Preference mapping
Why do they like or dislike my product ?

Status

Marketing executives cannot be content with knowing if their product is liked or not by consumers. They must also explain this overall judgement, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the product so as to guide its improvement.
However, consumers are not capable of explaining their judgements precisely and reliably. The have neither the sensorial capacities nor the vocabulary required.
Preference mapping enables this problem to be resolved.

Methodology

The consumer is used for what he knows how to do, in other words, judge the products.
To describe the products, we call on qualified, trained sensorial experts, capable of specifying the nature and the intensity of the sensations associated with a product, without attaching any hedonistic value to it. They are asked to describe and in no case to judge. Statistical analyses enable the two groups of collected data to be linked so as to explain consumer enjoyment via the sensorial characteristics described by the experts.

Implementation

1. Definition of the group of products that constitute the reference market.
   A minimum of 8 products are required to make the model work and these are chosen for their capacity to describe the diversity of the sensorial range while eliminating products that are too atypical.

2. The experts choose the relevant sensorial descriptors and draw up the profile of each product, evaluating the intensity of the sensation that they perceive in relation to each descriptor (by means, for example, of marks between 0 and 10).

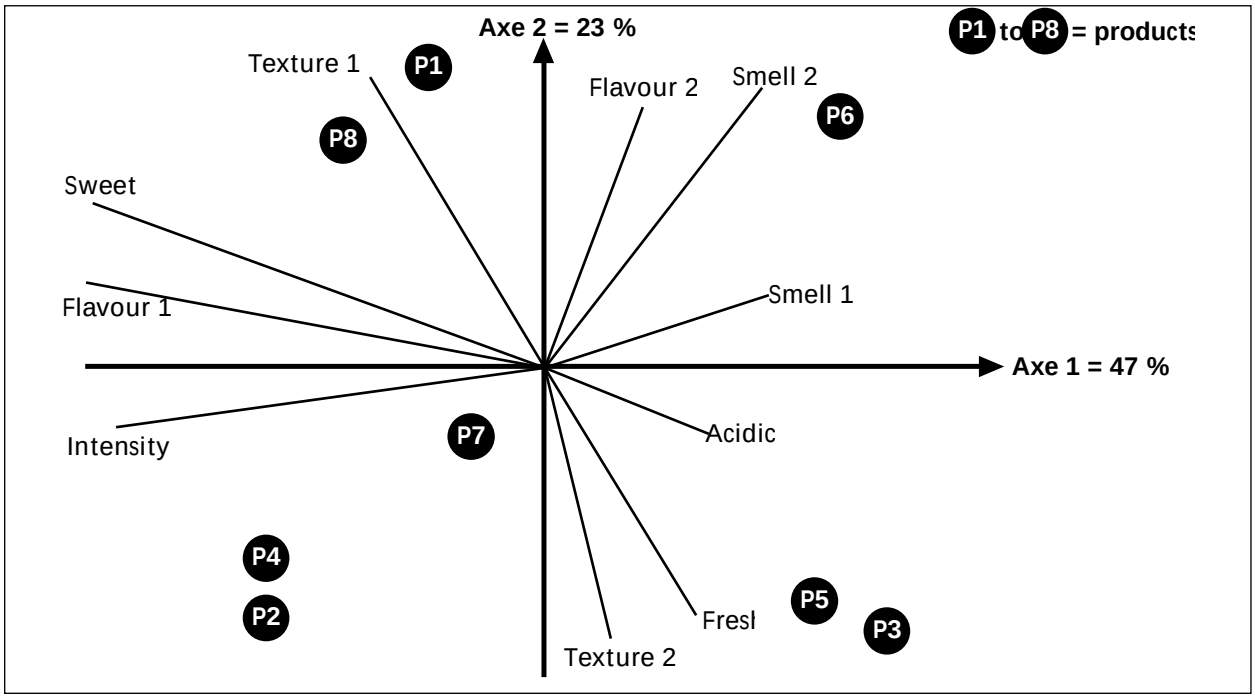
3. A representative sample of target consumers is recruited and each individual evaluates all the products in the group.
   This obligation can weigh down the procedure when you want to avoid the successive

   tasting of a large number products (home tests staggered over a period of several weeks, hall tests in several sessions). The key information being asked of consumers is the overall evaluation mark given to each product.

4. The processing of the data collected begins with the establishment of a sensorial map. This is obtained by means of a factorial analysis conducted on the basis of the experts' sensorial profiles.

The sensorial map gives a simplified representation of all the sensorial profiles by reducing it to the main synthetic dimensions, the factorial axes.

Example :



The next step consists in looking for a statistical link between the consumers' preferences and the position of the products on the sensorial map.
For each consumer, a solution to the "pleasure = function" equation is sought (sensorial positioning).

Several regression models can be used, running from the simplest to the most complex.
The aggregation of individual results enables each point in the sensorial space (each possible positioning of a product) to be associated with a value corresponding to the percentage of consumers who appreciate or would appreciate a product placed at this point.

Applications

- Definition of a precise positioning on the map and development of the corresponding product.
- Optimisation of a range, occupying complementary positionings on the map.

Repères and preference mapping

Preference mapping is a very useful model that we use regularly but which can still be perfected.
REPERES is currently working on integrating into the model psycho-chemical and image characteristics of the products under study.

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