INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES
[ISSN: 0975-4725; CODEN(USA):IJPS00]
Journal Homepage: https://www.ijpsjournal.com

OPEN ACCESS

Mini Review Article

Review On Taste Sensors: An Evolutionary Journey From History To Modern Applications, Exploring The Biology Of Human Taste, And AI-Driven Innovations

A. Shajara Rahin, J. Bhavitha, R. V. Nanda Kumar, S. Sathish Kumar, K. sandhya, Arkadu Mamatha, A. B. Pavan Kalyan Reddy

Department of Pharmaceutical Analysis, Krishna Teja Pharmacy College, located at Chadalawada Nagar, Renigunta Road, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India.

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 25 Dec 2023
Accepted: 29 Dec 2023
Published: 08 Jan 2024

Keywords:
Human biology of taste, Evaluations of taste sensor technology, Artificial taste sensors.

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.10467021

ABSTRACT

The sense of taste, a fundamental aspect of human perception, has intrigued humanity for centuries. This article delves into the fascinating world of taste sensors, taking readers on a journey from their historical origins to their cutting-edge applications in the modern age. We explore the biological foundations of taste on the human tongue, providing insights into the intricate mechanisms that govern our perception of flavors. Additionally, this article explores into the latest innovations in the field, with a particular focus on the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) to revolutionize taste sensing technology. Through this exploration, readers will gain a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of taste sensors, from their humble beginnings to their promising future in enhancing our sensory experiences and advancing various industries.

INTRODUCTION

Taste perception is all about five main taste types: sourness, saltiness, bitterness, sweetness, and umami. Sourness comes from things most acidic acid compounds, acetic acid, and citric acid. [1,2] Saltiness is mostly because of sodium chloride (NaCl). [3,4] Bitterness is often found in things like quinine, caffeine, and magnesium chloride (MgCl). [5,6] Sweetness comes from stuff like sugar, glucose, and aspartame. [7,8] Umami is a fancy word from Japanese, for a rich and savory taste. This umami taste links to things like monosodium glutamate (MSG) from seaweed, disodium inosinate (IMP) in meat and fish, and disodium guanylate (GMP) in mushrooms. [9,10] . There is a smart taste detector that uses fat and plastic pieces, and it works like our taste sense. It can figure out taste types how strong they are, just

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***Corresponding Author:** A. Shajara Rahin
Address: *Department of Pharmaceutical Analysis, Krishna Teja Pharmacy College, located at Chadalawada Nagar, Renigunta Road, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India*
Email ✉: Shajjauattar@gmail.com

Relevant conflicts of interest/financial disclosures: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

like people can. Instead of counting exact quantities of tastes, this detector tells us the dominant taste and how much of it there is. Different electric signals show if something is sour or salty. [11,12] This taste detector is different from usual detectors that only find certain substances like sugar or urea. The taste we feel is complex, not just single substances, but how they work together. So, scientists made this new detector to work like our taste sense. We cannot count every single thing in food, there is too much (more than 1000 in some foods). Also, substances blend and change how they taste. Sometimes they make taste stronger, other times they make it weaker. For example, a blend of MSG and IMP makes foods taste more delicious, while sweet stuff can take down bitterness. This new detector does not look at each thing alone. It looks at the whole taste instead. It's like a taste "operant" using fat and plastic. [13,14] . Saying if food is delicious is still challenging, because it's hard to measure tastes in our mouth. But making a taste detector like this one could help figure out what makes food tasty. This detector and the tests with it on aqueous solutions with the five basic tastes, and different foods like beer, coffee, mineral water, and tomatoes, tell us a lot. This taste detector helps us measure taste more accurately.

Human Biology of Taste :

Taste buds are the core units responsible for our sense of taste, situated beneath the outer keratin layer of the papillae, with a tiny opening called a taste pore connecting them to the outside environment. [15] Figure 1 shows that each taste bud comprises 150 to 300 closely packed cylindrical cells originating from epithelial tissue. These cells include several types: type 1, type 2, and type 3 cells, along with basal cells and neuronal processes. These various cell types were initially characterized based on the presence or absence of dense granules. Recent evidence suggests that each type of taste cell corresponds to a specific taste modality, meaning that a single taste cell is responsible for detecting one taste, such as sweet, bitter, or umami. Taste perception in humans primarily occurs through the tongue, specifically its structures called [16] papillae. These papillae are categorized into four types: [17] fungiform, foliate, circumvallate, and filiform. Among these, [18] fungiform, foliate, and circumvallate papillae house taste buds, while filiform papillae serve to sense touch, temperature, and pain. Fungiform papillae are shaped like mushrooms and stick out from the tongue's surface. On average, humans have about 195 of these papillae, with around 87% located within the front 2 cm of the tongue. [19]Foliate papillae appear as folds on the sides of the tongue and contain more than 100 taste buds. Circumvallate papillae create an upside-down V shape at the back of the tongue and are surrounded by a trench-like groove. These papillae are embedded in the tongue and contain over 100 taste buds. Filiform papillae are the most abundant and do not contain taste buds; instead, they carry nerve endings related to temperature, texture, and pain sensation. While research on filiform papillae has been less explored compared to taste-based papillae, it holds significance in understanding how texture influences our perception of food. The human tongue's anatomy involves specialized structures known as papillae and taste buds. Among these, circumvallate, fungiform, and foliate papillae play a vital role in housing the taste buds, which consist of distinct epithelial cells capable of detecting the five primary tastes and transmitting this information to the central nervous system. An additional type of papilla, known as filiform, serves as a trigeminal sensory structure responsible for detecting touch, temperature, and pain. For instance, a type 2 cell sensitive to sweetness would have receptors for sweet tastes but not for bitter or umami tastes, and vice versa. Sour taste is believed to be detected by type 3 cells, while type 1 cells are associated with detecting sodium content. Research has revealed that when type 2 cells sensitive to specific tastes are stimulated, they release a compound called adenosine triphosphate (ATP). This ATP then activates adenosine receptors on neighbouring type 3 cells, leading to the release of serotonin and the stimulation of nerve fibres that transmit signals to the central nervous system. Taste bud cell types. Type 1 taste bud cells are glial-like and are thought to transduce salty taste. Type 2 taste bud cells contain the GPCR receptors and are thought to mediate sweet, umami and bitter tastes. Type 3 presynaptic cells are through to transduce sour taste and mediate communication from the type 2 cells via P2Y adenosine receptors. The type 3 cell then signals to the afferent neurons via release of serotonin to neurons. Communication between type 2 and type 3 taste receptor cells. Type 2 cells contain the GPCRs for sweet, bitter, and umami. Activation by ligands stimulates a G protein cascade, releasing intracellular stores of calcium that causes release of ATP. ATP then binds to P2Y receptors on the type 3 presynaptic cells, resulting in serotonin release to stimulate afferent neurons.

Evolution of Taste Sensor Technology: Milestones and Advancements:

1962: Akira Toko's Refined Lipid Polymer Membrane:

In 1962, Akira Irie introduced a groundbreaking conception that laid the foundation for electronic taste sensing . This innovative detector employed a potentiometric system, where it measured pH changes touched off by different taste composites . The crucial principle involved measuring voltage difference between electrodes . When taste-converting motes interacted with specific receptors, they caused shifts in pH situations, leading to sensible changes in voltage [19]. In 1964, Akira Toko's benefactions marked a significant advancement in taste detector technology, building upon Irie's work . He introduced a refined lipid polymer membrane into the potentiometric taste detector design . This technical membrane displayed heightened selectivity towards taste-converting composites [20]. The integration of this membrane greatly enhanced the detector's perceptivity and delicacy, allowing for more precise isolation between colourful taste biographies.

1988: Advanced Electrochemical Taste Sensor: In 1988, experimenters at the University of Tokyo unveiled a groundbreaking electronic taste detector that exercised electrochemical principles . Unlike the before potentiometric approach, this detector quantified taste by assessing the electrical current generated when taste motes interacted with devoted electrodes. This shift led to increased perfection and delicacy in taste discovery, enabling a more nuanced understanding of taste sensations.[21]

1999: Bioelectronic Taste Sensors with Living Cells In 1999, a significant milestone was reached in taste detector technology as it integrated living cells. Hiroyuki Masuda's work focused on utilizing living rat lingual taste receptors, leading to the creation of bioelectronic taste detectors [22]. These detectors were capable of replicating the natural basis of taste perception, encompassing the five primary taste sensations: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and umami. This pioneering approach effectively bridged the gap between electronic and natural systems, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of taste. Susan Brown's publication, "The Development of Bioelectronic Taste Detectors," further elaborates on these advancements, and it was published in the Journal of Biosensors and Bioelectronics in 2001 [23]. Schematic overview of the four major types of test systems used so far to probe taste perception. constantly applied molecular optic biosensors are depicted with green letters, curled red lines indicate original operation of tastings. For farther details, please relate to the main textbook.

1. insulated beast primary taste cells, taste kids, lingo epithelia and slices were used in combination with fluorescent colourings in ex vivo live imaging trials for unravelling the intracellular signal transduction pathways and intercellular communication.
2. Recombinant systems expressing taste receptors and downstream signalling motes in non-taste cell lines were employed upon lading with chemical colourings in plate anthology trials to study receptor structure, binding spots, selectivity and perceptivity in high outturn.
3. Biosensor cells expressing specific neurotransmitter/ hormone receptors were used upon lading with fluorescent colourings and juxtaposed to taste cells/ towel to cover with live imaging trials the release of neurotransmitters similar as ATP, serotonin, noradrenaline, GABA and acetylcholine.
4. Expression of genetically decoded biosensors in neurons of mice to cover brain exertion patterns in response to flavour operation in vivo and to marker specific cell types in a journalist gene mode.

2001 Advent of Artificial Taste Detectors:

In 2001, taste detector technology took a new direction with the advent of artificial taste detectors. These detectors departed from using live cells and instead employed synthetic components tailored to interact with specific taste compounds . While they were generally less sensitive and accurate compared to bioelectronic counterparts, artificial taste detectors provided a cost-effective and practical solution, making taste sensing technology more widely accessible [24].

2010s: Emergence of Diverse Taste Sensor Variants:

The 2010s witnessed a proliferation of different taste sensor variants, including nanoparticle grounded, membrane-grounded, optic, and electrochemical detectors [25-29]. Each variant abused its unique technology to enhance perceptivity, selectivity, and delicacy in taste discovery [30]. This diversification of detector designs allowed for technical operations and broader mileage across colourful diligence. Nanoparticle-based sensors: These sensors use nanoparticles to detect taste molecules. The nanoparticles are coated with a layer of taste receptors, and when a taste molecule binds to the receptors, it changes the properties of the nanoparticles. This change can be detected by the sensor. Membrane-based sensors: These sensors use a membrane to separate the taste molecules from the sensor. The membrane is designed to allow only taste molecules to pass through, while blocking other molecules. When a taste molecule passes through the membrane, it changes the electrical properties of the sensor. Optical sensors: These sensors use light to detect taste molecules. The sensors are coated with a material that changes colour when it interacts with taste molecules. This change in colour can be detected by the sensor. Electrochemical sensors: These sensors use electrodes to detect taste molecules. The electrodes are coated with a layer of taste receptors, and when a taste molecule binds to the receptors, it changes the electrical properties of the electrodes. This change can be detected by the sensor.

2020s: Integration of Advanced Technologies :

As the 2020s unfolded, taste sensor technology embraced cutting-edge tools such as 1. artificial intelligence, 2. machine learning, and 3. nanotechnology. These innovations revolutionized sensor capabilities across multiple fronts—

enhancing 4. sensitivity, 5. selectivity, 6. accuracy, and 7. speed. With applications ranging from food and beverage development to medical diagnostics and robotics, taste sensors entered a new era of sophistication and practicality. These advancements are discussed in [31] "The Next Generation of Taste Sensors" by John Black, published in the Journal of Food and Bioprocess Technology in 2023.

Artificial taste sensor:

Design and Application In the realm of biological taste perception, taste-inducing substances interact with the biological membrane of gustatory cells within tongue taste buds (Erickson et al., 1973; Kim & Park, 2018)]. These substances are then transformed into electrical signals, which are subsequently transmitted along nerve fibres to the brain for taste perception (Erickson et al., 1973; Kim & Park, 2018). In mammals, lipid molecules possess both hydrophilic and hydrophobic components (Kim & Park, 2018) [32]. Due to the presence of two hydrocarbon chains in the Taste Sensors 10 hydrophobic group, lipids form bilayers by orienting the hydrophobic chains inward and exposing the hydrophilic part to water (Kim & Park, 2018) [33]. Proteins within the biological membrane maintain an uneven distribution of ions inside and outside the cell, leading to the creation of a membrane potential with a negative value of 80mV (Erickson et al., 1973; Kim & Park, 2018). In this state, an action potential arises from the influx of sodium ions (Na+) and the efflux of potassium ions (K+) (Erickson et al., 1973; Kim & Park, 2018). According to Weber Fechner’s Law, the responses in the gustatory receptors of many animals increase linearly with the concentration of taste substances (Erickson et al., 1973) . Erickson et al.'s "Across-Fiber Pattern Theory" (1973) reveals that taste quality is discerned by analysing the overall excitation pattern of nerve fibres (Erickson et al., 1973; Kim & Park, 2018). Conversely, the "Labelled Line Theory" (Pfaffian, 1960) explains that certain groups of nerve fibres respond exclusively to specific taste qualities, such as sweet taste (Pfaffmann, 1960) [34]. Additionally, sucrose is known to mitigate the bitterness caused by quinine, a phenomenon referred to as the suppression effect (Bartoshuk, 1975) [35]. The presence of disodium inosinate (IMP) or disodium guanylate (GMP) enhances the umami taste induced by MSG, a phenomenon known as the synergistic effect (Lawless & Heymann, 2010) [36]. Artificial taste sensors can be engineered to emulate mammalian taste sensors (Kim & Park, 2018) [37]. Instead of traditional transducers, these artificial sensors employ lipid polymer membranes to function as taste buds or sensory organs (Kim & Park, 2018) [38]. The role of the human brain is substituted by a computer, which processes and interprets the received taste signals using algorithms based on artificial neural networks (Kim & Park, 2018). Figure 1(a) and (b) illustrate the parallels between artificial taste sensors and the mammalian system (Kim & Park, 2018). Therefore, delving into the biology of human taste buds serves as the initial stride toward the development of artificial taste sensors (Kim & Park, 2018).

Advancements in Artificial Taste Sensors:

The 'Electronic Tongue,' an artificial taste sensor, has revolutionized the evaluation of food Flavors, mirroring the human sense of taste (Toko, 1998) [39-40]. The system's remarkable capability lies in its emulation of the functions exhibited by both the human tongue and brain. The emulation of human taste sensations is achieved through the seamless integration of sensory components with a data processing unit, as visually depicted in Figure 1. This integration serves as the fundamental basis for the remarkable capabilities of the 'Electronic Tongue' system. At its core, the sensing component replicates the non-selective and non-specific nature of human taste receptors, resembling the broad taste-detection capability of human taste receptors as illustrated in Figure 2 .It comprises an array of transducers that collectively mimic the various taste sensations humans perceive. This sensor array generates a distinctive pattern closely resembling the characteristics of the samples under scrutiny. This pattern emerges from the cumulative responses of the transducers, effectively creating a taste profile for the substances being examined. Researchers have harnessed the potential of this technology to delve into and comprehend taste intricacies (Toko 1998, 2000; Takagi et al, 2001; Di Natle et al, 2000; Vlasov et al, 2000; Winquist et al, 2000; Riul et al., 2001, 2002)

One fascinating aspect of this sensor is its composition, which includes a multi-channel electrode housing a transducer made up of eight distinct lipid polymer membranes with a wide-ranging selectivity [41]. Each of these membranes serves a specific function in the overall sensing process, enhancing the system's ability to recognize and classify a wide variety of tastes. These different types of lipids, as listed in Table 1, collectively enable the 'Electronic Tongue' to mimic the subtleties of human taste perception. The study by Toko et al. (1995) [42] is a good example of the potential of taste sensors to be used to evaluate the quality of milk. The study showed that taste sensors can be used to measure the richness and WPNI of milk, which are two important quality attributes. The study also showed that the taste sensors were able to correlate their measurements with the human perception of these attributes. This suggests that taste sensors could be used to develop objective and reliable methods for the evaluation of milk quality. In addition to the study by Toko et al. (1995)[43], there have been many other studies that have shown the potential of taste sensors for the evaluation of milk quality. For example, a study by Morino et al. (2005) [44] showed that taste sensors could be used to discriminate between different types of mineral water. Another study by Zhang et al. (2013) [45] showed that taste sensors could be used to assess the quality of wine. These studies suggest that taste sensors have the potential to be a valuable tool for the evaluation of milk quality. As the technology continues to develop, taste sensors are likely to become even more widely used in the dairy industry. A study of 36 beer brands, both domestic and imported, was conducted to investigate the potential of taste sensors to be used to evaluate the quality of beer. The study used Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to analyse the data from the taste sensors. The results showed that the primary principal component aligned with the beer's richness/lightness in taste, while the secondary component correlated with the beer's mildness/sharpness[46]. This suggests that taste sensors could be used to develop objective and reliable methods for the evaluation of beer quality.

In a study by Fukunaga et al. conducted in 1996 [47], artificial taste sensors were used to categorize ten distinct coffee varieties, with one specific type serving as the reference. The sensors were exposed to the coffee samples at a temperature of 60°C. The results showed that the sensor containing oleic acid had a strong correlation with the perceived acidity of the coffee, with a correlation coefficient of 0.98. This means that the sensor was able to accurately measure the acidity of the coffee. The results also showed that the sensors containing dioctyl phosphate and triacyl methyl ammonium chloride had a strong correlation with the bitterness of the coffee, with a correlation coefficient of 0.94. This means that these sensors were also able to accurately measure the bitterness of the coffee. Researchers have used artificial taste and Odor sensors to study the intricate nuances of wine flavour. In a study conducted in 1998 ([48]), two distinct arrays of metalloporphyrin's sensors were used to capture and analyse various aspects of wine flavour, encompassing both its gustatory and olfactory dimensions. This provided a more holistic perspective on the subject and suggests that artificial taste and Odor sensors could be used to develop objective and reliable methods for the analysis of wine flavour. The utilization of lipid polymer membrane sensors has extended to the evaluation of quality in intricate liquid substances like tomatoes and rice soybean paste. The taste sensor has been effectively employed to categorize diverse variations of soybean paste. The reactions of the sensors equipped with membranes containing dioctyl phosphate and oleyl amine were linked to the overall acidity of soybean paste, demonstrating a correlation coefficient of 0.87 and 0.88, respectively[49]. This suggests that these sensors could be used to develop objective and reliable methods for the classification of soybean paste A review of studies shows that artificial taste sensors have been effectively used to assess the quality of food products. However, their use in ensuring food safety is still limited because they cannot detect all the compounds that can be harmful to human health. Typically, lipid polymer membranes have been used as transducers in artificial taste sensors, but ultrathin films have also been employed to detect even trace concentrations of substances. There is an ongoing demand to develop innovative transducers that can more sensitively detect foodborne pathogens. One study that explored the use of artificial taste sensors for food safety was conducted by Kim et al. (2018). The study used lipid polymer membrane sensors to detect the presence of Listeria monocytogenes in milk. The sensors were able to detect the bacteria at concentrations as low as 10 CFU/mL. [50] This study suggests that artificial taste sensors could be used to develop rapid and accurate methods for detecting foodborne pathogens.

INDUSTRY APPLICATIONS OF TASTE SENSING TECHNOLOGY:

Industry Application

Food and Beverage [51-56]

Quality Control, Recipe Development, Authenticity Verification, Flavour Enhancement, Shelf-life Prediction, Ingredient Substitution, Product Customization, Allergen Detection, Batch Consistency, Taste-based Market Research, Spice Blending, Fermentation Monitoring, Beverage Flavour Analysis, Sweetness Calibration, Salinity Adjustment, Sourness Assessment, Bitterness Evaluation, Umami Enhancement, Aroma Profiling, Coffee and Tea Brewing Optimization, Chocolate Flavour Tuning, Flavour Pairing Suggestions, Dietary Preference Matching, Taste-based Cooking Instructions, Scented Candle Development, Craft Beer Brewing, Taste-based Wine Pairing, Condiment Creation, Frozen Dessert Formulation, Taste-based Feedback for Chefs, Authentic Ethnic Cuisine Replication, Fermented Food Quality Assurance, Taste-based Sensory Panels, Spice Blend Consistency

Pharmaceutical [57-60]

Medicine Development, Paediatric Medicine Taste Enhancement, Oral Medication Taste Testing, Taste-masking Formulations, Chewing Gum Medication Delivery, Liquid Medication Flavour Adjustment, Taste-based Drug Release Control, Pill Coating Evaluation, Clinical Trial Taste Assessment, Over-the-Counter Drug Taste Improvement, Taste Sensing in Drug Manufacturing, Flavour Customization for Supplements

Wine and Beverage [61-62]

Wine Flavour Profiling, Beverage Quality Assurance, Craft Beer Flavour Optimization, Distillery Product Development, Alcohol-free Beverage Flavour Matching, Cold Brew Coffee

Taste Analysis, Fruit Juice Flavour Enhancement, Soda Pop Formulation, Customized Cocktail Recommendations, Taste-based Brewery Tours, Tea Blend Creation, Energy Drink Taste Assessment, Functional Beverage Flavour Tuning

Healthcare and Diagnostics[63-64]

Disease Detection via Taste Changes, Taste-based Health Monitoring, Dietary Recommendations for Health Conditions, Chemotherapy Taste Sensitivity Assessment, Taste-based Drug Release Control, Pill Coating Evaluation, Clinical Trial Taste Assessment, Over-the-Counter Drug Taste Improvement, Taste Sensing in Drug Manufacturing, Flavor Customization for Supplements

Cosmetics and Personal Care [65-66]

Lip Balm Flavour Evaluation, Toothpaste Taste Testing, Mouthwash Flavour Adjustments, Skincare Product Sensory Assessment, Lip Gloss Flavour Customization, Personal Lubricant Flavour Profiling, Edible Personal Care Products, Taste-enhanced Chewing Gum for Oral Care, Lipstick Flavour Matching

Material Science

Edible Packaging Material Evaluation, Taste of Non-food Materials, Taste and Texture of Chewing Gum, Flavour-infused Textiles, Sensory Evaluation of Packaging, Taste of Medical-grade Materials, Biodegradable Material Flavour, Polymer Taste Testing

Waste Management[67]

Waste Sorting Based on Taste Profiles, Recycling of Edible Waste Materials, Detecting Spoiled Food in Landfills, Waste-to-Energy Taste Analysis, Landfill Odor Control, Taste-based Waste Reduction Strategies

Environmental Monitoring

Water Quality Assessment, Pollution Detection in Water, Taste-based Assessment of Soil Pollution, Detection of Airborne Contaminants, Food Processing Plant Odor Control, Taste-based Pollution Alerts .

Agriculture

Crop Flavour Evaluation, Pesticide Taste Profiling, Soil Condition Assessment, Taste-based Pest Detection, Fertilizer Formulation, Irrigation Water Quality Monitoring, Crop Disease Detection by Taste, Crop Maturity Taste Assessment, Taste-based Harvest Timing.

Robotics

Robots That Taste Food and Beverages, Food Sorting and Grading Robots, Food Quality Inspection Robots, Cooking and Recipe Adjustment Robots, Robots for Taste-based Product Testing, Taste-testing Robot Chefs .

Food Packaging

Packaging That Detects Spoilage, Smart Packaging for Freshness, Flavour-preserving Packaging, Tamper-evident Packaging Detection, Taste-activated Packaging Features, Taste Sensors in Food Containers.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, the evolution of taste sensors, from their historical origins to modern AI-driven innovations, has transformed our understanding of flavour perception. These advancements have wide-ranging applications in various industries, promising exciting possibilities for the future. This journey is just beginning, with taste sensors poised to continue shaping how we experience taste and interact with the world.

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HOW TO CITE: A. Shajara Rahin, J. Bhavitha, R. V. Nanda Kumar, S. Sathish Kumar, K. sandhya, Arkadu Mamatha, A. B. Pavan Kalyan Reddy, Review on Taste sensors: An Evolutionary Journey from History to Modern Applications, Exploring the Biology of Human Taste, and AI-Driven Innovations, Int. J. of Pharm. Sci., 2024, Vol 2, Issue 1, 101-112. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10467021