as possible to natural language to describe taste as the result of a carefully orchestrated encounter between the taster-consumer and the product. The tasters, all members of the firm, were willing subjects who had chosen to be on the panel. By making voluntary participation a condition, the firm was trying to ensure that tasters identified with consumers who, as they expressed it, want to taste and to talk frankly about what their experience (9). The participants were then trained to recognize the four basic tastes (sweet, salty, sour and bitter), as well as the essential flavours in fruit juices (e.g. hints of terpenes in orange juice), and thus to evaluate their own sensitivity to these tastes and flavours. This training was regularly repeated to heighten their senses. The tasters involved here were over-equipped in so far as they were trained to learn to taste and to exercise their ability to represent (to others and themselves) their visual, olfactory and gustatory perceptions. Yet they were also under-equipped because they had only anonymous liquids in identical glasses. They were thus deprived of the ordinary resources of appreciation: packaging, price, shop, advertising, other consumers, the

desires of their children, the list of available rival products, and so on. The system gives each juice its own space, independent from that of the others, and equips the tasters so that they can define tastes "rid" of everything that usually goes along with the product. From this point of view, this tasting is very different from the scene at the engineer-formulator's home, at the origin of the discovery of the juice-cordial mixture.

The tasting protocol is clearly designed to avoid two stumbling blocks: purely technical descriptions and strictly personal opinions. The hostess running the session and the tasters present reminded us several times that they had to produce a description in their own words but that they had to avoid "being hedonistic" (in other words, they had to avoid referring to their likes and dislikes). The course of the tasting session was supposed to facilitate this analytical exercise in natural language. Participants had to taste the products in a given order, first qualifying their visual aspect, then their aroma and finally their taste. This required them to dissect each product and not to settle for an overall judgement such as "I like it" or "I don't like it", "it's nice" or "it isn't nice". The hierarchy of the three senses \_ sight, smell and taste \_ is important because, according to specialists, saturation is more easily reached by the nose than the eyes, and more easily by the mouth than in nose. By respecting the order the taster optimises her or his analytical capacities. The protocol also makes it difficult to directly compare products, and delays the formulation of a preference for a particular juice. Unlike a physico-chemical analysis which studies the molecular composition of the product, this process is intended (to paraphrase one of the participants) to describe what these molecules do to the palate. The idea is not, however, to make a personal judgement in terms of likes/dislikes, as in the case of the tests concocted by the engineer-formulator's daughter, but to describe the taste as the result of an action which depends neither entirely on the object nor entirely on the subject.

We could therefore say that tasting simultaneously creates three frames: (i) it specifies the operations which will enable the taster and the product to experience each other; (ii) it defines a consumer capable of physically and verbally expressing impressions resulting from contact with the product; (iii) it defines a product through its impression on the consumer's eyes, nose and taste buds.

Apart from the singular relationship which they establish between tasters and products, tasting sessions also provide a base for a relationship between supply and demand. Tasting is a collective experience and designed as such, for both the products and the tasters. The course of the entire process of defining descriptors for pure orange juice clearly illustrates this point. The first step in this process the session for the formulation of descriptors discussed above. An identical session is organized concurrently, according to the same modalities, at the group's research centre. In a second stage, fairly soon after the first session, each panel meets again for a session called "selection of descriptors". The aim is to taste the same products again and, for each of them, to test all the descriptors generated by the two panels during the first session. At the end of this second session each panel has a list of descriptors agreed by all the participants. The next session, called "global consensus", combines the two panels. The aim is to discuss those descriptors on which the two panels disagree. The protocol is a little different because tasting concerns only those products for which different descriptors were chosen by the two panels. The aim is to draw up a list of descriptors on which there is consensus and which will serve to qualify the profile of each product during the last session (10). The common denominator in all these sessions is collective discussion which, in the eyes of the uninitiated that we were, sometimes seemed more like

nitpicking. We call it discussion here but, to be more precise, we should say a dynamic of collective tasting and verbalization. It is this dynamic which links the different participants's perceptions and stabilizes the list of descriptors without necessarily finalizing it.

Whereas the participants are all supposed to use their own words when producing descriptors, the training they received determines part of their vocabulary. We were hardly surprised to note how scant our own repertoire was compared to that of certain tasters, due not only to the difficulty we had in finding words to express our perceptions but also to our inability in some cases to perceive anything at all (11)! Individual peculiarities did not, for all that, disappear. On the contrary, after having acquired the same references the participants were able to express their differences better. Indeed, that was the object of the exercise, as we realized during the session for the selection of descriptors. The specialists who frequently have to taste products in their daily activities were amiably accused by the others of having found "impossible things". A new taster, who came from the cider department, saw green everywhere. With such differences one could expect the disagreement to carry on forever. However, except for rare occasions when the participants got carried away in the discussion or when the hostess decided to leave it open, the session was, on the whole, fluid (12). To understand this situation we needed to examine the mechanisms regulating interaction between the participants.

Basically, the dynamics of the discussion is fairly simple. It was summarized by the organizer of the global consensus session in the following way: each participant must feel free to propose a descriptor and to argue it, even if he/she is the only one to have chosen it. In concrete terms, this principle is reflected in a number of mechanisms which, although implicit, are effective throughout the discussion. If a descriptor is rejected by a majority of participants, it is taken off the list. However, if a taster insists on a word that he/she alone has selected, and manages to convince the assembly of the specificity of this word for the juice that brought it to mind, the descriptor will be retained. The final use of the descriptors is also recalled to eliminate some of them, group together others and add others, even if nobody has proposed them. For example, the two flavours "ripe orange" and "over-ripe orange" were grouped together with a view to defining a single scale. The idea was to mark a product's degree of ripeness on this scale when drawing up its product profile. Another example: certain descriptors, and especially those that the participants think qualify possible negative points in a juice, are to be introduced in cases where such juices are produced by error. A third example: those descriptors which distinguish certain products in relation to their rivals are added. Thus, the aim of actively watching rival products in the market is frequently recalled to help in the selection of descriptors. During the global consensus session this is a constant concern, to the point where the eliminated descriptors are sometimes reselected from a complementary list as the need arises.

These diverse mechanisms channel the course of the sessions aimed at getting all the participants to express themselves on their choice of descriptors, that is, to describe the perceptions that these descriptors convey. Thus, bit by bit, there is a sort of collectivization of perceptions and words to express them, a transformation, through contact with others, of the participants' own experiences of familiarity with the product (13). The following extract clearly illustrates this point:

« [The discussion concerned fruit pulp. Comments were on the length or fineness of the pulp, on the difficulty of seeing it, etc.]

Hostess: In fact, the pulp has two aspects. First, presence/absence\_  
[New comments on the fact that it can't be seen.]

Hostess: \_ then fine/course

The participants repeat that they can't see anything.]

Hostess: It's true that except for Soleil [a specific juice], there was no juice with pulp.

X: I can't actually see the pulp. But there is something that I can feel in my mouth. One can feel if there is any or not. But its dimensions, don't take things too far. In fact, I think it's a bit strange putting pulp under aspect.

Y: But in Soleil there is pulp and it's visible. Yet it's true that the descriptor "pulp" on its own is confusing. Because in that case I'd put it everywhere.

X: So we should just leave it as it is.

[In the end, the following correction was proposed: pulp (presence/absence); pulp (size: fine/long, to be placed on a scale).] »

During the global consensus session this type of interaction was multiplied. The hostess's role was decisive. For example: she questioned the participants, requiring them to say what the descriptors denoted for them; she circulated little vials of flavours so that everyone could smell them; she suggested the participants taste the juices again to check their first impressions; and she asked everyone to find their own ways of identifying impressions conveyed by a particular word. The hostess also had other ways of absorbing differences. For example, she initiated the compilation of a complementary list grouping together the terms used specifically by one person, and she proposed that the score 0 be given to a descriptor during the formulation of a product profile if that descriptor evoked nothing for the majority of participants. The series of sessions during which the participants learned of their points of agreement and disagreement generated collective emulation, so that a common framework of perceptions and words to describe them was gradually constituted.

Clearly, the tasters involved in this action were individually and collectively transformed, as were the products tasted. Not only were the qualifications of each of them refined, the image of the supply that they were creating together was also redefined. It then became possible \_ and it was with this intention that these sessions were organized \_ to define each product as well as the main features of the pure orange juice supply on the market. At the time of writing, the translation of these results in terms of strategic analysis of the competition is still in its early stages in the firm. But tasting sessions have proved to be powerful tools in competitive intelligence on taste trends \_ which is probably why firms are using them more and more.

### Conclusion

By choosing to focus on tasting session we have been able to study the way in which firms frame taste as a property shared by products and consumers. The examples analysed show that this framing is always specific and therefore necessarily establishes a strictly situated relationship between product and consumer. Each time, it is an instantiation of the product and the consumer that is realized. In other words, product and consumer are always grasped in their entirety but in a particular way. This somewhat counter-intuitive point enables us to understand the proliferation of tasting sessions, especially since they modify feelings of familiarity between products and consumers.



Two paths for reflection are thus opened. The first, which this article has initiated, is a comparative analysis of the multiple tasting sessions organized by industrial firms and marketing experts to monitor the ways in which different conceptions of the consumer's and the product's taste are experienced. In this sense, it seems to us that tasting sessions are less ways of testing the product than of testing the relationship that is constantly built up and broken down between product and consumer. These sessions naturally tend to proliferate not because they result in some kind of dissatisfaction in firms with the quality of their products, but because they continuously aim at constructing the taste of both consumer and product, and because this taste is formed and deformed during the framed encounters between the two. For industrial firms, analysing taste does not imply the search for its social and cultural determinants, nor the isolation of physico-chemical components, but the multiplication of opportunities to enable it to be created in frames that the firm is capable of organizing and maintaining. This helps to explain why, alone, firms cannot monitor tastes. These are formulated in many other places: in consultancy firms, among distributors, in the press, at the doctor, in restaurants, in the kitchen, and so on. This brings us to the second path for reflection, entirely programmatic at this stage, which could be formulated as follows: what are the tools that industrial firms and marketing specialists use to deal with this proliferation of frames without destroying it, and what are their characteristics compared to classical coordination tools? If we wish to recognize the proliferation of the formulations of taste, we have to recognize that there necessarily exist means to articulate tastes formulated in many places. It seems that there is a track that can be followed through the different apparatus set up by professionals to equip consumers' judgements, that is, the operations through which the actors of supply standardize or uniformize ways of talking about tastes, rather than tastes themselves. This calls for a study of the all means of prescription which, in the market, enable consumers to talk of products and to relate them to other products (descriptors are certainly part of these means when they are sufficiently stabilized to circulate beyond the space in which they were formulated). This apparatus includes the mediators of supply, such as advertising (the role of words and symbols) or packaging (codes for forms and colours), but also mediators as such, including the media and, finally and paradoxically, consumers' unions. These organizations, through their dual role of representation and information, equip consumers in their own specific way, offering them means for testing and assessing products, for example. The challenge, for socio-economic analysis, is to explain the constant movement of renewal of supply and demand that we saw in the agri-food industry but which probably also exists in other sectors.

## Notes

- (1) Certain product tests, such as those which measure the comfort of car seats, have been analysed in detail. However, they have above all, and rightly so, been analysed as tools for qualifying products because the value given to users' comfort is relative \_ the users being represented in most instances by dummies. We nevertheless note certain exceptions: the work of S. Dubuisson and A. Hennion [1996] on industrial design, which convincingly shows the way in which aesthetics is physically produced in the object and the consumer, represented here by the designer; the work of H. Mialet [?] which describes a researcher who feels the matter he is working on, forms one body with it, and physically experiences the changes he causes it to undergo.
- (2) Packaging design agencies, packaging agencies, quality control agencies, marketing agencies, advertising agencies, distributors, etc.
- (3) The mass consumption sector constantly uses results from the social sciences. Note, however, that this process is not linear; it works both ways. We shall frequently revert to this process throughout this paper and in our conclusion.
- (4) The circumstances were particularly favourable: restructuring of the firm after a merger with another company in the group specialized in the production of cider and the processing of apples; appointment of a new president known to be in favour of innovation; simultaneous launch of the fruit juice range in a new plastic developed by the group's research centre.
- (5) For example, the creation of new flavours such as the following mixtures: orange-coconut, grape-cherry-red currant, apple-pear, apple-peach, etc.
- (6) The history of the reconstitution of the firm's fruit drink range is fairly turbulent. The idea was less to create a market for children than to complement and support the range with products intended for children and visible as such, so as to singularize the brand and create an impulsion effect on its existing 2L products. But the company also had to take into account its nectars, launched fairly recently. It therefore decided to offer its new products (the children's range and the nectars) only to those distributors that had sold its 2L products. The advertising and promotion campaign, run by a specialized agency, largely contributed to the fine-tuning of this strategy and the positioning of the range.
- (7) The advertising strategy subsequently formulated a slightly more complicated equation. It targeted both complementary ranges \_ i.e. the children's range and the nectar range \_ at children; the first according to the terms listed above and the second as a children's drink which reassured mothers of a guaranteed vitamin content. In order to persuade the distributor to reference list both complementary ranges rather than creating only a children's niche or a health niche, the firm explained that children had needs and desires which varied throughout the day.
- (8) With, in particular, a smile engraved on the bottle, creating an area adapted to a child's hand.
- (9) The status of these tasters, somewhere between fruit juice/drink specialists and uninformed consumers, was also reflected in the vagueness of certain instructions. For example, tasters were advised not to drink coffee or smoke before a tasting session. But during a subsequent session (see below), some tasters transgressed this recommendation. During the session a participant mentioned that she wasn't sure what her visual experience was worth because she had shaken the glass. The hostess answered that, in any case, when one drinks in daily life one always moves the glass.
- (10) This was the only session that we were unable to attend.
- (11) In a recent article, G. Teil clearly shows how this type of training enhances the ability to use one's senses and to describe more and more subtle nuances [Teil, 1998].

(12) In the end the limited time granted to the exercise and its fastidious nature probably got the better of the protagonists, even the most hard-headed ones.

(13) This phenomenon, although not always explicit, is prevalent. It is what is sought in amateur clubs, such as wine-tasting clubs, but also occurs in daily life when people exchange recipes, for example, or comment on the food of a particular restaurant.