Citral-to-Menthol Transformations in a Continuous Reactor over Ni/Mesoporous Aluminosilicate Extrudates Containing a Sepiolite Clay Binder

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ABSTRACT: One-pot continuous synthesis of menthols from citral was performed over 5 wt % Ni supported on a mesoporous aluminosilicate catalyst with sepiolite as a binder at 70 °C with a selectivity of 75% to menthols. Catalyst deactivation with time-on-stream resulted in a decrease of the conversion and selectivity to menthols at the expense of higher selectivity to isopulegols. Stereoselectivity to isopulegols and menthols only slightly changed with conversion and TOS. A kinetic model capable of describing experimental data for transformations of citral to menthol in a continuous mode was developed. It was based on a detailed reaction network and also comprised deactivation on both metal and acid sites. Numerical data fitting confirmed a good correspondence between the experimental data and calculations.

KEYWORDS: citral, menthol, shaped Ni catalyst, clay binder, trickle-bed reactor

INTRODUCTION

Production of menthol, a compound with local anesthetic and counterirritant properties, acting also as a weak k-opioid receptor agonist, has attracted significant attention because of its physiological behavior. Menthol, occurring naturally in peppermint oil, can be manufactured by freezing this oil followed by filtration of menthol crystals. Substantial amounts of menthol are also produced by synthetic routes starting from renewable sources. Manufacturing of menthol from myrcene starts with formation of an allylic amine, followed by asymmetric isomerization using a BINAP rhodium complex giving enantiomerically pure cintronellal after hydrolysis.\(^1\) Subsequent steps include cyclization to isopulegol and hydrogenation to menthol. This route has been commercialized by Takasago International Corporation.\(^2\) An alternative route involves n-cresol, which is alkylated with propene to form thymol.\(^3\) The latter is hydrogenated over heterogeneous catalysts resulting in a mixture of menthol enantiomers,\(^4,5\) which are separated by chiral resolution. A particular interesting option is the one-pot synthesis of menthol starting from another renewable source, citral. The latter is obtained by distillation of essential oils.

As can be seen from Figure 1, citral comprises three functional groups, which can be hydrogenated on metal sites. Selective hydrogenation of the double bond adjacent to the carboxyl groups gives cintrenonellal\(^6,7\) on the metal sites. This reaction should be selective not resulting in hydrogenation of either the second double bond or the carbonyl group to citronellol\(^8\) and further to 3,7-dimethylloctanol. Cyclization of citronellal to isopulegol requires an acidic catalyst.\(^1,12\) The final step in this reaction path is hydrogenation of isopulegol.\(^13\)

Several reports are available in the literature on one-pot citral transformations in batch reactors.\(^14−20\) High yields of menthol (94\%) were obtained starting from citral at 70 °C and 20 bar hydrogen over 8 wt % Ni/Al-H-MCM-41 and 15 wt % Ni-MCM-41-Zr-β.\(^14,16\) Mäki-Arvela et al. reported that the selectivity of 54% to four stereoisomers of menthols was achieved at 100% citral conversion over 15 wt % Ni-H-MCM-41 under 10 bar total pressure at 70 °C in cyclohexane.\(^17\) The stereoselective ratio of (±)-menthols/(±)-neomenthols/(±)-isomenthols was 71:25:4% with the absence of (±)-neoisomenthols in the reaction mixture.\(^17\) Noble metals, such as Pd, Pt, or Ru, have also been applied in a quest for a delicate balance between hydrogenation ability of the catalyst and its acidity.\(^15−20\) These active metals could lead to overhydrogenation, while too acidic catalysts can give rise to dehydration and defunctionalized products. In addition to nickel, other nonnoble metals, including, for example, copper,\(^21\) supported on a natural material sepilote of the following structure Si\(_{12}\)O\(_{28}\)Mg\(_{8}\)(OH)\(_{6}\)(OH\(_2\))\(_{4}\)8H\(_2\)O,\(^22\) gave 45% menthol yield in heptane at 90 °C under 1 bar hydrogen in a batch reactor.\(^22\)

In our recent work, we have reported mildly acidic mesoporous Ru-MCM-41 with a relatively large size of ruthenium clusters for one-pot synthesis of menthol from citral in batch and continuous reactors.\(^26\) Such a large size (7–20 nm) was intended to diminish the hydrogenation activity. The catalyst along with microporous Ru-H-Y-80 was not very...
selective toward menthol, giving defunctionalized mentha- 
tries as the main products.23

Continuous menthol production from citronellal requires 
utilization of either shaped catalyst bodies or structured reactors 
to avoid high pressure drop, inevitable with powder catalysts.24 
In a series of studies, various aspects of catalyst shaping by their 
extrusion and utilization for menthol production have been 
addressed, including selection of the binder (e.g., bentonite or 
Ludox) and the metal location using Ru as the main 
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![Diagrams](https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.oprd.1c00435)

Figure 1. Transformations of citral to menthol.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Characterization of Ni Catalysts.** Nickel supported on 
mesoporous aluminosilicate catalysts was characterized before 
and after the reaction by inductively coupled plasma-optical 
emission spectrometry (ICP-OES), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), nitrogen physisorption technique, X-ray 
diffraction method (XRD), scanning electron microscopy with 
energy-dispersive X-ray microanalysis (SEM-EDX), Fourier 
transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), and crush testing.

Nickel loading and particle size as well as some textural data 
for Ni supported on mesoporous aluminosilicate catalysts are 
presented in Table 1. Isotherms and pore size distribution of 
catalysts are shown in Figures S1 and S2.

According to ICP-OES analysis (Table 1) of the fresh reduced 
and spent Ni catalysts, nickel loading decreased during citral 
transformations regardless of the operation mode (batch or 
continuous). The nickel content in the powder Ni/MAS catalyst 
decreased from 4.76 to 4.55%, while for the extruded catalyst it 
changed from 6.30 to 5.95%, supposedly due to insignificant 
metal leaching during citral conversion (Table 1).

The sorption isotherm of catalysts is of type IV according to 
IUPAC classification (Figure S1a). Characteristic features of the 
Type IV isotherm are its hysteresis loop, which is associated with 
capillary condensation taking place in mesopores and the 
limiting uptake over a range of high p/p°.28 A type H2 hysteresis 
loop indicated that the samples are mesoporous materials with 
cage-like mesopores formed due to disordered blocked pore 
shapes.28 Prior to the reaction, the fresh reduced powder Ni/
MCM-41 catalyst exhibited a specific surface area (S_{BET}) of 447 m²/g and total pore volume (V) of 0.47 cm³/g (Table 1). 
After citral conversion, the surface area and pore volume of the 
catalyst decreased to 280 m²/g (S_{BET}) and 0.36 cm³/g, respectively 
(Table 1 and Figure S1a). The same trend was also noticed for 

![Diagrams](https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.oprd.1c00435)

**Table 1. Concentration and Particle Size of Nickel and Textural Properties of the Catalysts**

| catalyst                  | [Ni] (wt %) | d_{Ni} (XRD) (nm) | d_{Ni} (TEM) (nm) | S_{BET} (m²/g) | S_{NE-B} (m²/g) | V (cm³/g) | V_m (%) |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|--------|
| fresh, reduced powder Ni/MAS | 4.76        | 8                 | 447               | 412            | 0.47           | 71.1      |
| spent, powder Ni/MAS       | 4.55        | 13                | 280               | 317            | 0.36           | 66.3      |
| fresh, reduced crushed extrudates Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) | 6.30        | 12                | 743               | 756            | 0.85           | 71.0      |
| fresh, reduced extrudates Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) | 5.95        | 11                | 337               | 329            | 0.39           | 75.5      |
| spent, extrudates Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) | 5.95        | 11                | 149               | 214            | 0.31           | 81.0      |

*[Ni]—concentration of Ni determined by ICP-OES, d_{Ni} (XRD)—average particle size of Ni determined by XRD, d_{Ni} (TEM)—median particle size of Ni determined by TEM, S—specific surface area calculated by BET and Dubinin—Radushkevich equations, V—total pore volume (micro + mesopore volume) calculated by the density functional theory (DFT) method, and V_m—percentage of the mesopore volume.*
the extrudates during citral transformations in the continuous reactor under the same reaction conditions giving a decrease of the surface area from 337 to 149 m²/g (S\text{BET}) and pore volume from 0.39 to 0.31 cm³/g (V) (Table 1 and Figure S1b). A lower surface area and pore volume of Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) extrudates compared to powder Ni/MAS catalysts can be assigned to sepiolite that clogged pores of the pristine aluminosilicate during extrusion. Interestingly, crushing of the fresh reduced extrudates Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) significantly increased the surface area from 337 to 743 m²/g (S\text{BET}), indicating that the ground catalyst is able to expose much more available sites for N₂ molecule adsorption. All samples exhibited more than 66% of the mesopore volume. After the reaction, the fraction of the mesopore volume of extrudates increased; however, the total pore volume decreased, which can be explained by preferential blocking of micropores in line with pore size distribution (Figure S2).

Pristine support along with the fresh reduced and spent extrudates (Figure 2) as well as powdered Ni/MAS catalyst (fresh calcined, fresh reduced, and spent samples) (Figure S3) were studied by powder X-ray diffraction (XRD).

The observed lines indicated the presence of sepiolite phase Mg₄Si₆O₁₅(OH)₂(H₂O)₆ (PDF # 04-014-4557) (Figure 2a). XRD patterns of the studied materials at low angles showed that the positions and intensities of the observed diffraction lines correspond to the MCM-41 material (Figure 2b).29 The
Figure 3. continued
interplanar distances $d_{100}$ for the mesoporous support, freshly reduced, and spent extrudates were respectively 32.4, 31.8, and 31.5 Å. The corresponding values of the hexagonal lattice parameter defined as $2d_{100} \sqrt{3}$ were 37.4, 36.7, and 36.4 Å. A significant decrease in the reflections for the spent catalyst compared to the MCM-41 phase can be associated with more prominent structural disordering after the reaction (Figure 2b).

XRD patterns of the spent extrudates are presented in Figure 2c. Along with the lines from sepiolite phase Mg$_4$Si$_6$O$_{15}$(OH)$_2$(H$_2$O)$_6$, the lines from the metallic nickel Ni$^0$ phase (PDF No. 04-0850) are presented. The average coherent scattering domain size (CSD) of Ni$^0$ $D_{Ni}$ is 11.0 nm that is consistent with TEM data (Table 1 and Figure 3). The determined value of the Ni lattice parameter $a = 3.524$ Å. Note
there are no additional lines in XRD patterns of the fresh reduced and spent catalysts other than characteristic lines of MCM-41, indicating stability of the support texture after deposition of nickel and subsequent treatment as well as upon exposure to the reaction media.

The irregular shape of Ni particles was observed for all Ni catalysts by TEM analysis (Figure 3). The median Ni particle size for the fresh and spent powder Ni/MAS 41 catalyst without a binder was the same, 13 nm, with a broad range from 0.2 to 56 nm. TEM analysis of Ni extrudates clearly confirmed that Ni was deposited randomly on both H-MCM-41 and the sepiolite binder. The median Ni particle size was 9 nm for the fresh extrudates. This value is smaller than that for the powder catalyst without a binder and can be attributed to the impact of extrusion per se and the additional thermal treatment after shaping being similar to previous observations for Pt extrudates.30 Such a behavior was explained by variations in the location of metal particles on the support and the binder, and the influence of the organic binder methylcellulose. The latter, upon calcination, is removed acting as a reducing agent for metal particles, thereby increasing the metal dispersion by forming small metal particles.30 On the contrary, a slightly larger median Ni particle size of 14 nm for the spent extrudates, compared to the fresh extrudates, can be an indication of minor agglomeration.

FTIR results for the Ni/MAS fresh nonreduced powder catalyst and Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) fresh reduced extrudates are reported in Table 2 together with the pristine H-MCM-4127 powder catalyst for comparison. A slightly higher value of weak Lewis acid sites, 35 μmol/g, but lower total acid sites and lower

| catalyst | BAS | LAS | TAS | B/L |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| H-MCM-41 27 | 41 | 19 | 24 | 84 | 20 | 14 | 21 | 56 | 140 | 1.5 |
| fresh, reduced powder Ni/MAS | 18 | 25 | 9 | 51 | 35 | 13 | 7 | 55 | 106 | 0.9 |
| fresh, reduced extrudates Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) | 23 | 7 | 0 | 30 | 24 | 11 | 0 | 35 | 65 | 0.9 |

*BAS—Brønsted acid sites; LAS—Lewis acid sites; TAS—total acid sites; s—strong acid sites, data at 450 °C; m—medium acid sites, data at 350 °C minus data at 450 °C; and w—weak acid sites, data at 250 °C minus data at 350 °C; and B/L—ratio of Brønsted-to-Lewis acid sites.
Brønsted and Lewis acid sites ratio (B/L), 0.9, were obtained for 5 wt % Ni/MAS. When Ni is loaded in zeolites and mesoporous catalysts, typically, the amount of strong acid Brønsted sites decreases as confirmed by Kubic̆ka et al.31 The same B/L ratio and overall lower values for both Brønsted and Lewis acid sites were obtained for Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) extrudates compared to the powder catalyst without sepiolite binder.

SEM images of fresh powder catalysts, nonreduced (Figure 4a) and reduced (Figure 4b), are in line with the results from nitrogen physisorption (Table 1) and clearly show structural reordering after the reduction procedure (350 °C). The same trend was observed in case of extrudates. The spent extrudates exhibited a more compacted surface, which could be related to additional structural reordering and the blockage of pores after the reaction. The Si/Al weight ratio was 5.15 for both Brønsted and Lewis acid sites were obtained for Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) extrudates compared to the powder catalyst without sepiolite binder.

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The mechanical strengths of extrudates were determined to be 32 ± 7 and 4 ± 1 bar in the vertical and horizontal positions, respectively. These are relatively high compared to the mechanical strengths of aluminosilicate extrudates calcined at 600 and 800 °C, i.e., 4.2 and 25 bar, respectively. A higher value for Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) extrudates in the current work can be attributed to the sepiolite binder and the presence of the metal in the extrudates. Pure sepiolite extrudates exhibited mechanical strengths of 56 ± 6 and 35 ± 4 bar in vertical and horizontal positions, respectively.33 For Pt/H-β-25 extrudates containing SiO2 Bindzil binder or Bentonite binder, the mechanical strengths were 29−45 and 32−48 bar in the vertical position.30,34

Activity and Selectivity of the Powder Ni Catalyst in the Batch Experiment. The catalytic results from a batch experiment with 5 wt % Ni/MAS powder catalyst are displayed in Figure 5a–c. Citral conversion (X) increased with time to 53% in 5 h, while the liquid mass balance closure (MB) slightly decreased to 88%. Previously, Ni on MCM-4119 was used for one-pot transformations of citral to menthol also in cyclohexane at the same temperature and hydrogen pressure as in the current work. The catalyst-to-substrate ratio was, however, much higher (6-fold), resulting in complete conversion already after 2 h. In addition, it should be pointed out here that Mäki-Arvela et al.19

![Figure 5](https://example.com/fig5.png)

**Figure 5.** (a) Citral conversion (X) and liquid phase mass balance closure (MB), (b) concentrations of different products in a batch reactor, and (c) selectivity as a function of conversion. Legend: ACP—acyclic hydrogenation products, IPs—isopulegol isomers, MEs—menthol isomers, DFP—defunctionalization products, and DM—dimeric ethers and heavy components. Conditions: 70 °C, 10 bar of H2, 0.086 M initial concentration of citral in cyclohexane, and 0.2 g of the Ni/MAS catalyst. Notation: (■) ACP, (●) IPs, (▲) MEs, (▼) DFP, and (●) DM.
reported both citral and solvent were preheated and saturated with hydrogen prior to their injection into the reactor, which contained the prereduced catalyst. This pretreatment ensured rapid start up and also faster reaction, while in the current case, prereduced catalyst, reactant, and solvent were loaded into the reactor and the reaction was started when reaching the desired
temperature and pressure. Although the initial hydrogenolysis rate over 5 wt % Ni-MCM-41 was negligible compared to the initial hydrogenation rate, the selectivity to DFP products after 330 min at 100% conversion was 40%. However, the selectivity to menthols was 54% at the same point and only traces of acyclic hydrogenation products were formed. This catalyst exhibited 5.8 nm Ni particles and the support exhibited a BAS/LAS ratio of 0.53.

In the current work, already during the first minute of the experiment, citral was selectively hydrogenated to citronellal (S = 96%), which was partially converted to isopulegols (S = 4%). The concentration profiles for different product groups, i.e., acyclic hydrogenation products (ACP), pulegols (IPs), menthols (MEs), and defunctionalized products (DFP) are shown in Figure 5b. The scheme of citral transformation demonstrating all potential reactions in detail is shown in Figure 6. The ratio between the initial rates for IPs, ACP, and DFP, i.e., \( r_{ACP}/r_{DFP} < 1:4:6:27.7 \), while menthols are only visible at 300 min. This result indicates that hydrogenated products were already formed during the heating period as a large amount of citronellal was present at 1 min. Furthermore, a maximum concentration of hydrogenation products was visible at 120 min after which mainly citronellal reacted further to cyclic products. It can also be stated that IPs and MEs were intermediates, which reacted very rapidly to menthene derivatives, while no hydrogenated menthanes were formed. The selectivity to DFP increased with increasing conversion reaching 78% after 5 h (Figure 5c). At the same time, the selectivity to citronellal, which was the only acyclic hydrogenation product, decreased. This result indicates that hydrogenation of citral proceeded during 5 h reaction time; however, its rate decreased because only 53% conversion was achieved. No other hydrogenation products than citronellal were formed over a bifunctional Ni catalyst, which agrees well with data reported by Mäki-Arvela et al.19 It is worth to note that also a bifunctional Pd/MCM-41 extensively promoted the formation of 3,7-dimethyloctanol.19 Extensive hydrogenolysis of menthols occurred during 5 h; however, only unsaturated menthene derivatives, i.e., \( \alpha \)-terpinolene, mentha-2,8-diene, \( p \)-menth-4(8)-ene, \( p \)-mentha-1,3,8-triene, \( p \)-mentha-1,5,8-triene, and \( o \)-cymene, were formed. The high selectivity to DFP products can be explained by a relatively high BAS/LAS ratio of 0.93 (Table 2) as well as larger Ni particle size, 8 nm, in comparison to ref 19.

**Activity and Selectivity of Ni Extrudates in the Continuous Operation Mode.** One-pot citral transformation experiments at 70 °C, 10 bar of hydrogen, and 0.4 mL/min of feed in the trickle-bed reactor over Ni/(MAS+sepiolite) extrudates demonstrated rather high citral conversion and exceptionally high selectivity to menthols of ca. 75% (Figure 7). The yield of menthols of 63% was previously reported over 8 wt % Ni on heteropolyacid with a mesoporous support17 after 24 h of the reaction at 80 °C and 10 bar of hydrogen. Lower yields (35–50%) were reported for other studied catalysts. The authors17 concluded that the presence of strong Lewis and medium Brønsted acid sites is required for high menthol selectivity. Note that for the Ru/MCM-41 catalyst20 also tested in the form of extrudates with the Bindzil binder, mainly defunctionalized products were obtained (ca. 25–30% yield) and the highest yield of menthol was just 6% with a stereoselectivity of 66%. Analogous to the previous work on the ruthenium catalyst in a trickle-bed reactor, substantial catalyst deactivation was seen resulting not only in a decrease of the conversion but also significant selectivity changes with increasing time-on-stream (TOS) as conversion was decreased because of deactivation (Figure 7).

A decrease in the catalytic activity can be caused by Ni leaching as well as by pore blocking (Table 1). The subsequent changes in selectivity are in fact expected for a consecutive reaction network. The citral conversion and selectivity to the desired menthols (MEs) decreased by 0.9 and 1.1% per hour of TOS, respectively. On the contrary, selectivity to isopulegols (IPs) and the acyclic hydrogenation products (ACP) during the same time increased by 0.7 and 0.3%, respectively. Selectivity to the defunctionalization products (DFP) was constant, not changing with conversion, indicating that such products are formed in parallel.
from all reactants and products as illustrated in Figure 6. Neither dimeric ethers nor heavy components (DM) were detected in the reaction mixture. The carbon balance and liquid phase mass balance closure (MB) were close to 100%. Note that much lower mass balance closure was reported for one-pot citral transformations over Ru/MCM-41 containing extrudates finally reaching 60–80% depending on the type of catalyst. Moreover, even the activity decrease was more pronounced in the case of Ru/MCM-41 as conversion dropped from ca. 90–100 to 65–70% just within 3 h.

As expected, detailed analysis of the acyclic hydrogenation products (ACP, Figure 8) revealed an increased selectivity to citronellal, formed in the first step from citral, with TOS at the expense of the subsequent hydrogenation product 3,7-dimethylpentan-1-ol. Other ACP (including 2,6-dimethyloctane) were formed in minor quantities without a visible trend in TOS.

Stereoselectivity to isopulegol and menthol isomers as a function of time-on-stream is displayed in Figures 9 and 10.

In both cases, stereoselectivity only slightly changed with conversion and TOS. Among cyclization products, selectivity to isopulegol and isoisopulegol increased, while selectivity to neoisopulegol clearly decreased with TOS. In 50 h of TOS, the ratio of isopulegol/neoisopulegol/isoisopulegol changed from 54/46/0/0 to 61/32/7/0. Often, the distribution of isopulegols follows the thermodynamic equilibrium, which means that stereoselectivity to (+)-isopulegol is ca. 70–75%. At the same time, stereoselectivity to isopulegol depends on acidity and over such Lewis acids as Zr-β or zinc chloride, it can reach 90–94% in citronellol cyclization. Lower values than thermodynamic ones have also been reported; thus, the stereoselectivity distribution of ca. 55/35/10% for IP/NIP/IIP was observed for ruthenium bearing extrudates with a random Ru deposition on both H-MCM-41 and Bindzil in one-pot citral transformations to menthol.

Changes in the stereoselectivity distribution of isopulegols were concomitant with the ratio of menthols; thus, the formation of menthol and neomenthol followed selectivity patterns for isopulegol and neoisopulegol. For menthol/neomenthol/iso menthol/neo isomenthol, their ratio changed from 66/26/2/6 to 71/15/0/14 in 50 h of TOS.

Stereoselectivity to the desired (±)-menthol of 68–70% was reported previously for Ru/H-MCM-41 extrudates containing the Bindzil binder, while somewhat lower stereoselectivity to menthol (42%) was obtained for Ru/Y-80 extrudates when Bindzil was used as a binder. Note that the total yield of menthols in previous reports for continuous one-pot transformations of citral was much lower (just between 2 and 6%) than in the current work.

Figure 11 shows citral conversion as a function of time-on-stream at different temperatures (40–80 °C) and the same pressure of hydrogen (10 bar), flowrate of feed (0.4 mL/min), and initial citral concentration in cyclohexane (0.086 M) over 1 g of Ni-containing extrudates.

Figure 11 also demonstrates catalyst deactivation visible through a decrease of the conversion with time-on-stream at isothermal conditions as well as by the difference in the level of conversion when the same temperature was tested after several hours of operation.

Figure 12 displaying citral conversion as a function of time-on-stream at different hydrogen pressures (2.5–10 bar) and the same temperature (70 °C) shows almost zero-order dependence in hydrogen for hydrogenation of citral. Somewhat more prominent deactivation was observed at a lower hydrogen pressure that could be probably related to slower recovery of metallic nickel at a lower H2 pressure.
Kinetic analysis of one-pot transformations of citronellal to menthols in a batch reactor has been reported for the Ru/\(\beta\)-25 catalyst, while such analysis is absent for citral transformations to menthol for both batch and continuous operation modes. In the current work, we have thus developed a kinetic model capable of describing experimental data for transformations of citral to menthol in a continuous mode.

The reaction network is an extension of the network proposed previously for one-pot transformations of citronellal to menthol and includes hydrogenation of citral to citronellal and side transformations to defunctionalized products (Figure 13).

The noncompetitive adsorption of organic compounds and hydrogen allows the introduction of the rate expressions for the following type

\[
r_i = \frac{k_{\text{Citral}}P}{D D_{\text{H}_{2}}} \alpha \beta_i
\]

**Figure 10.** Stereoselectivity to menthol isomers (SS\(_{\text{MEL}}\)) in a continuous reactor as a function of (a) total time-on-stream and (b) conversion (X). Legend: ME—menthol, NME—neomenthol, IME—isomenthol, and NIME—neoisomenthol. Conditions: 70 °C, 10 bar of \(\text{H}_{2}\), 0.4 mL/min of feed, 0.086 M initial concentration of citral in cyclohexane, 1 g of the Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) catalyst, and 11.5 min of residence time.

**Figure 11.** Citral conversion as a function of total time-on-stream at different temperatures in a continuous reactor. Conditions: 40—80 °C, 10 bar of \(\text{H}_{2}\), 0.4 mL/min of feed, 0.086 M initial concentration of citral in cyclohexane, 1 g of the Ni/(MAS + sepiolite) catalyst, and 11.5 min of residence time.

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**Kinetic Modeling**

Kinetic analysis of one-pot transformations of citronellal to menthols in a batch reactor has been reported for the Ru/\(\beta\)-25 catalyst, while such analysis is absent for citral transformations to menthol for both batch and continuous operation modes. In the current work, we have thus developed a kinetic model capable of describing experimental data for transformations of citral to menthol in a continuous mode.

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\[
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\]
where \( k_1 \) is the lumped rate constant, which includes adsorption constants of hydrogen and citral, \( P \) is the hydrogen pressure, \( \rho_B \) is the catalyst bulk density (0.217 g/cm\(^3\)), \( r_1 \) is the reaction rate along path 1, \( c_{\text{Citral}} \) is the concentration of citral (mol/L), and \( D \) and \( D_{H_2} \) are denominators

\[
D = 1 + K_A c_{\text{Citral}} + K_B c_{\text{Citronellal}} + K_C \left( c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}} + c_{\text{IP}} \right) + c_{\text{NIP}} + K_D \left( c_{\text{MNT}} + c_{\text{NM}} + c_{\text{IM}} + c_{\text{NIM}} \right) + K_F c_{\text{DFP}}
\]

(2)

\[
D_{H_2} = 1 + K_{H_2} P
\]

(3)

In eqs 2 and 3, \( K_A, K_B, K_C, K_D, K_F, \) and \( K_{H_2} \) are equilibrium constants for adsorption of citral, citronellal, isopulegols, menthols, defunctionalized products, and hydrogen, respectively.

The term \( \alpha_1 \) reflects catalyst deactivation, which was modeled in a semiempirical way\(^{24,39,40}\) by introducing an exponential decay function of metal sites with TOS

\[
\alpha_1 = e^{-k_{d1} TOS}
\]

(4)

where \( k_{d1} \) is the temperature-dependent deactivation constant.

For the cyclization reaction routes (reactions 21–24), the expressions for the observed rates can be written as follows

\[
r_{21-4} = \eta_{21-4} \frac{k_{21-4} c_{\text{Citronellal}}}{D} \alpha_2 \rho_B
\]

(5)

With another deactivation function, specific for acidic sites

\[
\alpha_2 = e^{-k_{d2} TOS}
\]

(6)

where \( k_{d2} \) is the temperature-dependent deactivation constant for acidic sites. During the parameter estimation, it turned out, however, that the temperature dependence of this and the first deactivation constant could be neglected. In eq 5, \( \eta \) is the catalyst effectiveness factor for a particular reaction reflecting the experimental data in this work were generated in the regime where the external and internal mass transfer cannot be neglected. In general, for nonfirst-order reactions, the catalyst effectiveness factor changes during the reaction as the Thiele modulus depends on the concentration.

In the current work for hydrogenation reactions of isopulegols to menthols on metallic sites, the rate expressions are

\[
r_{31} = k_{31} c_{\text{IP}} \frac{P}{D D_{H_2}} \alpha_2 \rho_B; \quad r_{32} = k_{32} c_{\text{NIP}} \alpha_2 \rho_B; \quad r_{33} = k_{33} c_{\text{NIP}} \alpha_2 \rho_B
\]

(7)

The initial kinetic model included step 4; however, because the yields of citronellol were very low, this step was excluded from further considerations. Moreover, numerical data fitting indicated that because of lumping of defunctionalized products into one group, it is sufficient to include only the rate of reaction 5 in the model, finally giving

\[
r_3 = \eta_3 \frac{k_3 c_{\text{Citral}}}{D} \alpha_1 \rho_B
\]

(8)

\[
r_7 = \eta_7 \frac{k_7 (c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}} + c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}})}{D D_{H_2}} \alpha_2 \rho_B
\]

(9)

\[
r_8 = \eta_8 \frac{k_8 c_{\text{Citronellal}} P}{D D_{H_2}} \alpha_2 \rho_B
\]

(10)

The plug flow reactor model was used, solving the rate equations along with mass balances

\[
\frac{dc_{\text{Citral}}}{dt} = -r_1 - r_3
\]

\[
\frac{dc_{\text{Citronellal}}}{dt} = r_1 - r_2 - r_3 - r_4 - r_8
\]

\[
\frac{dc_{\text{IP}}}{dt} = \frac{r_31 - r_3}{c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}} + c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}}} \frac{dc_{\text{NIP}}}{dt}
\]

\[
\frac{dc_{\text{NIP}}}{dt} = r_2 - r_3 + r_7 \frac{c_{\text{NIP}}}{c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}} + c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}}}
\]

\[
\frac{dc_{\text{IP}}}{dt} = r_{31} - r_{33} + r_7 \frac{c_{\text{IP}}}{c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}} + c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}}}
\]

\[
\frac{dc_{\text{NIP}}}{dt} = r_{33} - r_{34} + r_7 \frac{c_{\text{NIP}}}{c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}} + c_{\text{IP}} + c_{\text{NIP}}}
\]
where $\tau$ is the residence time in min. For the sake of simplicity, the rate constants for transformations of different isomers of isopulegols to defunctionalized products were considered to be equal to each other; thus, the rates of step 7 in eq 11 contain the term corresponding to the fraction of a particular isomer.

During the parameter estimation, average values of the catalyst effectiveness factors for different rates were calculated neglecting their concentration dependencies, as a rather close to first-order kinetic curve could be deduced from the batch data (Figure 5).

The temperature dependence was modeled with the modified Arrhenius equation, where $T$ is the mean temperature used in the experiments (i.e., 70 °C)

$$k_j = k_{0j}e^{\frac{E_{j}}{\pi}(\frac{1}{T} - \frac{1}{T_{\text{max}}})}$$

(12)

Kinetic modeling was performed using ModEst software, minimizing the residual sum of squares between the calculated and experimental data with the Levenberg–Marquardt and simplex algorithms implemented in the software. The degree of explanation reflecting a comparison between the residuals given by the model with the residuals of the simplest model, i.e., the average value of all data points, served as a measure of the fit quality.

Application of eq 11 along with the expressions for the rates for various steps in the reaction mechanism (eqs 1, 5, 7–10) gave a reliable description of experimental data (Figures 14 and S4) with the degree of explanation equal to 97.1%. The values of parameters are presented in Table 3.

In general, the parameters are rather well-identified apart from $E_{34}$ and activation energy for deactivation steps, exhibiting a very minor temperature dependence. Due to a large number of parameters, errors for some constants were in the range of 50% and a certain correlation between them was seen. Figure 15 illustrates examples of such correlations.

Elongated contour plots visible in some of the graphs in Figure 15 reflect a strong correlation between some parameters. It should be, however, considered that this study represents a first example of successful one-pot transformation of citral to menthol in a continuous reactor over a supported nickel catalyst shaped to extrudates along with a binder and apparently more
menthol synthesis from citral at 40°C. A binder catalyst was prepared by extrusion and tested in one-pot reactions.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Work is needed to determine the values of kinetic parameters in a more statistically reliable way.

### EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

**Preparation of the Ni Catalyst.** Mesoporous aluminosilicate (MAS) as a support and sepiolite (Mg₂H₂SiO₉·xH₂O, Sigma-Aldrich) as a binder were dried overnight at 100°C and physically mixed in the mass ratio = 70/30, e.g., 4.2 g and 1.8 g, respectively. Methylcellulose (1.0 wt %, e.g., 0.06 g) as an organic binder (viscosity: 4000 cP, Sigma-Aldrich) was dissolved in 3 mL of water and added into the mixture of MAS and sepiolite to control the rheological properties of the final slurry. Distilled water was slowly dropped into the mixture under stirring at room temperature. The extrudates were fabricated in a cylindrical shape with a diameter of 1.4 mm using the extruder equipped with a 1.5-mm diameter-hole die plate (TBL-2, Tianjin Tianda Beiyang Chemical Co. Ltd., China) driven by a rotational velocity of 1400 rpm. Subsequently, the extrudates were dried in an oven at 100°C overnight, calcined at 500°C for 4 h in a muffle oven, and cut to a length of ca. 0.6−1.0 cm.

Ni-containing extrudates were prepared by an incipient wetness impregnation with nickel nitrate aqueous solution Ni(NO₃)₂·6H₂O (Sigma-Aldrich, >97%) to achieve the nominal nickel loading 5.7 wt %, dried overnight at 100°C and calcined at 450°C for 6 h in a muffle oven. Before catalytic run, the synthesized Ni/(MAS+Sepiolite) extrudates were reduced in the reactor in hydrogen flow (100 mL/min) at 350°C during 2.5 h with a temperature ramp of 2°C/min.

The 5 wt % Ni/MAS powder catalyst was prepared by the incipient wetness impregnation with an aqueous solution of Ni(NO₃)₂·6H₂O (CJSC Souzchimprom). Thereafter, the sample was dried at 100°C overnight and calcined at 450°C for 6 h with a temperature ramp of 2°C/min controlling decomposition of nickel nitrate by measuring the pH of the outgoing gases. Before a catalytic run, calcined Ni/MAS powder catalysts were activated in hydrogen flow at 350°C during 2 h with the temperature ramp of 2°C/min.

**Characterization of Ni Catalysts.** Fresh and spent Ni catalysts in the powder and shaped forms were characterized in detail. Inductively coupled plasma-optical emission spectrometry determined the metal concentration in the entire volume of the catalyst with the PerkinElmer Optima 5300 DV device.

Transmission electron microscopy using JEOL JEM-1400Plus was used to investigate the metal shape, particle size, and metal location.

Morphological studies were performed by scanning electron microscopy (SEM, Zeiss Leo Gemini 1530). Elemental analysis of microporous materials was conducted by energy-dispersive X-ray microanalysis using the same instrument.

Nitrogen physisorption was used to determine the pore size distribution, pore volume, and specific surface area with the Micromeritics 3Flex-3500 machine.

Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy with pyridine as a probe molecule was applied to quantify the amount and strength of Bronsted and Lewis acid sites using an FTIR spectrometer.

Powder X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns of extrudates were obtained on a Bruker D8 Advance diffractometer (Cu Kα radiation, λ = 0.15418 nm) equipped with a LynxEye position-sensitive detector. The data were collected in the 2θ range of 5−65° with a step of 0.05° and a collection time of 3 s. Phase identification was performed using the ICDD PDF-2 database.

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**Table 3. Values of Kinetic Parameters**

| constant | value    | error (%) | units |
|----------|----------|-----------|-------|
| k₁       | 52.9     | 56.8      | mol/(g bar min) |
| k₂       | 8.11     | 45.6      | mol/(g min) |
| k₃       | 3.54     | 45.5      | mol/(g min) |
| k₄       | 1.18     | 51.3      | mol/(g min) |
| k₅       | 77.6     | 56.8      | mol/(g bar min) |
| k₆       | 45.0     | 56.4      | mol/(g min) |
| η₁       | 40.2     | 57.6      | mol/(g min) |
| η₂       | 4.7      | 59.2      | mol/(g bar min) |
| η₃       | 4.07     | 60.0      | mol/(g bar min) |
| η₄       | 7.1      | 56.3      | mol/(g bar min) |
| E₁       | 80.7     | 4.7       | kJ/mol |
| E₂       | 38.1     | 10.4      | kJ/mol |
| E₃       | 37.9     | 13.0      | kJ/mol |
| E₄       | 92.2     | 18.7      | kJ/mol |
| E₅       | 45.5     | 7.9       | kJ/mol |
| E₆       | 48.8     | 13.3      | kJ/mol |
| E₇       | not reliable | not reliable | kJ/mol |
| E₈       | 56.8     | 11.5      | kJ/mol |
| E₉       | 111      | 20.2      | kJ/mol |
| E₁₀      | 40.7     | 20.7      | kJ/mol |
| ηk₁      | 749      | 52.3      | L/mol |
| ηk₄      | 4.5      | 41.6      | 1/bar |
| ηk₅      | 0.037    | 2.8       | 1/min |
| ηk₆      | 0.0175   | 8.1       | 1/min |
The average crystallite size of phases was calculated by the line broadening analysis according to the Scherrer equation.

The mechanical strength of the shaped catalyst was measured by the crush tester (SE 048, Lorentzen & Wettre) for 10 extrudates in the vertical position and 10 extrudates in the horizontal position.

Details of characterization methods and instruments are reported in our previous publications.\textsuperscript{20,23,25,26,30,42−44}

**Catalytic Tests.** The experiments of citral transformations over Ni/(MAS + Sepiolite) extrudates were carried out in a continuous trickle-bed reactor (internal diameter 1.25 cm, empty reactor volume 14.7 mL, catalyst bed volume 4.6 mL)\textsuperscript{20,23,25−27} at different temperatures 40, 50, 60, 70, and 80 °C under varied hydrogen pressures of 2.5, 5.0, and 10.0 bar. A quartz wool was placed at the bottom of the reactor, then 1 g of Ni/(MAS + Sepiolite) extrudates as well as inert quartz beads of the size in the range 0.2−0.8 mm (~18 g) were loaded inside the reactor, filling the voids between extrudates and in the reactor. Citral (cis-/trans-isomer ~1/1, ≥95.0%, Sigma-Aldrich) in cyclohexane (≥99.9%, Alfa Aesar) solution (0.086 M) was fed into the reactor with a feeding rate of 0.4 mL/min, while the hydrogen rate was 100 mL/min.

A 5 wt % Ni/MAS powder catalyst was tested in the autoclave (Parr, 300 mL). The experiment was performed over 0.2 g of the catalyst at 70 °C, 10 bar of H\textsubscript{2} with 0.086 M citral in cyclohexane, and 900 rpm.

The liquid samples were analyzed by gas chromatography with flame-ionization detection using Agilent GC 6890 N. All samples were diluted with cyclohexane as a solvent before analysis. The column was DB-1 column with a length of 30 m, diameter of 250 μm, and film thickness of 0.5 μm. Temperature program: 110 °C−0.4 °C/min−130 °C−13 °C/min−200 °C (5 min). Details are given in our previous publications.\textsuperscript{20,23,25−27}

**ASSOCIATED CONTENT**

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.oprd.1c00435.

Isotherms of adsorption/desorption (powdered and extruded catalysts), pore size distribution (powdered and extruded catalysts), parity plots for all reaction components, and XRD patterns of powdered Ni/MAS catalysts (PDF)
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Notes
The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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