

Peer Review

Review of: "Ethnobotanical Documentation of Yerba Mate in Syria"

Hany Akeel Al-hussaniy¹

1. University of Baghdad, Iraq

This article represents a valuable and timely ethnobotanical contribution documenting the cultural integration of Yerba Mate in Syria, particularly its unique blending with local medicinal herbs. The strengths of the study include a relatively large sample size (n=430), clear documentation of regional practices, and the quantitative use of the Relative Frequency of Citation (RFC) index to rank herbal additives. The cultural dimension is well described, and the manuscript successfully highlights Syria as a major consumer of yerba mate outside South America. However, to improve scientific rigor and increase suitability for higher-tier journals in Food Science or Ethnopharmacology, several aspects require refinement: (1) the sampling strategy (snowball purposive sampling) should be more critically discussed in terms of selection bias and representativeness; (2) statistical analysis is largely descriptive—adding inferential statistics (e.g., regional comparisons, age–consumption correlations, gender-based differences, logistic regression for predictors of herb addition) would substantially strengthen the analytical depth; (3) the RFC formula appears incorrectly defined ($RFC = FC/N$ where N should represent total informants, not total citations—this needs clarification); (4) the health-benefit section is overly narrative and should be more critically synthesized, clearly distinguishing between in vitro, animal, and human evidence; (5) claims about synergistic effects between mate and added herbs remain speculative and should be framed cautiously unless supported by experimental data; (6) the discussion of safety should be expanded, especially regarding caffeine load, high-temperature consumption risks, herb–drug interactions, and standardization of herbal mixtures; and (7) language tightening and removal of minor repetitions would improve readability. Overall, the manuscript is culturally significant and publishable, but it would benefit from stronger methodological transparency, deeper statistical analysis, clearer differentiation between perception and evidence-based effects, and a more critical scientific discussion to elevate it from descriptive ethnography to robust ethnopharmacological research.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.