

International Sweets and Biscuits Fair 2020

Consumers in Europe assess sweets positively as a luxury food

The consumers in five European countries are mainly of the opinion that "as a luxury food, sweets, when consumed moderately, are a good thing." In a survey on the consumption and buying preferences that was carried out in December 2019 in Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, France and Spain, this opinion was stated by between 60 and 83 percent of the respondents depending on the respective country.

The Berlin-based market research company, POSpulse, carried out an in-app survey in the five countries, with 500 respondents each, on behalf of SWEETS GLOBAL NETWORK. As such, the overall survey, the distribution of the age and gender groups of which were comparable, represents around 60% of the consumers in Europe or 70% of the European GDP.

The most important results of this survey:

- **Sweets are popular with the consumers across the board.**
- **Sweets are mostly purchased at the supermarket in all countries; the discounters lie in second place in Denmark, Germany and Great Britain, in France and Spain the specialised shops/department stores rank second**
- **In Germany, Spain and Great Britain more than 70% of the respondents consume sweets daily or several times a week. The Danes are much more conservative in their consumption at 36%**
- **Chocolate is the favourite category everywhere, followed by crisps/snack items**
- **In Germany, "Nutriscore" or "the traffic light" and the discussion about diet only has a slight influence**

Many consumers are in favour of a moderate consumption of sweets

At 83%, the statement "as a luxury food, sweets, when consumed moderately, are a good thing," was confirmed by most of the consumers in Germany. There was also a high level of agreement in Great Britain (79%) and Spain (74%), whereas the consumers in Denmark (62%) and France (61%) were rather more conservative. Only 11% of the respondents interviewed in Germany disagreed with this statement (13% in Great Britain and 19% in Spain). Whereas in France 32% and in Denmark 23% of the respondents disagreed.

Consumption of sweets varies significantly from country to country

Whereas 78% of the interviewees in Germany state that they consume sweets "daily or several times a week", at 36% the consumers in Denmark are much more conservative here. In Spain and Great Britain (each 72%) the frequency of the consumption is also very high; and in France 57% consume sweets several times a week.

The results regarding the frequency of purchasing sweets are similar. 83% of the Brits purchase sweets at least once a week, in Spain the percentage is 82, in Germany 77 and in France 63. The consumers in Denmark are also more conservative regarding this question: Whereas 50.4% purchase sweets at least once a week, 9.4% state that they never buy sweets. In Germany, 1.6% of the respondents never buy sweets, whilst 2% don't buy any in Spain and Great Britain.

Sweets are mainly purchased at the supermarket

When purchasing sweets, the respondents of all nations agree: The sweet products are primarily purchased at the supermarket. In four countries, asked about their two preferred places of purchases, in some cases well over 80% of the consumers stated their preference to be the supermarket, with the exception of the respondents in Denmark, where the percentage was 68%. Whilst in Germany the discounters ranked second at 70%, which also play an important role in Denmark (42%) and Great Britain (31%), this sales channel is of significantly less importance in France and Spain (both 11%). At around 40%, in these two countries the consumers purchase their sweets much more frequently in specialised shop or department stores. The frontrunners for making their purchases online among the respondents are Great Britain and Denmark, in both countries 12% of the respondents use this channel, followed by France (9%), Spain and Germany (both 6%).

Chocolate is the number one in all countries

Asked about their three most popular sweets, across all countries well over half of the consumers stated chocolate overall and bars of chocolate as their number one favourite. Only in Great Britain, at 61% the candy bar managed to pip the bar of chocolate at the post by 2%. Crisps/snack items take second place on the consumers' wish list, with a percentage of almost 50 in Germany and Great Britain, followed by Denmark (44%) and France (31%). Spain proved to be the exception here: At 36% ice cream is the second favourite, ahead of biscuits/wafers on 34%. The German consumers also appreciate candy bars (42%), fruit gums/licorice (38%) and biscuits/wafers (34%).

Nutrition discussion influences sweets consumption

A further part of the study by POSpulse and SWEETS GLOBAL NETWORK deals with the discussions about nutrition and nutrition labels and their effect on the assessment and the consumption of sweets. Just over 20% of the respondents in Denmark, France, Great Britain and Spain (16% in Germany) stated that their sweets consumption had changed as a result of the nutrition debates. 60% of the interviewees in Spain and 56% in France stated that certain ingredients had become more important to them. The consumers in Great Britain (41%), Germany (38%) and Denmark (34%) are rather more conservative on this point. Across all of the countries, on average the consumers pay more attention to "less sugar" (56%), "less artificial additives" (41.2%), less fat (33%) and "less calories" (29%).

Big differences for NutriScore and the traffic light labelling

There are big differences between the countries regarding the questions to do with NutriScore or a traffic light labelling. Whereas 70% of the respondents in France and 65% in Germany are aware of the "NutriScore/traffic light" theme, the figure is only 38% in Great Britain, 32% in Spain and only 16% in Denmark. There are significant differences between the countries in the answers to the question whether a negative NutriScore or a red traffic light would influence whether they purchase sweets or not. Almost two thirds of the Germany replied with a no: 52% of the Germans say "probably not" and for 11% it made no difference. In Spain 66% of the respondents replied with a "yes", in France the figure was 58%, in Denmark 53% and in Great Britain 46%. Only 5% of the Spaniards stated that this has no influence on the buying behaviour, followed by Great Britain (7%), Denmark (8%) and France (12%).

Source: SWEETS GLOBAL NETWORK (h.strohmaier@sg-network.org)/POSpulse