



Research and Development Pilot-plant process optimization: Validation of alternative filling processes

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To Sevinç

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Research and Development process optimization: Validation of alternative filling processes in pilot-plant

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Abstract

This report documents the work performed during an internship at The Coca-Cola Company, Brussels under the program Erasmus+. This internship constitutes the last step to complete a BSc on Biological and Food Engineering at the Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco.

The work developed aimed at the quality and standardization assurance of the final product, particularly in the production of beverages containing fruit pieces or pulp and on small scale production of carbonated beverages. The production time optimization was simultaneously targeted.

The report commences firstly with the characterization of the company and introduces key definitions on the soft drink industry followed by a brief description of the tasks assigned in the beginning of the internship. It subsequently reports, in detail, the results obtained in two of the assigned tasks.

On the first task, it was concluded that the time needed for the manual dosing of fruit bits and pulps into bottles would be reduced by 80% through the acquisition of an equipment capable of doing it semi-automatically. The automated dosing has other advantages associated, as for example the enhancement of uniformity between bottles and the possibility to use the dosing equipment for filling in some of the production of still beverages in the pilot plant. The search for an equipment capable of performing this task was fruitful and an assessment was conducted in order to test the equipment precision and accuracy. The results showed that the equipment is precise, but the ratio solid/liquid was not considered the ideal. Nevertheless, it was demonstrated that the method of stirring of the hopper of the equipment during the tests was inadequate and, thereby, the cause of ratio uniformity lack between samples and two ideal ways of stirring were found. The acquisition of the electric dosing unit was advised.

On the second task reported in this work, it was demonstrated that the use of a POM dispenser for carbonated beverage bottle filling presents several advantages when compared with the currently used system of Figals. The ergonomics and higher capacity are its major strong points. It was demonstrated that the equipment is capable of mixing carbonated water with syrups at a steady flow, and precise ratio. It was also determined that the temperature of the syrup before dispensing influences the final carbonation of the product. However, the tests conducted showed that the POM dispenser cannot fully replace the Figal system due to its carbonation limited range. The equipment was consequently validated for the filling of carbonated soft drinks targeting a carbonation level of 2.6 ± 0.2 (V/V).

Keywords

Soft drinks, Carbonated beverages, Fruit bits, Bottle filling, Standardization.

Optimização de processos em pesquisa e desenvolvimento: Validação de processos de enchimento alternativos em planta piloto

André Filipe Ferreira Fonseca

Resumo

Este relatório documenta o trabalho realizado durante um estágio na *The Coca-Cola Company*, Bruxelas sob o programa Erasmus+. Este estágio constitui a última etapa para a conclusão de uma licenciatura em engenharia Biológica e Alimentar no Instituto Politécnico de Castelo Branco.

O trabalho desenvolvido visou a garantia de qualidade e padronização do produto final, particularmente na produção de bebidas contendo pedaços de fruta ou polpa e na dispensa de bebidas carbonatadas em produções de pequena escala. A optimização do tempo de produção foi simultaneamente visada.

O relatório é iniciado com a caracterização da empresa e introduz definições chave sobre a indústria de refrigerantes, seguida por uma breve descrição das tarefas atribuídas no início do estágio. Posteriormente relata em detalhe os resultados obtidos em duas das tarefas atribuídas.

Na primeira tarefa, concluiu-se que o tempo necessário para a dosagem manual de pedaços de fruta e polpas em garrafas seria reduzido em 80% mediante a aquisição de um equipamento capaz de executar esta tarefa semi-automaticamente. A dosagem automatizada tem outras vantagens associadas como, por exemplo, o incremento de uniformidade entre garrafas e a possibilidade de usar o equipamento de dosagem para o enchimento, em algumas das produções, de bebidas não carbonatadas na fábrica-piloto. A procura de um equipamento capaz de realizar esta tarefa foi frutífera e uma avaliação foi conduzida a fim de testar a sua precisão e exactidão. Os resultados demonstraram que o equipamento é preciso, mas a relação sólido/líquido não foi considerada ideal. No entanto, foi demonstrado que o método de agitação do depósito do equipamento durante os testes foi inadequado, sendo a causa da falta de uniformidade entre amostras. Subsequentemente, duas formas ideais de agitação foram encontradas. A aquisição da unidade eléctrica de dosagem foi aconselhada.

Na segunda tarefa relatada neste trabalho, demonstrou-se que a utilização de um distribuidor POM para o enchimento de garrafas com bebidas carbonatadas apresenta diversas vantagens quando comparado com o sistema actualmente utilizado de Figals. A ergonomia e maior capacidade são os seus principais pontos fortes. Demonstrou-se que o equipamento é capaz de misturar água carbonatada com xaropes a um rácio e a um fluxo constante. Também se determinou que a temperatura do xarope antes da dispensa influencia a carbonatação final do produto. No entanto, os testes realizados demonstraram que o distribuidor POM não pode substituir totalmente o sistema Figals devido ao seu limitado alcance de carbonatação. O equipamento foi conseqüentemente validado para o enchimento de bebidas gaseificadas visando um nível de carbonatação de $2,6 \pm 0,2$ (V/V).

Palavras chave

Refrigerantes, Bebidas carbonatadas, Pedaços de fruta, Enchimento de garrafas, Padronização.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Key concepts.....	2
1.1.2 Brix	2
1.2 Fruit bits in the industry.....	3
1.3 Assigned tasks.....	4
2. Semi-automatic fruit pulp and bits bottle filling system	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 Requirements.....	5
2.3 Equipment.....	5
2.4 Justification of acquisition.....	6
2.5 Equipment test	7
2.5.1 Accuracy	8
2.5.2 Bits and pulp consistency	10
2.6 Evaluation of slurry homogenization options.....	11
2.7 Conclusions 1	16
3. Validation of Lancer Delta III POM dispenser for small-scale productions.....	17
3.1 Introduction.....	17
3.2 First phase of tests	18
3.3 Second phase of tests	22
3.3.1 General notes.....	23
3.3.2 Carbonation level.....	23
3.3.3 Brix	25
3.3.4 Acidity	27
3.3.5 Third phase of tests.....	29
3.3.5.1 Fanta test.....	29
3.3.5.2 Final test	30
3.4 Conclusions 2	32
References	33
Annex 1- Pom dispenser SOP.....	34

Figure index

Figure 1- Time consumption difference between manual fill and equipment assisted.	7
Figure 2- Empty bottles and flasks sent for the first test.	7
Figure 3- Filled drums and bag sent for the first test.	7
Figure 4- Photograph of all the bottles side by side, separated by group.	8
Figure 5- Bits consistency evaluation using a 20 Mesh screen (Samples PE#01; OR#02; OR#07).	10
Figure 6- Pulp consistency comparison between the dispensed and the control sample (PE#01)	10
Figure 7- Impellers used on the first test and diagram.	11
Figure 8- Bottles filled in the first tests, with high velocity (400 rpm).	11
Figure 9- Bottles filled in the first tests, with low velocity (50 rpm).	12
Figure 10- Two level impeller and improvised fruit dispenser.	12
Figure 11- Effect of adding baffles in a hopper.	13
Figure 12- Bottles filled from the hopper with added baffles, with two level of paddles.	13
Figure 13- Hopper with helicoid shaped impeller and combination with baffles.	14
Figure 14- Triangular shaped paddle, combination of triangular shaped paddle with upper level paddle and diagram of the composition in the stirrer.	14
Figure 15- Bottles filled from the hopper with a 50% slurry agitated in the bottom with a triangular shaped paddle.	15
Figure 16- Bottles filled from the hopper with a 50% slurry agitated in the bottom with a triangular shaped paddle and an added upper paddle.	15
Figure 17- Preparation steps before the dispensing of 20L of carbonated beverage using the Figal system.	17
Figure 18- Preparation steps before the dispensing of an unlimited amount of carbonated beverage using the POM dispenser system.	17
Figure 19- Carbonation level (V/V) comparison between heavy and light usage.	18
Figure 20- Temperature progression of the dispensed carbonated water.	18
Figure 21- Graphic representation of the flow (ml/s) of high and low pressure.	19
Figure 22- CO ₂ level progression comparison between bottles filled directly and from a beaker.	20
Figure 23- Carbonation progression: Comparison between direct sampling and sampling from cup into bottle.	20
Figure 23- Carbonation progression: Comparison between direct sampling and sampling from cup into bottle.	21
Figure 25- Graphic representation of the CO ₂ measurements (Vol/L) per syrup tested on the POM dispenser and on the Figal system.	24
Figure 26- Graphic representation of the number of outliers and difference between the target and average Brix per trial.	25
Figure 27- Graphic representation of the number of outliers and difference between the target and average Brix per trial.	26

Figure 23- Carbonation progression: Comparison between direct sampling and sampling from cup into bottle.	26
Figure 29- Graphic representation of the number of outliers and difference between the target and average Acidity (%) per trial tested on the POM dispenser.	27
Figure 30- Graphic representation of the number of outliers and difference between the target and average Acidity (%) per trial (Extended test).	28
Figure 30- Graphic representation of the number of outliers and difference between the target and average Acidity (%) per trial (Extended test).	28
Figure 32- Graphic representation of the CO ₂ measurements (Vol/L) per Fanta version tested on the POM dispenser (Fanta test).	30
Figure 33- Graphic representation of the CO ₂ measurements (Vol/L) per version tested on the POM dispenser (Final test).	31

Table list

Table 1- Comparison between the two equipments	6
Table 2- Set of samples sent to perform the first test on the equipment.....	7
Table 3- Obtained difference between the weight of the bottles before and after the test (PE#01; OR#02; OR#07).	9
Table 4- Bottle pulp and bits content weight (PE#01; OR#02; OR#07).	9
Table 5- Formulation of the syrups tested at a low pump pressure.....	22
Table 6- Formulation of the syrups tested at a high pump pressure.	22
Table 7- CO ₂ measurements (Vol/L) per syrup tested on the POM dispenser and on the Figal system.	23
Table 8- Brix measurements per syrup tested on the POM dispenser.....	25
Table 9- Brix measurements of the syrup 4 tested on the POM dispenser and on the Figal system (Extended test).....	26
Table 10- Acidity (%) measurements per syrup tested on the POM dispenser.	27
Table 11- Acidity (%) measurements of the syrup 4 tested on the POM dispenser and on the Figal system (Extended test).	28
Table 12- CO ₂ measurements (Vol/L) per Fanta version tested on the POM dispenser.	29
Table 13- CO ₂ measurements (Vol/L) per syrup version tested on the POM dispenser.	30

