

Consumers look for comfort in challenging times

In periods of stress, consumers seek comfort in familiar foods.
Where better to go than confectionery?



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The future is ...

Predicting the future is risky, to put it mildly

Consumers are split on what their lives will be like post-COVID:

- Half look forward to their lives returning to post pandemic ways
- But half agree that the pandemic has encouraged them to live their lives differently after the pandemic
- Confectionery has remained a strong category through the pandemic
- The category provides a range of solutions... from comfort and ritual to nostalgia and reward

51%

of US consumers are looking forward to their lives going back to the way it was before the pandemic

In troubled times, consumers are turning to confectionery... here's why

Comfort

The isolation and fear of the unknown generated by the COVID-19 pandemic has driven consumers to **seek comfort in familiar foods**.

Traditional, dependable confectionery products have a well-established track record as "comfort food" for stressful occasions.

Nostalgia

For many consumers, **the present is frightening and the future is unknown**.

They are likely to **look to the past for solace**, and for a reminder of what was, and what can be again.

The reliance on nostalgia is already well established; watch for it to grow in the months ahead across categories.

But, also for fun

Consumers may **lean on familiar brands** to provide the emotional support they need.

But, **they are also experiencing a sense of boredom** as social distancing become tedious.

A **new flavor, texture or color** of a dependable treat provides a boost when people are figuring out how much they can do "outside."

Candy provides relaxation, ritual and reward

Relaxation

Sweets are strongly associated with relaxation. Although new launches promote the addition of relaxation ingredients, there is an opportunity to remind consumers that relaxation can come from a range of sweet products in their "usual" form.

Ritual

Rituals that contribute to mental wellness (coffee or tea breaks, "me time," and other opportunities that give consumers a moment to pause and re-center themselves) should be celebrated. Consumers identify sweets with these occasions; manufacturers should promote usage tied to such rituals.

Reward

Many consumers reward themselves with sweets. With so much attention being paid to mental wellness and the need for emotional support, brands can do more to identify products as rewards for a range of achievements and accomplishments.

Looking for comfort in the reliable has led consumers to lean on confectionery

Given the tumult the world has experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not surprising that the importance of comfort food has become more pronounced.

We know that stockpiling was a major trend as the pandemic took hold... we've all heard about the run on toilet paper.

But consumers wanted to make sure they are equipped with other comforts - candy, baked goods, snacks.

- Even one year after the pandemic took hold on the US, more than half of consumers are still making larger stock-up grocery purchases.
- A third of consumers agree that food has mainly been a source of comfort for them during COVID-19

68%

Of US consumers agree that their favorite food or drink reminds them of happy times

Comfort from confectionery - familiar brands and popular flavors, with the occasional twist

Skittles created buzz around a popular flavor



Starburst innovated around its core brand with a flavor change



Classic Swedish Fish continues to be a strong brand



Chocolate confectionery also leans on the reliable, with some twists and innovation to keep consumers interested



The ever-popular Reese's peanut butter cups took on a green hue for Halloween



M&Ms innovates around color



Kit Kat innovates around flavor

Nostalgia is a major driver for confectionery purchase


63%

of chocolate eaters agree that they like the same brand they did when they were kids.

Even before COVID-19, consumers enjoyed experiences and products that reminded them of their past.

Consumers continue to look to confectionery for the nostalgic feelings it brings them: in the US, 63% of chocolate eaters agree that they like the same type of chocolate now that they did when they were kids, for example.

And the desire for old and familiar explains the enduring popularity of long-lived confectionery brands such as Hershey (on the market in the US since 1900) or Cadbury Dairy Milk (for sale in the UK since 1905).



Nostalgia is strong in challenging times: Tootsie Roll, which has been on the market for more than a century, was a top seller over the past year

The brand that “lasts a long time”

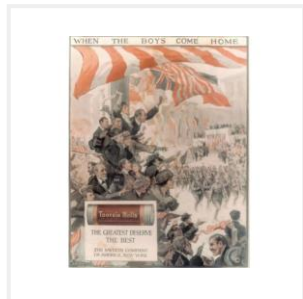
- Tootsie Roll was launched in 1896
- The slogan, logo and packaging have remained generally unchanged for decades.
- The pandemic has had a lot to do with Tootsie Roll’s position as a top-selling candy:
 - Consumers looked for reliable comforts when they were fearful, locked down, and confused
 - Sales of familiar brands saw increases across categories; confectionery was no different

26%

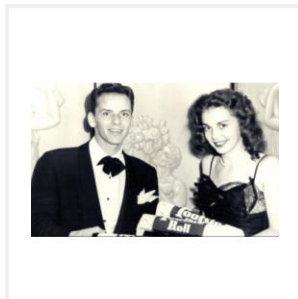
Of US consumers agree that they have turned to food/drink for comfort more often during the COVID-19 pandemic

Tootsie Roll has history behind it

Long-lived brands have the advantage of history, and it keeps up with popular trends, without major changes



Popular through two World Wars
Tootsie Rolls were crowd-pleasers and offered support to the US military through two World Wars.



Celebrity status came early to the brand
Frank Sinatra was an early "spokesmodel" for the brand.



Keeping up with social trends
Using social media and packaging, the brand has kept up with a number of social trends, promoting significant holidays and other events.

While looking to the old and familiar, consumers are also interested in innovation

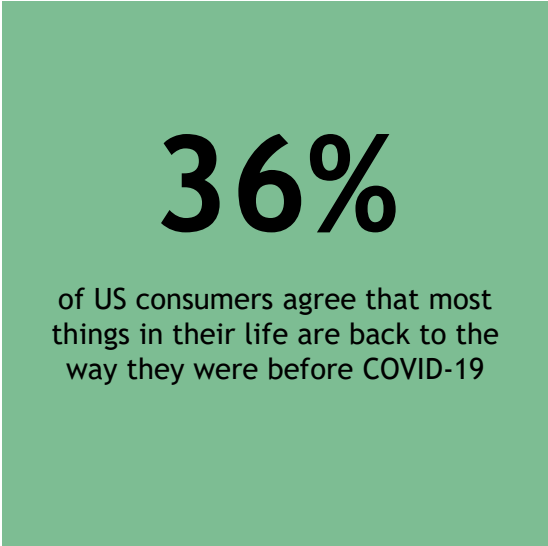
While confectionery can depend on its **strong nostalgia factor** to provide consumers with security and comfort, there is also room to launch new and innovative products.

Even with all the challenges of the pandemic, consumers are still interested in the new and the different:

In the US, for example,

- **77% of consumers agree that they love trying new experiences**
- **75% agree that they look for fun in all aspects of life**

That leaves confectionery with a lot of room to maneuver, with a chance to launch new flavors and textures of the “old and reliable” as well as innovating with completely new products



36%

of US consumers agree that most things in their life are back to the way they were before COVID-19

Familiar brands take one step beyond the expected



Ever-popular Starburst shifts texture from chewy to gummy



Sour Patch innovates by changing the size of the candies



Jelly Belly leverages the “ugly produce” trend by launching misshapen jelly beans

New flavors range across sweet and spicy



Inspiration from alcoholic beverages
Sugarfina Truly Hard Seltzer
Pineapple Bears



Spicy flavor notes
Vero Pica Chili Pepper Covered
Tamarind gummies



Flavors from other categories
Jelly Belly Krispy Kreme Doughnut
Flavored Jelly Beans

Chocolate confectionery, too, innovates around flavor, texture and shape



Dove chocolate launches white chocolate with pumpkin pie and graham flavored crisps



Antidote chocolate takes flavors to a new level: this bar has raki-anis seeds and sun-dried tomato



Sugarfina plays with shape of packaging and product to launch salted caramel gelato chocolate

A few steps, but not too far



Ferrero Rocher Milk Chocolate Bonbons



Ferrero Rocher milk chocolate bar

Except for a few Easter products, the Ferrero Rocher bonbon retains its iconic shape. But, the brand is now available in a chocolate block, broadening its reach.

"Flattening the curve"

In the UK, Terry's has transformed its milk chocolate orange (a wrapped sphere of chocolate that divides into individual chocolate segments) into a tablet that replicates the shape of the segments.



Terry's Milk Chocolate Orange



Terry's Milk Chocolate Orange Bar

Analyst POV

The pandemic has helped the confectionery industry... and the confectionery industry has helped consumers during the pandemic.

Consumers are extremely brand loyal, supporting core brands for decades - Tootsie Roll is an excellent example of a brand that can stay the course for more than 100 years. Their loyalty reflects their desire for security and their nostalgic wish that life can “return to what it was.”

But consumers are also looking for the next most exciting thing, be it a new shape, texture, or flavor and the buzz generated by small upstart brands is worth monitoring because they are looking forward to new and exciting experiences as their lives go on to the next normal.



Meet the Expert



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**The world's leading market
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