

Understanding E-Commerce Shopper Behavior For Confectionery Items In India

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Confectionery items, majorly driven by low-involvement impulse purchases, have been traditionally bought from the nearest physical stores. Attractive aisles and shelves, check-out counter space, and add-ons have been driving the sales of confectionery through the traditional and modern trade channels, but, with an increase in e-commerce customers, the opportunity to tap into the impulse buying has been limited. The purpose of this research is to understand the e-commerce shopper behavior for confectionery items in India.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The source of primary data is a structured qualitative questionnaire which covered various dimensions of research questions. The findings to be validated through quantitative research. This approach allowed for a more holistic understanding of the e-commerce shopper behavior towards confectionery.

Practical Implications: The implications of the research findings can be used to curate different offerings, to formulate e-commerce shopper strategy, and to efficiently utilise the visibility assets on an e-commerce site. The theoretical implications of the findings can be further explored for adjacent category like snacks and other packaged food items.

Originality/Value: There has been research on e-commerce consumer behavior but, the e-commerce shopper behavior for confectionery items remain largely unexplored. The research will fill this gap and explain behavior patterns, preferences and attitudes of e-commerce shoppers of confectionery in India

Keywords

E-commerce shopper behavior, confectionery items, E-commerce, chocolates

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Introduction

Confectionery describes food products with a comparatively high content of sugar. Confectionery products are products primarily contains sugar or other sweeteners. Sweet baked goods are distinguished from sugar confectionery products.

Confectionery can be categorized into four divisions based on manufacturing processes and ingredients: Chocolate and Chocolate Products, Sugar Confectionery (such as chewing gum and sweets and pastries or biscuits), and Ice Cream. It is one of the biggest selling segments in the food market. According to the latest report by statista.com, the market size of the sugar confectionery industry across India is expected to reach \$2.67 billion by 2022 [11]. The Indian candy market is divided into four main categories —

1. **Sugar candy –**
 - a. Hard-Boiled Sweets
 - b. Caramels & Toffees
 - c. Gums & Jellies
 - d. Medicated Confectionery
 - e. Mints
 - f. Others (Marshmallows, Nougat, Lollipops, and Liqueur)
2. **Chocolate**
 - a. White
 - b. Milk
 - c. Dark
3. **Fine Bakery Wares**
4. **Others**
 - a. Gums
 - b. Snack Products

- c. Brand Ice creams
- d. Raw Pastes
- e. Jelly, etc

Indian confectionery market has been flooded with International as well as domestic players. Some of the prominent players in the Indian confectionery industry includes Mondelez International, Perfetti Van Melle, Mars, Nestle, Parle, Hershey's, ITC, DS Group, and many small players. A notable trend in the industry since the past several years has been that the consumers are not restricted to children but adults across all age groups as well. The global confectionery market is constantly growing owing to an increase in demand from middle class consumers across geographies [12].

In India, traditionally, confectionery has been sold through the local general and Kirana stores, and pan shops but lately the channel of retail has hit the broadest of spectrums and confectionery is sold at supermarkets, grocery stores, mass merchandisers, pharmacy stores, convenience stores, gourmet/specialty stores, department stores, health, and natural food stores, restaurants, multicultural markets, cinema halls, theatres, kiosks and tobacco stores, card and gift shops, toy stores, florists, transportation hubs and terminals, online stores on the Internet, and many others, as well as vending machines and street vendors. With this wide spectrum of retail, there arises a need to understand consumer behavior when purchasing confectionery that has, traditionally, been a low involvement item.

There has been previous work on consumer buying behavior towards confectionery in the traditional retail format, however, their behavior in the e-commerce channel has been largely unexplored. Hence, in this research, consumer

buying behavior over the online retail channel will be explored. According to the India Brand Equity Foundation, the e-commerce industry in India is projected to rise to US \$200 billion by 2026 [4]. Despite such tremendous growth, the contribution to sales of confectionery through e-commerce has been extremely low. With rising market demand for convenience and advanced technology and other enabling factors, online FMCG growth is growing worldwide: Nielsen's Future Opportunities report of FMCG E-commerce predicts four times faster than offline sales. The enormous growth in e-commerce makes it a significant platform with growing importance in the near future [5].

Since the online and offline shopping experiences are unlike, there are many visibility assets and properties available in the online retail channel to advertise and tap into the impulse purchase behavior. Banner ads, categories, Sponsored ads, Brand Stores are some of the many assets to advertise and push the sales of the products online. E-commerce shopper behavior has been largely unplumbed and this research paper will try to explore the e-commerce shopper behavior towards confectionery in India. With the gigantic growth in e-commerce in India, it is important to explore and understand e-commerce shopper behavior. The study aims to explore the various aspects of consumer behavior, their preferences, and passion points for buying confectionery online.

Literature Review

Confectionery purchase is majorly driven by low involvement impulse purchases in India. Impulse purchasing refers to unplanned, sudden buying behavior, often accompanied by a sense of excitement and pleasure and/or a strong urge to buy. To understand product purchase and usage, behavioral indicators such as preferences (loyalty), purchasing behavior, and product usage and consumption rates are critical [8]. It should be noted that the reception and adoption of new products on the food market is mainly influenced by the enjoyment of consuming the product, the sense of novelty, the anticipation of a low health risk, and also the anticipation of health benefits from eating such a product [9]. Another study demonstrated how as disposable income increase, the demand for premium and super-premium sweet brands is also expected to increase, while the demand for private label brands drops, although these cheaper products will remain popular among less affluent consumers.

A. Findings of prior research

According to a study on Consumers Behavior Towards Innovative Confectionery Products, lack of free time and increased purchasing power make consumers look for frozen pastry because of eased preparation, but also for the multitude of applications / versatility. The major reason for purchasing a confectionery product is for consumer's own satisfaction [6]. Consumption and preferences of confectionery products are dynamic and are affected by several variables. Some of them are the appearance of the packaging, traditional recipe, price promotion, ingredients facts, brands, etc.[9]. Stress more on points. Previous studies indicate that there is a positive response to certain colors

when it comes to confectionery where purple is perceived as the most conducive and orange as the least conducive color to the purchasing of chocolate confectionery.

Regarding online purchase behavior, the findings of previous studies show a connection between online shopping behavior and purchase intention [13]. Theoretically, it has been suggested that unplanned purchases can be increased because of the layout, as all the products are in front of the customer, however, this is not the case with online shopping. According to a study on impulse buying behavior in grocery retailing the model indicates that pre-shopping behaviour directly affects impulse buying impetus: supporting our main hypothesis, higher pre-shopping planning contributes to lower impulse purchase rates [10]. The decision to order online is most likely to be affected by perceived behavioural influence, social and perceived enjoyment, the aggregate of people's attitudes surrounding them. To build and maintain a good customer relationship, an e-commerce website should understand consumer buying habits [3].

Another study confirms the positive correlation between impetuous buying and extraversion. With the opening up of economy combined with progressively evolving retail, this may be a sign of a change in behavior from 'shopping for need' to 'shopping for fun, and even occasionally touching the point of 'shopping for greed' [1] but the impulse buying in an online environment can be entirely different.

The economic factors alone cannot explain variations in sales and decision of purchase by consumers, but it is influenced by many psychological and sociological factors. In previous works, it has been found that family or joint decision making affects the purchase behavior. According to Sheth family decision-making model, joint decision-making appears to prevail in middle-class households-newly married and close-knit families with few defined family roles. A consumer will also search for alternative solutions to a given problem before making a final decision. The process of consumer search, i.e. the mental and physical activities that consumers undertake to provide information about recognized problems, involves identifying alternatives. Hence, a consumer will also search for alternative solutions to a given problem before making a final decision. Consumer decision-making therefore also involves assessing alternative decisions, i.e. the activity of identifying alternative solutions to a problem and determining the relative merits of each problem. Major factors influencing consumer behavior, economic (Utility, Want, and need) and non-economic aspects (environmental factors and individual factors) need to be considered in research. According to another study, impulse transactions account for nearly 50% of all consumer spending. While impulse purchases were observed in the brick-and-mortar retail environment, they were not investigated in the online retail environment [7]. The online retail environment of 2020 is quite different from the environment in 2004, hence, it was necessary to understand their behaviour in the current situation in India. Communicating the deal in a popup is a more effective position and presentation mode than placing the offer in the checkout page and strengthens the consumer's probability of making an impulse purchase.

Although there have been many studies to understand the online purchase behavior of shoppers, the studies do not

answer the questions about the purchase behavior of shoppers when buying confectionery online in India. Detailed studies pertaining to shopper behavior while buying confectionery online in India is almost non-existent hence a detailed study to understand their preferences was required to gain clarity on the topic.

Research Methodology

This study explores how e-commerce shopper behaves and what is their purchase behavior when buying confectionery online. The objective was to identify the passion points and pain points when buying confectionery online and explore any trends in their purchase behavior. The methodology aspect discusses how data was obtained, synthesized, and analyzed to achieve research objectives.

A. Overview

For the purpose of the research, qualitative interviews were taken to generate some insights about e-commerce shopper behavior. 30 respondents, spread across different age groups, were approached for the purpose of the qualitative research. The age groups were divided into 20-30 years, 30-40 years, and more than 40 years. The respondents were also spread across geographies and socio-economic classes in India. While the Male: Female ratio was 13:17, 23 of the respondents were from Tier 1 cities and 7 were from Tier 2 cities in India and the majority (28) of them belonged to the A1 group according to New Consumer Classification System or NCCS. This gives a fair picture of the type of demography that is e-commerce shoppers in India.

A qualitative study was done since the aim was to understand views and perceptions of e-commerce shoppers towards confectionery in India and there have not been many studies on the same. The qualitative approach helped to explore new thoughts and shopper insights. Its methods are exploratory and seek to unravel the respondent's opinions, thoughts, and feelings. It was also important to more deeply explore personal experiences and perceptions when buying confectionery online. It was found that respondents were freely able to explain and express which might not be possible in a closed-ended questionnaire. This gave the answer to why and a good base for quantitative research.

In phase 1 of the study, the 30 respondents were interviewed with open-ended questions to generate qualitative insights. The general criterion for inclusion for this stage of research was that a respondent must be an e-commerce shopper in India. In the telephonic interview, respondents were asked about their purchase habits, frequency, preferences, and impulse purchase triggers. On the basis of the responses, a quantitative questionnaire was made to test the validity of the insights generated. A quantitative survey also serves as a good method to study opinions, behaviors, attitudes, and other defined variables in a bigger sample population. It also uses measurable data to articulate facts and uncover patterns. The sampling frame ensured socioeconomic diversity among participants.

For the purpose of quantitative research, a survey was conducted on 100 e-commerce shoppers with a sampling frame that ensured socio-economic diversity among

participants. Females constituted 51% of the participants whereas the rest 49% constituted Male participants. This shows that there is no specific gender that dominates one over the other. 78% of the respondents belonged to the A1 category according to the New Consumer Classification System which categorizes consumers on the basis of their highest educational qualification and the number of consumer durables owned by the family. New Consumer Classification System or the NCCS, was developed following through study of various discriminators, which would best define a household's buying power [2]. This type of classification is dynamic and has the ability to change over time and it adequately captures the affordability quotient of the household. 21% of the respondents belonged to the A2 category and there was a negligible percentage of respondents belonging to other classification groups. This gives an adequate representation of the type of population that uses e-commerce in India. For geographical classification, 58% of the respondents were from Tier I cities in India whereas 42% of the respondents were from Tier II cities in India. This can be attributed to the absence or low presence of e-commerce in Tier III cities in India and the lack of a viable market for e-commerce in Tier III cities.

B. Data Collection

For the purpose of qualitative research, the general measure for inclusion provided that the study respondents should be e-commerce shoppers in India and must have made an online purchase in the 3 months prior to the study after taking into account the prevailing situation in the country. The study used supplementary eligibility requirements to promote diversity in terms of age, gender, and socio-economic classification. The respondents were approached through snowball sampling. Professional standards on confidentiality of information and privacy were established and the participants' consent was obtained before entering the qualitative study. A structured questionnaire guide was prepared to cover every aspect of the research. The questionnaire guide was given structural flow to capture the insights of various kinds of responses.

The in-depth interviews concentrated on what makes the respondents buy confectionery online and what affects their purchase decision. Traditionally, in the brick and mortar retail format, confectionery sales have been driven by impulse purchases because of the merchandising, product placement, shelf placement, and packaging. But in the online channel, these factors are absent, hence, they were also asked about their impulse purchases and what caused them to make an impulse purchase. The data was collected between March 2020 to June 2020. Detailed telephonic interviews were taken considering the feasibility of approaching the respondents and the current situation in the country. The telephonic interviews were digitally recorded after the informed consent of the participants and lasted 25-45 minutes. Afterward, for quality control, the recordings were converted to transcripts, and to ensure that the transcripts were comprehensive and precise, the transcripts were matched to the audio recordings. Errors and faults in the transcripts were also amended and the transcript was structured. The transcribed data were also coded, redefined, and adjusted to arrive at insights.

After cleaning the data from the qualitative research, some insights were arrived at but to validate the findings of the research, a quantitative survey was conducted. For this, a structured quantitative questionnaire was prepared and shared with 100 participants who have made an online purchase. The primary criterion for inclusion was that they must have purchased an FMCG product online since a notable difference can be spotted between the purchase behavior towards FMCG and Non-FMCG items.

In the first section, the aim was to arrive at the penetration of confectionery and penetration of e-commerce shoppers of confectionery. After which, the participants were asked about their motivations and passion points for buying confectionery on online and offline retail formats.

Results & Analysis

For the purpose of analysis of data, no statistical tools have been used as the sample size was small for qualitative study. Of the 30 participants in the qualitative study, 17 were females and 13 were males. None of the respondents were younger than 20 years, 12 of them were in the 20-30 age group and 10 of them were in the 30-40 age group whereas 8 of the respondents were more than 40 years old. 24 of these participants or 80% of the participants bought confectionery online. 15 out of the 24 participants who bought confectionery online were female constituting 62.5% of the total e-commerce shoppers of confectionery. 23 out of these respondents were from Tier I cities in India accounting for approximately 77% of the total participants. According to the India Brand Equity Foundation, metro cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi accounted for most of the online shopping in absolute numbers [4]. 11 of the 24 participants who bought confectionery online belonged to the 20-30 age group which gives a clear indication of the age group which is more likely to buy confectionery online. A clear indication of the demography of e-commerce shoppers in India. Data about their work status was also collected and 14 out of the 30 participants were employed. Housewives contributed 30% of the respondents while the rest were either students or unemployed.

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERVIEWS.

Participants in Interview	n (%)
Age (years)	
a. Mean	34
b. Median	33
Gender	
a. Male	13 (43.33%)
b. Female	17 (56.67%)
City	
a. Tier I	23 (76.67%)
b. Tier II	07 (23.33%)
Employment Status	
a. Employed	14 (46.67%)
b. Unemployed	09 (30%)
c. Student	07 (23.33%)
Buy Confectionery Online	
a. Yes	24 (80%)
b. No	06 (20%)
Mode Of Interview	

Telephonic

30

The most commonly purchased item was Cookies, purchased by 22 of the respondents, followed by chocolates, candies, and other confectionery items. When asked about why the item was purchased, consumption after a meal, snacking, personal/consumer preference, and a desire for a change in taste came out to be the most prominent responses. Further, a clear majority of the participants bought confectionery online. Traditionally assumed to be consumed by young children, teenagers, and young adults only, confectionery was found to be consumed by the whole family of the participants. The majority of the respondents prefer to buy either bulk packs or multiple mono packs of confectionery items when buying online. This shows that when buying online, people prefer to buy in bulk rather than making small ticket size purchases considering the frequency of online shopping is low as compared to other retail formats.

The top reasons for selecting a confectionery product when buying online came out to brand, preferred taste/ flavor, packaging of the confectionery product, price of the confectionery product, to try a new product/variant, discounts & offers and ingredients in the products. For 10 participants, the preferred channel for buying confectionery was still offline retail, i.e., general trade and modern trade while 8 of the participants preferred to buy confectionery online and only 6 of the participants were comfortable with both retail formats for confectionery. Half of those who preferred to buy confectionery online belonged to the 20-30 age group. The respondents were also asked their frequency of buying confectionery online and their shopping mission whenever they buy confectionery. General questions regarding the shopping behavior on the app, money spent on confectionery, impulse purchases, and promotional sensitivity towards confectionery were also asked to gather more insights. The majority (17) of the respondents agreed they have bought an item out of impulse while buying online and the most common impulse purchase item came out to be confectionery, dominated by chocolate purchases. For 16 of the respondents, their impulse purchase resulted in buying a food item. The main reasons for impulse purchase were:

1. To try a new product/variant 7
2. Advertisements 4
3. Visuals 3

Other reasons were – discounts and offers, packaging, suggestion/recommendation by the e-commerce mobile application. While the advertisement recall was low among the participants and only 8 agreed to remember an advertisement on confectionery while buying online, a clear majority of the respondents (20) said they would react positively to an advertisement or promotion on confectionery when buying online.

Basis the insights arrived at from the qualitative research, a quantitative questionnaire was prepared to validate the findings of the qualitative study and to see if it can be a good representation of the overall population. For the quantitative study, the general criterion for inclusion was that the participants should be e-commerce shoppers and must have made an online purchase in the 3 months prior to the study. The sample size of the study was 100. Table 2

represents the tests of normality in data and it was found that the Sig value indicates that the data was not normally distributed.

TABLE 2. TESTS OF NORMALITY

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Gender	.345	100	.000	.636	100	.000

a. *Lilliefors Significance Correction*

Females constituted 51% of the participants and approximately 51% of the women were aged between 20 and 30 years, equal percentage of women were aged between 30 and 40 years and more than 40 years. 47% of the males belonged to the 20-30 age group, followed by 30% in the 30-40 age group. 28% of the male respondents were aged 40 and above. The majority of the respondents were aged between 20-30 years. This age group accounted for 49% of the e-commerce shoppers, followed by respondents in the 30-40 age group, accounting for 25% of the e-commerce shoppers. There were only 2% of the respondents below the age of 20 and the rest of the e-commerce shoppers were aged 40 and above. It was also seen in the previous study where shoppers between 25 and 34 years of age were more engaged on e-commerce platforms and a growing number of elderly folks started shopping online more and more [4]. Respondents from Tier-I cities in India accounted for 58% of the e-commerce shoppers for FMCG products whereas the rest 42% accounted for e-commerce shoppers from Tier-II cities in India. There were no respondents from Tier III cities in India and this can be attributed to the lack of infrastructure and a viable market in these cities in India. The respondents were also classified according to the New Consumer Classification System and 78% of them belonged to A1, 21% to A2 and only 1% of the respondents belonged to the B2 classification group.

TABLE 3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Participants in survey	n
Age (years)	
c. Mean	33
d. Median	29
Gender	
c. Male	45
d. Female	55
City	
c. Tier I	58
d. Tier II	42
Employment Status	
d. Employed	40
e. Unemployed	19
f. Self-employed	07
g. Student	34
Buy Confectionery	
a. Yes	90
b. No	10
Buy Confectionery Online	
c. Yes	52
d. No	48
NCCS	

a. A1	78
b. A2	21
c. Other	01

A sweeping 90% of the sample bought confectionery but only 52% bought confectionery online. To ensure this was not attributed to the lack of awareness about the presence of confectionery online, the respondents who did not buy confectionery online were asked if they were aware of the same and 90% of those who do not buy confectionery online agreed to be aware of the presence of confectionery online.

TABLE 4. MAJOR REASONS FOR NOT BUYING CONFECTIONERY ONLINE BY THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

Reasons	n (%)
I cannot wait for delivery for immediate consumption	20 (41.67%)
It is not required	17 (35.42%)
I am reminded to buy only when I see it	16 (33.33%)
I do not prefer to buy food items online	14 (29.17%)
I want to check quality, expiry, adulteration, etc	14 (29.17%)
I do not get my desired brand/size/variant/product online	07 (14.58%)

The major reason for not buying confectionery online came out to be the fact that the respondents cannot wait for delivery for the immediate consumption of confectionery. Other reasons came out to be the lack of trust in online delivery, fear of adulteration, price, etc. When buying confectionery online, it becomes difficult for the customers to check the expiry date of the product, contents, and other details on the packaging of the product.

TABLE 5. CONFECTIONERY ITEMS BOUGHT ONLINE BY THE RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

Confectionery Items Bought	n (%)
Cookies	44 (84.62%)
Chocolates	39 (75%)
Cakes & Other baked products	26 (50%)
Candy	12 (23%)
Toffee	10 (19.23%)
Mint	07 (13.46%)
Chewing gum	05 (9.62%)
Jelly	05 (9.62%)
Lollipop	05 (9.62%)
Other	22 (42.31%)

The most commonly bought item was cookies, bought by 85% of the respondents. Chocolates were the second most commonly bought item and were bought by 75% of the respondents. While cookies, chocolates, and cakes and other baked products were popularly bought online, candy, toffee, mint, chewing gum, jelly, lollipop, and other items were not as popular when buying online. Other items included marshmallow, sweet wafers, cotton candy, ice-cream, flavored nuts, sweets, spreads, and other products.

TABLE 6. CONSUMERS OF CONFECTIONERY

Confectionery items bought for	n (%)
Self	12 (23.07%)

Child	06 (11.54%)
Family	36 (69.23%)
Other	03 (05.77%)

TABLE 7. REASONS FOR BUYING CONFECTIONERY

Reasons	n (%)
I like it	29 (55.76%)
My child/family likes it	27 (51.92%)
For consumption after meal	23 (44.23%)
Change in taste	22 (42.30%)
It was an ingredient for a dish	09 (17.30%)
To try new product/variant	07 (13.46%)

As presented in Table 6, it was found that the majority of customers bought confectionery for the whole family. Table 7 lists the various reasons for buying confectionery. The respondents were asked to select all the reasons that apply. The most common reason was the personal preference of the e-commerce shopper (32%). The other prominent responses were: the choice of consumer (30%), after meal consumption (26%), the desire for a change in taste (25%).

TABLE 8. PREFERRED PACKS OF CONFECTIONERY BY THE RESPONDENTS WHEN BUYING ONLINE

Preferred Packs	n (%)
Multiple mono packs of different products	21 (40.38%)
Single unit of different products	20 (38.46%)
Family pack	11 (21.15%)
Bundle Pack	07 (13.46%)

According to Table 8, the research demonstrated that consumers preferred to buy single or multiple mono packs of different confectionery products when buying online. Bundle packs and family packs were not as preferred as mono packs of confectionery products.

TABLE 9. THE IMPORTANCE GIVEN TO VARIOUS FACTORS WHEN BUYING CONFECTIONERY ONLINE

The respondents were asked to rank the importance given to various factors while buying confectionery online on a 5 point Likert scale and their responses were recorded.

	Extremely Important	Quite Important	Neutral	Quite Unimportant	Not Important At All
Preferred taste	44	4	3	1	0
Preferred Flavor	34	11	6	1	0
Brand	29	13	7	2	1
Price	17	17	14	4	0
Packaging	15	12	15	7	3
Availability	15	16	10	11	0
Ingredients	14	11	8	11	8
Fat Content	11	10	9	11	11
Discounts & Offers	14	18	18	2	0

To try a new product/variant	10	11	20	9	2
Advertisements	1	10	11	20	10
Wide Variety	8	18	12	7	7
Convenience	7	18	9	11	7
Pack Size	6	17	12	5	12
Influence Of Others	3	5	14	7	23

A clear representation of the above data can be seen in the following chart.

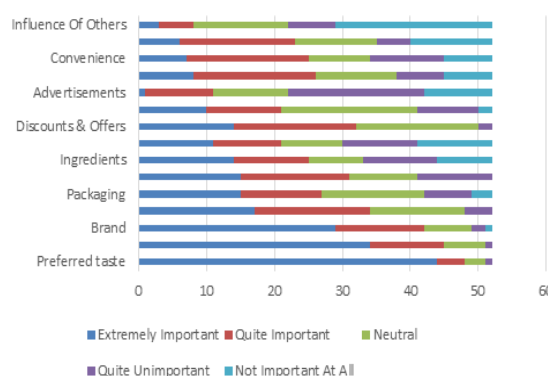


Fig 1. The importance given to various factors when buying confectionery online

For 44%, their preferred taste is extremely important while buying confectionery online, for 34%, their preferred flavor is extremely important, and for 29% Brand is extremely important. Approximately one fourth are not affected by any influence of others while buying confectionery. There were mixed opinions about the fat content in a confectionery. And the majority of the respondents do not consider the advertisement to be an important factor while buying confectionery online. Hence, a major conclusion about the consumer preferences and factors crucial to them can be drawn. The focus can be shifted to communicating the brand, flavor, and taste of the product.

TABLE 10. LEVEL OF COMFORT OF RESPONDENTS WHEN BUYING CONFECTIONERY ONLINE

Level of Comfort	n (%)
Totally Comfortable	32 (61.54%)
Somewhat Comfortable	17 (32.69%)
Neutral	02 (3.85%)
Somewhat Uncomfortable	01 (1.92%)
Totally Uncomfortable	00 (0.00%)

None of the respondents were uncomfortable buying confectionery online. While buying online a positive response to the comfort level was noted.

Other factors: Preferred channel for buying confectionery, role dominance in deciding the confectionery product to be bought, level of planning before buying confectionery online, frequency of buying confectionery online

The majority, 24%, prefer to buy confectionery from either channel, however only 11% prefer to buy it online only. In 22% of the cases, the child plays the primary role in deciding the confectionery to be bought followed by the wife in 21% of the cases. For 52% of those who buy confectionery online, it is a planned purchase, while for one-fourth of them, it is an impulse purchase. This gives a clear indication of how impulse purchases of a consumer can be tapped in online retail. This can be done with the help of various visibility assets available on e-commerce retailers like banner ads, sponsored ads, and sponsored product and brand ads. 62% bought it once in a month, 25% bought it twice in a month and the rest bought it thrice or more than 3 times a month. It is majorly bought from the category itself and a relatively lower share of buys it from the deals discounts and offers section.

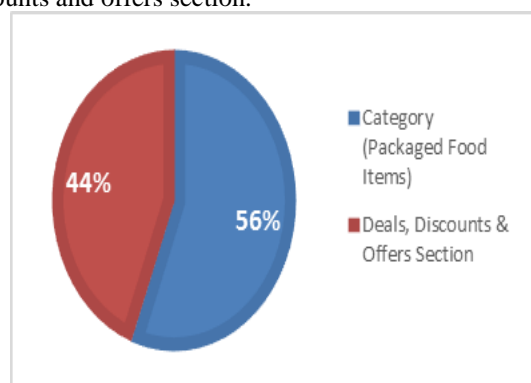


Fig 2. Preferred section on the ecommerce site for buying confectionery items

TABLE 11. TABULAR REPRESENTATION OF IMPULSE PURCHASE

Impulse Purchase	n (%)
Have made an impulse purchase	36 (36%)
Never made an impulse purchase	43 (43%)
Not sure	21 (21%)

TABLE 12. MAJOR REASONS FOR IMPULSE PURCHASE WHEN BUYING ONLINE

Reasons for Impulse Purchase	n (%)
Discounts & Offers	40 (40%)
To try a new product/variant	26 (26%)
Advertisement	17 (17%)
Visuals	17 (17%)
Word-of-mouth	16 (16%)
Recommendation/suggestion by the app	11 (11%)
Packaging	09 (09%)

Out of the 100 respondents, 36% agreed to have made an impulse purchase online. 42% of those who agreed to have made an online purchase bought confectionery. As can be observed from the table above, majority of people will make an impulse purchase to avail of the discounts and offers available online followed by the desire to try a new product or variant. Advertisements, visuals, word-of-mouth, and recommendations and suggestion by the e-commerce app also have an influence on the impulse purchases of a consumer.

TABLE 13. TABULAR REPRESENTATION OF PROMOTIONAL SENSITIVITY TO CONFECTIONERY ITEMS WHEN BUYING ONLINE

Promotional Sensitivity	n (%)
Sensitive	49 (49%)
Not Sensitive	19 (19%)
Not sure/May be	32 (32%)

A majority of respondents agreed to be positively impacted by promotions, advertisements, discounts, and offers on confectionery products. Almost half of the respondents (49%) agreed to be sensitive to promotions on confectionery.

The findings of the quantitative research were in line with qualitative research. This paper allows organizations to more fully comprehend their consumer needs and strengthen their strategy of customer service.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of e-commerce shopper behavior while buying confectionery online in India. After referring to previous literature, a qualitative study was conducted and insights were generated. To validate the findings of the qualitative study, a quantitative survey was conducted. The results indicated that e-commerce shoppers between the age of 20 and 30 years are more likely to buy confectionery online than any other age group. The study also demonstrates that the most common confectionery product bought online were cookies followed by chocolates and confectionery is bought for the family. When buying online, it was found that multiple mono packs of different products are bought and more importance is given to the preferred taste, preferred flavor, brand, price, discounts & offers, packaging, and availability is given. It was also demonstrated that unlike offline retail, online confectionery purchases are planned and those who made an impulse purchase while buying online attributed this to the discounts & Offers, the desire to try a new product/variant, advertisements, visuals, and word-of-mouth.

This study found that the younger age group is more likely to buy confectionery online, hence, the communication strategy used in the ads on e-commerce sites should be targeted towards this age group. It was also demonstrated that, when buying online, multiple mono packs of different products are preferred. Hence it would be useful in planning the best practices for e-commerce. The data indicates the importance given to various aspects/factors when buying confectionery online. These factors can be emphasized when planning the presence of confectionery on e-commerce sites and apps. The data contributes a clear understanding of the various reasons accounting for the impulse purchase. It was found that discounts & offers, the desire to experiment and try a new product or variant, advertisements, visuals, and word-of-mouth can be effective in tapping online impulse purchases. This study sought to identify the price, quality and brand orientations for FMCGs in the context of one of the largest developing countries such as India by exploring their consumer decision-making styles (CDMSs), in particular their price awareness, quality awareness, brand awareness, and brand commitment.

The results build on existing evidence from a similar study where the major reason for purchasing confectionery

products was for personal satisfaction (49.46%), followed by anniversary reasons (32.26%) and meeting with friends was the third reason for purchasing choice of confectionery products (16.78%) [6]. Contrary to a previous study that indicates that the most important factors when buying confectionery are: products freshness, quality, ingredients used, it was found in this study that the taste, flavor, brand, price, discounts and offers, packaging, and availability were given more importance when buying online.

The results do not tell the preferred pack size in grams as the recall rate for grammage was found to be low in the qualitative research. Since there are various e-commerce sites in India that sell confectionery, it was difficult to ascertain the most preferred property on e-commerce for buying confectionery. Further research is needed to establish the preferred brand, taste – on the basis of the degree of sweetness, flavor, packaging, pack size – in grams.

Conclusion & Recommendation

Today's customers live in a rapidly changing dynamic environment that transforms from regional to worldwide, supply to demand, passive to interactive, and linked to insular. Their attitude changes when they are more educated, knowledgeable, judicious and more impatient fueled by the Internet based social networking. In the current times, consumers are empowered like never before and expect to get what they want, the way they want it, quickly and at ever better value driven by the worldwide economic crisis. They enjoy being able to express their views, whether to a corporation or to their colleagues, family and friends. 90% of the sample were consumers of confectionery products but online buyers of confectionery were 52%. The preferred taste, flavor, brand, packaging, price, availability of products and ingredients in a confectionery product attract consumers to buy it online.

The principal driving force for the rise of confectionery products is its wide range of products, the large number of innovations and the growing importance of healthier products, which often have some additional characteristics, thus further attracting customers and increasing the off take of confectionery products. Consumer trust was found to be a significant factor in deciding the retail format and the respondents attributed the reluctance to buy confectionery online to the need for immediate consumption, the need to check the quality, expiry, adulteration in confectionery product and the need to be reminded to buy confectionery. E-commerce portfolio of products is different than offline retail and usually large-sized stock keeping units are present in e-commerce. It was found to be a factor responsible for the reluctance to buy confectionery online.

The findings of the research can be used in forming the e-commerce shopper strategy for confectionery products in India. Designers and retailers are also supplied with instructions on how to take advantage of the benefits of being able to see the product in an online environment. A clear majority was found to be sensitive to promotions on confectionery products, hence, discounts and offers can be of high significance in driving e-commerce sales of these items. More than half of the respondents bought confectionery from the category itself instead of the 'discounts section', hence the discounts, offers, and

promotions should be visible to the consumer in the category itself. Content is also found to be a major driver of sales in e-commerce. The e-commerce portfolio of confectionery products can be formulated in such a way that it caters to the masses. Compared to previous studies, this study has shown an increased explanatory power of purchase intent and online shopping actions. This also offers recommendations to focus on the strengths and eliminate the shortcomings for future research. Just like any other study, this research has some shortcomings, such as the sample size selected was small. Thus, future study is suggested to dive deep on the various aspects of consumer preferences related to online shopping.

Limitations

A number of notable limitations apply to this analysis, as is the case for any research piece. Those are mentioned below:

1. Environmental Factors in Probing Respondents:

Time of day is likely to be a relevant factor relating to the decision making of an individual. Research by Chetthamrongchai and Davies (2000) showed that customers at various times of the day show different purchasing behaviors. Perhaps, respondents who answered the morning questionnaire, a period seen as less conducive to chocolate consumption, may have been unenthusiastic about buying chocolate in general. By comparison, those who answer the questionnaire at lunchtime may have replied more assertively and positively when chocolate is typically considered to be more appropriate for consumption.

2. The influence of exogenous variables on buying behavior:

This research didn't challenge the familiarity of customers with the category of chocolate, their consumption patterns, etc. Many of those consumption figures may have affected their respective views and, thus, may have responded to those colors. In fact, the shopping incentive may have affected the decision to purchase and neutralize traditional purchasing behavior. This may further serve to distort findings.

3. Most Preferred Brand of Confectionery:

There are a plethora of confectionery brands – international, local, private label, available online. The most preferred brand by the consumers was not ascertained in this research due to the numerous brand available. The brand also affects the purchase decision of a consumer.

4. Generalizability:

The study is focused on the consumers in India only and the results cannot be generalized across the world.

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