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QUALITY OF TOMATO STORED UNDER CONTROLLED ATMOSPHERE CONDITION BUILD BY DIFFUSION CHANNEL SYSTEM

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A study was conducted to extend the shelf-life of tomato by diffusion channel system. Diffusion channel length 60, 120, 180 and 240 mm and diameter 3, 6, 9 and 12 mm were tested. The storage chambers of two liters capacity made of polyethylene tetrachloride were used for conducting the experiments. Tomato samples at breaker stage were taken in each chamber and stored at 10, 20 and 30 °C. Quality characteristics such as firmness, TSS, titratable acidity, total sugars, ascorbic acid, lycopene and colour change (ΔE) were tested before and after storage. The stored tomato attained market acceptability after 40, 32 and 23 days at 10, 20 and 30 °C respectively under diffusion channel system but 14 days under control. Maximum firmness of 90-94 N, titratable acidity as high as 0.46-0.48%, ascorbic acid content as low as 22.97 mg/100 g, lycopene formation as low as 2.58-2.62 mg/100 g, minimum ΔE of 29.87, TSS of 5.32-5.87 °Brix and total sugar content of 3.31-3.71 g/100 g were recorded in chambers with diffusion channel length 180 mm and diameter 9 mm at 10 and 20 °C. Firmness, acidity and ascorbic acid were found significant ($p \leq 0.05$) by temperature, channel length and diameter. Total sugars and lycopene content had a significant difference with temperature and channel diameter. TSS had a significant effect on temperature.

Keywords: Tomato, Diffusion channel, Temperature, Storage, Quality characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Tomato (*Lycopersicon esculentum Mill*) is a wonderful vegetable embraced incredible health promoting properties such as vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, carotenoids, fiber, fat and protein. It has good source of lycopene that has been proved in decreased risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer including breast and prostate cancer (Agarwal and Rao, 2000). Since it is highly perishable in nature encounters several problems in its transportation, storage and marketing. It has been reported that the loss of 20-50% between harvesting and consumption of fresh tomato in tropical countries (Pila *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, an increase in postharvest life is really desirable to reduce losses during supply chain. Major physiological activity in the postharvest life of a produce is respiration. Respiration is considered to be a key process which brings physiological disorders such as ripening, senescence, decay, degradation of chlorophyll and subsequently deterioration in the normal course of time. Respiration involving the consumption of oxygen (O_2) for oxidative break-down of organic components into simple molecules such as carbon dioxide (CO_2), water, with concurrent release of energy and other intermediates which can be used by the cell for synthetic reactions (Kader *et al.*, 1989). The rate of physiological disorders can be slowed in low temperature and modified atmospheric condition. Modified atmosphere can be achieved by the natural interplay between respiration rate of the produce and transfer of gases through the storage that lead to an atmosphere richer in CO_2 and poorer in O_2. This atmosphere can potentially reduce the rate of respiration

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of the produce (Zagory and Kader, 1988; Mahajan and Goswami, 2001; and Fonseca *et al.*, 2002). Increased shelf life by alteration of gas compositions have been reported by several researchers for various commodities (Klieber *et al.*, 1996; Sozzi *et al.*, 1999; Akbudak *et al.*, 2004; Ramayya *et al.*, 2011; Kudachikar *et al.*, 2011; Vunnam *et al.*, 2012; and Majidi *et al.*, 2012). Polymeric films, used as packaging materials for Modified Atmosphere Packaging (MAP) are limited to gas permeability. In general, the fresh produce in MAP consumes O_2 and liberates CO_2 results absence of O_2 that leads to anaerobic respiration. It accelerates senescence, off-flavour and spoilage of produce due to fermentation (Kader *et al.*, 1989). The limitations associated with polymeric films could be solved by use of perforations which are related to diffusion channel.

Diffusion channel system works based on the principle of Fick's first law of gas diffusion. It states that the gas flux moves from a region of higher concentration to a region of lower concentration, with a magnitude that is proportional to the concentration gradient. Diffusion channel is a hollow tube fitted in an airtight storage chamber in which fresh produce is stored. Diffusion of gases takes place through the tube due to the concentration gradient between inside and outside the storage chamber. This creates a modified atmosphere inside the chamber which is beneficial for the storage (Baugerod, 1980). As a result of respiratory activity of stored produce, concentration of O_2 will be decreased and CO_2 increased. This creates a concentration gradient between inside and outside the chamber. Due to the concentration gradient, O_2 diffuses from outside to inside and CO_2 diffuses from inside to outside the chamber through the tube. Thereby a steady-state level of gases is maintained that depends on mass of the produce, rate of respiration and rate of diffusion of the gases. The rate of diffusion of gases is dependent on the length and cross-sectional area of the channel/tube (Ratti *et al.*, 1998; and Stewart *et al.*, 2005). The gas composition in the storage chambers could easily be altered by varying the dimensions of the diffusion channels. Diffusion channel is used due to its extreme structural simplicity, which provides great flexibility in the design of storage chamber and the materials used are considerably less expensive. The quality of stored produce is well maintained. Keeping in view of the above perspectives, the investigation on enhancing the shelf life of tomato under diffusion channel system has been undertaken. Quality of tomato under diffusion channel system which is a part of this investigation has been discussed in this paper.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample Preparation

Fresh mature tomato of local popular variety '*Roma*' in breaker stage of ripeness free from cracks and bruises were obtained from the local field at Santiniketan, West Bengal (India). Breaker stage is a definite break in color from green to tannish-yellow, green with orange locular tissue and pink on not more than 10% of the surface (Sammi and Masud, 2007). The harvested tomatoes were graded manually and washed in chlorinated water concentration of 100 ppm to remove adhering dirt on their surface.

Experimental Setup

Diffusion channel made of fiber glass comprising inner diameter of 3, 6, 9 and 12 mm and length of 60, 120, 180 and 240 mm were selected based on the information available in the previous study (Ratti *et al.*, 1994; and Stewart *et al.*, 2005). The storage temperatures viz., 10, 20 and 30 ºC were selected. The storage chambers of two liters capacity made of polyethylene tetrachloride (PET) were used for conducting the experiments. The experimental setup was fabricated in such a way that four holes were provided on the lid. A silicon septum was fitted in the first hole to facilitate the withdrawal of gas sample from the chamber for analysis. Brass nipples with rubber gaskets were connected in second and third holes and tightened with nuts. A rubber tube length of 200 mm were connected to these nipples and closed by pinch clips after purging gas. In the fourth hole, a conical shape hallow rubber cark was fitted. The diffusion channel required size was rigidly fixed in the rubber cark. The joints were crammed by melted paraffin wax to secure air tightness. The absence of air bubble ensured the air tightness of diffusion chambers. Tomato samples of 800 ± 20 g were taken in each storage chamber and kept in selected temperature. The temperature was maintained throughout the storage period.

Bio-Chemical Analysis

To distinguish the relative changes in quality during storage under diffusion channel system, the bio-chemical characteristics such as Total Soluble Solids (TSS), titratable acidity, total sugars, ascorbic acid and lycopene were determined in the laboratory after storage and before storage at breaker stage. The bio-chemical characteristics of fresh harvested fully ripe tomato also were determined to compare with the stored tomato. Total Soluble Solids (TSS) can be used for estimation of concentration of sugar and it can be expressed in degree Brix. TSS in degree Brix was directly measured using Abbe hand refractometer (Model NI; ATAGO, Japan) by placing a drop of supernatant on the prism of refractometer. Total sugars, titratable acidity, ascorbic acid and lycopene were determined as per the methods described by Ranganna (2008).

Texture Analysis

Firmness of fruit referred to as the degree of softening. It was measured in terms of force (Newton) required to penetrate into the fruit through skin. The fruit penetrometer (Model FT 327) fitted with a cylindrical plunger probe of 11 mm diameter made of stainless steel was used for measurement of firmness. Average of two forces at two diametrically opposite positions on the circumference of each tomato was taken. The penetrating force depends on the softness of fruit tissues and it is directly proportional to the firmness. For safety point of view, the penetrating force should be more (Sozzi *et al.*, 1999).

Surface Colour Analysis

The surface colour of the tomato was measured using Minolta colorimeter (Minolta Co. Ltd., Japan) under hunter lab system with observation angle of 45° (Helga *et al.*, 1999). It provides a reading in terms of L^*, a^*, and b^* which describes chromaticity. L^* denotes measurement of luminance (lightness) on a scale ranging from zero (black) to 100 (white); a^* denotes degree of greenness when negative and degree of redness when positive; b^* denotes degree of blueness when negative and degree of yellowness when positive. These three values were recorded at three points on the circumference of the whole tomato fruits and the colour was computed by average of three measurements. The colour measurements were made on tomato before and after storage on three samples from each treatment. Reference colour values for the fresh samples, before storage (L_f^*, a_f^*, b_f^*) and colour values from stored samples (L_s^*, a_s^*, b_s^*) were employed in calculating the colour change (ÄE), as defined by McGuire (1992) and Vunnam *et al.* (2012):

$$\Delta E = \sqrt{(L_f^* - L_s^*)^2 + (a_f^* - a_s^*)^2 + (b_f^* - b_s^*)^2}$$

where,

ΔE = total change in colour

L_f = brightness value of fresh produce before storage

L_s = brightness value of stored produce

a_f = hue value of fresh produce before storage

a_s = hue value of stored produce

b_f = chroma value of fresh produce before storage

b_s = chroma value of stored produce

Visual Quality Index (VQI)

Visual observations were made by a jury of five persons to evaluate the overall market acceptability of the tomato taking into account discoloration, over softening, chilling injuries, decay, rotting, mold growth and shrinkage. Visual Quality Index (VQI) on 9-point grading scale described by Klieber *et al.* (1996) and Wrzodak and Adamiki (2007) were used. Time, in which the stored tomato attained overall market acceptability, was considered for the end of storage. The storage time of 40 days at 10 °C, 32 days at 20 °C and 23 days at 10 °C were confirmed under diffusion channel system but 14 days under control.

Statistical Analysis

All the quality characteristics were determined for five representative samples in triplicate and the average values were determined. Factorial completely randomized design using AGRESS software package ($P \leq 0.05$) was applied to analysis the effect of different diffusion channel lengths, diameters and temperatures on quality of tomato.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The biochemical constitutions of tomato at breaker stage and fresh harvested fully ripe tomato were presented in Table 1. The results obtained on biochemical constitutes were confirmed with the findings reported by Moneruzzaman *et al.* (2008) and Pila *et al.* (2010).

Visual Quality Index

Figure 1a shows the effect of different diffusion channel diameter, length and temperature on VQI at the end of storage. Highest VQI number (6.91 to 7) was recorded in chambers with diffusion channel diameter 9 and 12 mm and length 180 and 240 mm as compared to other treatments. In control it was 5.42 to 5.97. The effect of temperature, diameter and length of channel on VQI was found significant at ($p \leq 0.05$) while interaction effect was not significant. The results were supported by the study made by Wrzodak and Adamicki (2007) for tomato under controlled atmosphere storage.

Table 1: Physico-Chemical Characteristics of Breaker Stage and Fresh Harvested Ripe Tomato

Parameters	Breaker Stage Tomato	Fresh Harvested Ripe Tomato
Firmness (N)	135.964	54.193
Total soluble solids (°Brix)	4.571	6.541
Titratable acidity (%)	0.655	0.422
Total sugars (g/100 g)	2.627	4.845
Ascorbic acid (mg/100 g)	15.76	34.535
Lycopene (mg/100 g)	0.947	5.215
Colour value		
L^*	57.452	36.822
a^*	-1.372	26.843
b^*	12.651	21.781
ΔE	0	36.125

Note: Each observation is the average of three replicates.

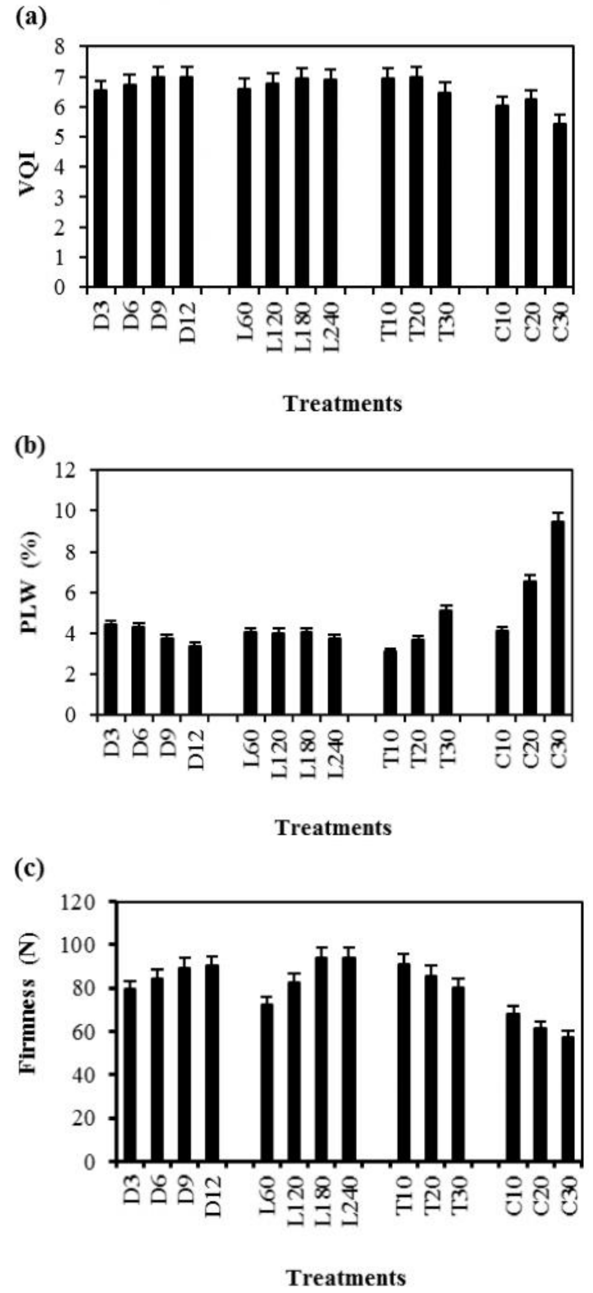
Physiological Loss in Weight (PLW)

Under the diffusion channel system, the PLW was found to be low compared to control. The PLW (%) was higher at 30°C followed by 20 °C and 10 °C irrespective of the treatments (Figure 1b). The mean PLW was 3.1, 3.68 and 5.11% at 10, 20 and 30 °C respectively but 4.11, 6.51 and 9.45% in control. High mean PLW of 4.41 and 4.05% was recorded in the chambers equipped with channel diameter 3 mm and length 60 mm. At the same time, low weight loss of 3.37 to 3.74% was recorded in the chambers equipped with channel diameter 9 and 12 mm and length 120 mm. Low O_2 in storage chambers turn to decrease the respiration rate thereby delayed physiological changes (Koca *et al.*, 1993). Effect of temperature, diameter and length of diffusion channel on PLW was found statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$). The results obtained from this study were in conformation with the results reported by other authors (Kudachikar *et al.*, 2011; Ramayya *et al.*, 2011; and Vunnam *et al.*, 2012).

Firmness

Effect of temperature, diameter and length of channel on mean firmness (N) of stored tomato at end of storage period is presented in Figure 1c. Highest firmness ranges between 89.34 and 94.05 N was recorded in the chambers equipped with channel diameter 9 and 12 mm and length 180 and 240

Figure 1: Effect of Diffusion Channel Length, Diameter and Temperature on (a) Visual Quality Index (VQI), (b) Physiological Loss in Weight (PLW) and (c) Firmness of Tomato at the End of Storage (Error with 5% Value)



mm. Average firmness of 89.24 and 80.03 N were recorded at 10 and 30 °C respectively but it was 57.37 to 68.35 N in control. More firmness was observed while increasing length and diameter of channel and decreasing in temperature. This may be due to less diffusion of O_2 taking place in chambers equipped with higher length of channel. Hence, there is decreased respiration rate and slowdown ripening process. Higher CO_2 concentration results in suppression of the degradation of protopectin to soluble pectin thus reducing fruit softening (Klieber *et al.*, 1996). Effect of temperature, diameter and length of channel on the firmness was found to be significant at ($p \leq 0.05$) but interaction effects were not significant. Thus, the channel diameter of 9 mm and length of 180 mm at 10 and 20 °C was adjudged to be best as it was maximum firmness. The results were consistent with findings of Wrzodak and Adamicki (2007), Kudachikar *et al.* (2011), Majidi *et al.* (2012) and Vunnam *et al.* (2012).

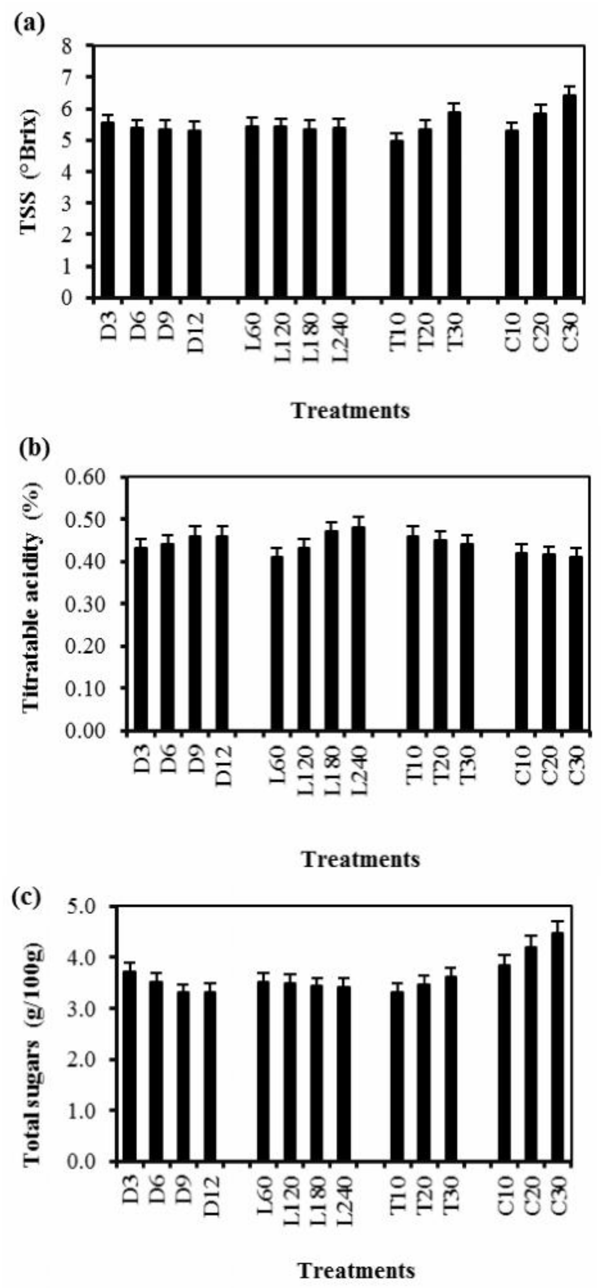
Total Soluble Solids

The TSS was observed in the range of 5.32 to 5.87 °Brix at the end of storage period irrespective of the treatments, whereas it was 5.3 to 6.4 °Brix in control (Figure 2a). However, the TSS of 6.54 °Brix was measured in fresh harvested ripe fruits of the same variety (Table 1). The reduction in TSS under diffusion channel system may be due to slight conversion of sugars. Statistical analysis showed that the effect of length and diameter of channel on TSS was not significant but temperature had significant variation. However, the results obtained in control were found to be significant ($p \leq 0.05$). These results were in agreement with results of Javanmardi and Kubota (2006) and Majidi *et al.* (2012).

Titratable Acidity

The sour taste of tomato is attributed mainly by citric and malice acids. Free amino acids such as glutamic acid play vital role of taste-enhancement. 'Sourness' closely correlates with titratable acidity. Generally, the level of acidity in the fruits decreases during ripening process. At the breaker stage, it was found 0.655% whereas fresh harvested red ripe 0.422% (Table 1). In diffusion channel system, the level of titratable acidity increased with increase in the diameter and length of diffusion channel (Figure 2b). When the diameter and length of channel was 9 and 180 mm respectively, the acidity level was as high as 0.46-0.48%. Beyond this level of diameter and length there was no appreciable change in titratable acidity. It was also observed that the acidity level decreased as temperature increased.

Figure 2: Effect of Diffusion Channel Length, Diameter and Temperature on (a) Total Soluble Solids (TSS), (b) Titratable Acidity and (c) Total Sugars of Tomato at the End of Storage (Error with 5% Value)



This might be due to the rate of respiration that subsides at lower temperature (10 and 20 °C) compared to higher temperature (30 °C). Therefore, the conversion of acidity into sugars may be delayed thereby quick ripening was also delayed. At the same time, the acidity level in control was found 0.41 to 0.42%. The influence of temperature, diameter and length of diffusion channel on titratable acidity was found to be significant ($p \leq 0.05$) but the interaction effect had no significant influence. The results were supported by results of Majidi *et al.* (2012) and Vunnam *et al.* (2012).

Total Sugars

Degradation of starch during ripening is the causes of production of glucose and fructose that builds sweetness in fruits. The taste of a fruit depends on the total sugar content. The total sugars of 2.627 g/100 g at breaker stage and 4.845 g/100 g at fresh harvested ripe stage were determined (Table 1). One of the main intentions of the study is to delay the degradation of the starch into glucose and fructose. Sammi and Masud (2007) also reported that the total sugars content in green and ripe tomato were 2.865 and 4.999 g/100 g respectively. Total sugar content under diffusion channel system ranges between 3.31 to 3.71 g/100 g but 4 to 4.9 g/100 g in control. No appreciable change in total sugars by changing length of channel but decreasing trend was noticed with increasing diameter of the channel (Figure 2c). Moreover, it was observed that the changes in sugar content was significantly less in chambers with diffusion channel of 9 mm diameter and 180 mm length. This might be due to low O_2 level which controlled the respiration rate thus delaying degradation of starch into sugars (Tasdelen and Bayindirli, 1998). Effect of individual treatments such as diameter of the channel and temperature were found significant ($p \leq 0.05$) statistically but channel length was not significant. However, the interaction effect between these three parameters was not significant. The results were in conformation with the findings reported by Tasdelen and Bayindirli (1998) and Kudachikar *et al.* (2011).

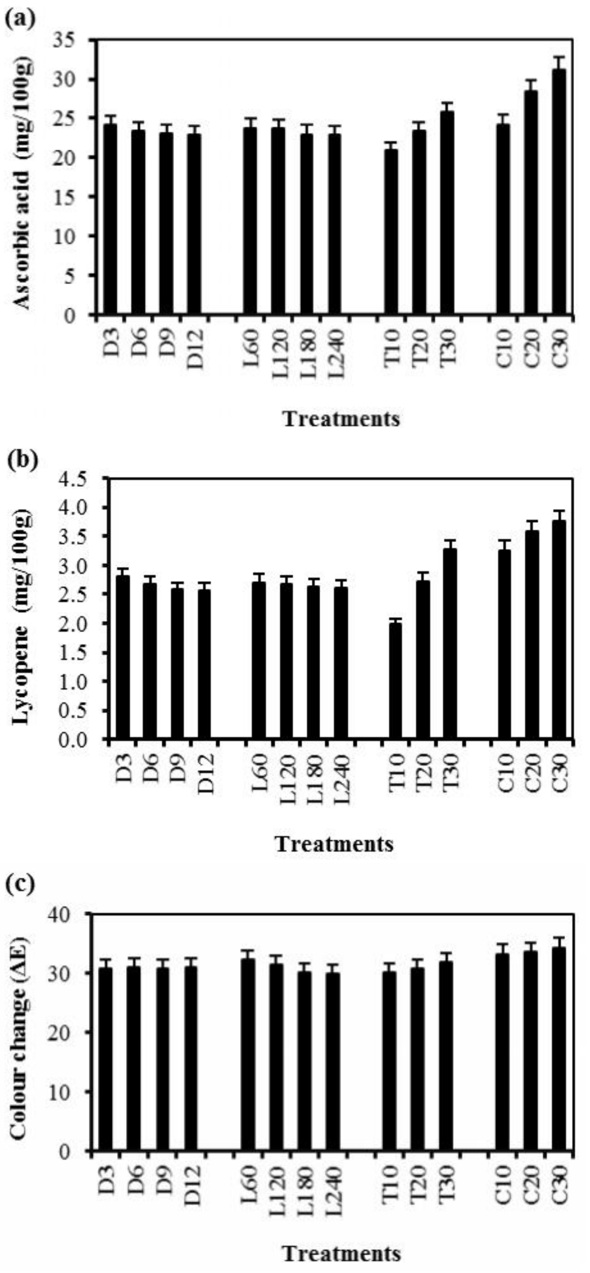
Ascorbic Acid Content

Ascorbic acid (Vitamin-C) exhibits more at ripened fruits. Ascorbic acid content of 15.76 and 34.535 mg/100 g at breaker and fresh harvested ripe stage tomato respectively were recorded (Table 1). Karki (2005) reported that the ascorbic acid content of tomato in mature green and pink colour stage were 16.45 and 19.63 mg/100 g respectively. The effect of different temperature, diameter and length of diffusion channel on ascorbic acid content of tomato at the end of storage is shown in Figure 3a. The ascorbic acid content was recorded slightly low with increase in diameter and length of channel but no appreciable decrease beyond the channel diameter and length of 9 and 180 mm respectively. At the same time it increased with increase in the temperature. The level of ascorbic acid was less under diffusion channel system irrespective of the treatments as compared to control. The minimum ascorbic acid content of 22.87 to 23.33 mg/100 g was recorded in chambers fitted with the channel diameter of 9 and 12 mm, channel length of 180 and 240 mm at 10 and 20 °C. The control had maximum ascorbic acid of 24.24, 28.47 and 31.17 mg/100 g at 10, 20 and 30 °C respectively. This may be due to high CO_2 and low O_2 reduced the respiration rate, thus hindered the ripening rate, delaying ascorbic acid production. Effect of temperature, diameter and length of the channel were found slightly significant both at 5% level, whereas the effect of first order and second order interactions were found not significant. The results were in conformation with the results reported by Ramayya *et al.* (2011).

Lycopene Content

Carotenoids, mainly lycopene, are responsible for red colour of tomato. Color changes during ripening are characterized by loss of chlorophyll and rapid accumulation of lycopene. The lycopene content of 0.947 and 5.215 mg/100 g at breaker and fresh harvested ripe stage respectively was recorded (Table 1). Figure 3b shows the effect of temperature, diameter and length of diffusion channel on lycopene content of tomato. The lycopene content significantly decreased when increasing the channel diameter from 3 to 9 mm and channel length from 60 to 180 mm but beyond this level there was no much considerable change. On the other hand, significant increase was observed with increase in temperature. The lycopene ranges between 2.58 and 2.62 mg/100 g was recorded in chambers fitted with the channel diameter of 9 and 12 mm and length of 180 and 240 mm at 10 and 20 °C but 3.27 mg/100 g at 30 °C. In control, maximum lycopene content of 3.26, 3.58 and 3.85 mg/100 g at 10, 20 and 30 °C respectively were recorded. The lycopene content of tomato stored under diffusion channel system was low as compared to control and fresh red ripe tomato. This may be due to formation of lycopene inhibited by low O_2 atmosphere storage under diffusion channel system. The low O_2 and temperature prevents the ethylene formation thus decreased lycopene production (Helyes *et al.*, 2011). Effect of temperature and diameter of the channel on lycopene was found statistically significant at 5% level. However, the effect of first order and second order interactions were not significant. These results were consistent with findings of Tasdelen and Bayindirli (1998), Sozzi *et al.* (1999) and Helyes *et al.* (2011).

Figure 3: Effect of Diffusion Channel Length, Diameter and Temperature on (a) Ascorbic Acid, (b) Lycopene and (c) Colour Change (ΔE) of Tomato at the End of Storage (Error with 5% Value)



Colour Change

Appearance is one of the salient features of fruits and vegetables. It may be influenced by several factors of which colour is the most important that directly affects the consumer acceptability. Total change in colour (ΔE) indicates the deviation in reflection. Initial ΔE value for the fresh samples (breaker stage) was recorded as zero and ΔE for fresh harvested ripe red tomato 36.125 (Table 1). The effect of different temperature, diameter and length of channel on ΔE value is depicted in Figure 3c. The ΔE value decreased from 32.30 to 29.87 when the channel length increased from 60 mm to 240 mm. Temperature had a little effect over the ΔE value (30.21 to 30.79). However, the channel diameter had no much influence over the ΔE value (30.78 to 31.05). In control, the ΔE value ranged between 33.23 and 34.22 that higher than tomato under diffusion channel system. The decrease in ΔE value indicates the slower rate of change in colour under diffusion channel system. This may be due to higher CO_2 and lower O_2 inhibits formation of lycopene that is main constituent of red pigment (Yang *et al.*, 1987). The channel diameter of 9 mm, length of 180 mm and temperature of 10 and 20 °C delayed change in colour (ΔE) compared to other treatments. The temperature and channel length had a significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$) but channel diameter had no significant effect on colour change. The effects of first order, second order interactions and control were also not significant. The results of colour change (ΔE) were conformed to the findings reported by Vunnam *et al.* (2012).

CONCLUSION

Physico-chemical quality parameters such as visual quality index, firmness, acidity and ascorbic acid were found to be significant ($p \leq 0.05$) by temperature, channel length and diameter. Total sugars and lycopene content had a significant difference with temperature and diameter but not with length of channel. The colour change (ΔE) was directly related to lycopene formation. Temperature had a significant effect on TSS but length and diameter of channel had no significant effect. Quality characteristics were preserved in better way upto 40 and 32 days at 10 and 20 °C respectively under diffusion channel system (length: 180 and 240 mm and diameter: 9 and 12 mm). Tomato stored under these conditions had harvest-fresh appearance, good colour, minimum mould and good marketability conditions. From this study, it is concluded that the diffusion channel system is capable of establishing a desired controlled atmosphere condition for storage of tomato. It is more flexible, less expensive and simpler way of altering gas composition in CA storage.

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