

Do you like chocolate?



Do you like chocolate ?

Do you like CHOCOLATE?

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Consumer Behavior

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine and compute the consumption behavior of chocolate in our society. Chocolate has been there for many centuries. In fact, the word “chocolate” comes from the Aztecs of Mexico, and is derived from the “Nahualt” word “xocolatl”, which is a combination of the words, “xocolli”, meaning “bitter”, and “atl”, which is “water.

This document about Chocolate - which comprises “a number of raw and processed foods”¹ that are produced from the seed of the tropical cacao tree - inspects and observes the different consumer behaviors of people. It can be more or less granted that every one of us, except those who are allergic against chocolate, have tried it at least once in their lifetime. Chocolate is served and consumed at countless occasions. For instance, you have a coffee or espresso in a cafeteria and it will most probably come with a tiny piece of chocolate. Or for instance, for Christmas or Eastern people tend to give chocolate as presents rather than any other kind of candy.

This study aims to determine the actions and activities concerning chocolate consumption in our civilization in such a frequent manner. This document is based on my own research of chocolate consumption. I handed questionnaires out, mostly to people in my university IFM, situated in Geneva, but also to random people around the area of Geneva. The research includes also interviews, with one salesperson from “AUER Chocolatier” (Rue de Rive), and another salesperson (Mrs. Louise) in Rue de Rhône, both located in Geneva.

Consumption results of that particular product might differ in other countries because of lack or shortages. Therefore this study represents the chocolate consumption of Switzerland and especially of Geneva.

Consequently, because of such a high and frequent consumption of chocolate this document of research aims to inspect and scan two main questions: HOW and WHY? The following report will refer to the results I found regarding how chocolate is consumed and why it is consumed in such a manner? The question “how is chocolate consumed?” can be answered based on solid facts. On the other side, the question “why is chocolate consumed?” relies on reasonable interpretation and a certain degree of common sense.

With the intention to better answer the much broader question “How?”, I made the decision to put together for more explicit questions.

¹ Wikipedia; www.wikipedia.org

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1. At what frequency do people consume chocolate?
2. What feelings do occur to people while consuming chocolate?
3. How addictive is chocolate?
4. What kind of chocolate do people prefer?

After each section written on the ways in which chocolate is consumed, another section will deal with the question “why”. In order to make it easier for the reader to understand the results of this research, the “how`s” and the “why`s” will alter continuously.

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Methodology

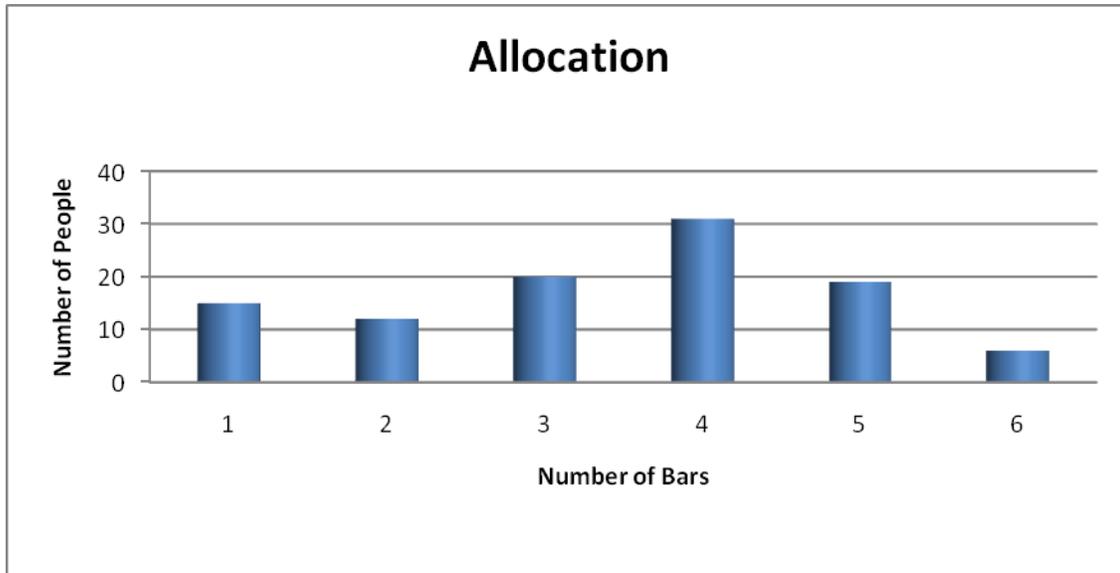
With the intention to complete and achieve the study, 2 methods of research were used over a period of 5 weeks. Therefore, the product of my research might be more likely to be representative of the general situation in Switzerland, contrasting of supplying you with just a snapshot of the consumption in Geneva. The methods which were used contain questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaires: Surveys were handed out mostly to students from IFM but also to random people crossing Rue du Rhône in Geneva. The questionnaires were handed out to students during their breaks times. Also during the afternoon questionnaires were handed out to random people, mostly in Rue de Rhône, because it is one the most frequented streets in Geneva. Furthermore questionnaires were handed out to people, who have just purchased chocolate in one of the various “Chocolatiers” in Geneva. I managed to get an outcome of more than 100 questionnaires, which might be representative for a reasonable study about the consumption behavior of chocolate. An example of the questionnaire is available in the Annex A.

Interview: Two interviews had taken place for the purpose of a second research technique. The first interview happened in the “Chocolatier Auer” in the afternoon of November 7th. The salesperson chose to be unknown because of personal reasons. The information she supplied me with were mostly relied on the expertise and her working experience. She could support me with statistics or any other source of scientific information. The next interview was with Mrs. Louise, who has been working at the Chocolaterie for many years. Mrs. Louise filled out my questionnaire and answered questions concerning her and her client`s chocolate consumption. She expressed her thoughts and feelings about client`s consumption patterns concerning seasons, holidays and weather conditions.

At what frequency do people consume chocolate?

The study of my research concluded that there was a huge disparity between the percentages of people consuming chocolate on a working day and during holidays, which includes weekends. The study shows that more than 27% of people consume 1 - 2 bars of chocolate during their working days. In opposite to that more than 70% of people consume 3 – 5 bars of chocolate on Sundays.



The number of bars rises up to 7 and more during Christmastime and on general holidays. The research also illustrates that 9 out of 10 people consume chocolate on a daily basis. The facts of the different consumption or purchasing patterns were also approved by the two salespersons I had interviewed. Both of them agreed, without knowing each other that people tend to purchase more chocolate on Saturdays and before Christmas, than during the week.

In order to show and explain such a trend, this is “a general tendency or movement”², we have to go deeper to identify the reasons of such a consumer behavior. Why do people consume more chocolate during weekends and especially holydays such as Christmas or Eastern? First of all there are cultural rituals. **Cultural Rituals**³ consist in behaviors that involve repetition in a relatively fixed sequence: they are the enactment of myths and values inclusive of the consumption of commodities – consumer rituals; for this reason they are important for product positioning”. In this particular case the **exchange rituals**⁴ take place, which “involve the substitution and changeover of commodities”. People

² Encarta Dictionary; www.encarta.com

³ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.12

⁴ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.12

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tend to buy chocolate in the shape of Santa Claus for Christmas or in the shape of a rabbit for Eastern. Therefore people tend to consume much more chocolate during this period than on regular working days because of cultural behavior.

On the other side, people are likely to eat more chocolate on their weekends because of consumer intention. Consequently, because of **Consumer intention**⁵, “this is a particular goal for oneself or for the cultural community,” people tend to socialize more on weekends therefore they consume more bars then during the week. Furthermore people have a propensity to watch movies while consuming chocolate with their peers, especially on the weekend because it is their free time. In that sense, the amount of chocolate consumed during the week shifts to the consumption at the weekend, and particularly during holidays.

Another reason for this pattern of consumption behavior might an interdependent one. **Interdependent**,⁶ means “that consumer are part of a social relation where any decision on one`s own consumer intention is influenced by and can influence another`s intention and interpretation of the context”. As a result, people consume more chocolate on weekends or holidays, because they socialize with their friends and families, who indirectly make them purchasing and devour that product. For instance, you would serve people chocolate when they visit you, especially on holidays because of its sweet and tender taste.

⁵ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.15

⁶ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.15

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What feelings do occur to people while consuming chocolate?

The answer to that question is not straightforward. My research concluded that more than 40% of people experienced the feeling of happiness, 30% of the people asked had the motion of excitement and one third felt guilt, sadness or depression. In the opposite of that, approximately 30% of the people felt guilt, sadness and even depression while consuming chocolate. In addition to that, also 15% of people preferred chocolate over having sex. Those 15% were mainly women. As I confronted the salespersons at AEUR with those results, they were rather shocked, because in their point of few people would just consume chocolate because of pleasure or happiness. They had no valid explanation for such a big discrepancy, which were computed from my survey. Therefore with the intention to find out how people react to the consumption of chocolate we might have to get more affiliated with the physiological effects of chocolate.

Consequently, part of the pleasure that people experienced ⁷“is due to the fact that its melting point is slightly below human body temperature: it melts in the mouth”. Thus, their **consumer motivation**,⁸“which is the dynamic drive or stimulus” is caused because if chocolate is consumed a release of serotonin in the brain occurs, which produces feelings of pleasure. Therefore, the reasons why people experienced the feeling of happiness are various. People tend to consume chocolate while socializing with their peers, but more often to satisfy their brain stimulation. Therefore, their **motivation**⁹results from the interplay of three forces, namely the unconscious – id, the social and cultural values – superego, and the conscious – ego (Freud). As a result, people consume chocolate because of childhood experience (unconscious), because of their environment (superego) and because of the pleasure they gain from it (ego).

On the other side, people who have experienced feelings of sadness and misery or guilt get those feelings not from consuming chocolate, but because of consuming. People feel guilty, because they gain weight while consuming chocolate. Therefore a feeling of depression or sadness occurs by many of the consumers. Those consumers suffer from a dysfunctional **cognitive elaboration**¹⁰, “which is the integration of sensations in prior knowledge and the transformation of the latter in various directions even opposite – boomerang effect”. Those people know that if they consume chocolate a gain of weight

⁷ Chocolate – Wikipedia; www.wikipedia.com

⁸ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.15

⁹ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.15

¹⁰ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.17

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will occur, which mostly causes a depression, but they continue because of their dysfunction. This cycle leads to more consumption of chocolate and therefore more sadness and depression.

In addition to that, my survey also concluded that especially women would rather eat chocolate than having sex. This result correlates with a study reported by the BBC¹¹ which indicates that melting chocolate in one's mouth produced an increase in brain activity and heart rate that was more intense than that associated with passionate kissing, and also lasted four times as long after the activity had ended. Another study confirms that ¹² "serotonin and especially phenethylamine can act as mild sexual stimulants".

Therefore, **consumer satisfaction**¹³, "which is both an internal and social state, refers to a judgment of the degree to which consume intentions are fulfilled – consumer satisfaction may thus be under-fulfilled or over-fulfilled and it is often thought of as contentment, or pleasure, delight, relief, or ambivalence", occurs to all the three mentioned groups of consumers. Finally, each of them experiences another form of consumer satisfaction, therefore they will continue purchasing and consuming that product.

¹¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/6558775.stm>

¹² Liebowitz, Michael, R. (1983). *The Chemistry of Love*. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co.

¹³ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.9

How addictive is chocolate?

The research of my study concerning the consumption of chocolate proves that more than 90% of people were absolutely convinced that chocolate is addictive. In addition to that, 80% were determined that they could not imagine a life without chocolate. With the intention to look behind such extreme results and to understand, why people have those feelings towards chocolate, we need to identify the process and its reasons, which could lead to an addiction of chocolate.

First of all, there are no scientifically proven facts that chocolate contains any kind of chemical or substance, which could be the cause for an addiction. Therefore a further more convincing approach would be the **consumer perceptual process**. This process consists of 5 aspects, which are going to explain and testify, why the tasting of chocolate might be addictive.

Initially there is **pre-attentive processing**¹⁴, “which involves the use of senses to monitor events on a continuous basis”. Thus, consumers – especially in Switzerland – are continuously exposed to chocolate related sensory stimuli. For instance, you will find on almost every corner a Chocolaterie or in every bit grocery store an entire section just for chocolate in Geneva. The next stage of the process is the **perceptual selection**, “which involves the voluntary and involuntary use of one portion of the sensory stimuli for conscious processing”. People are surrounded by products and advertising concerning chocolate. For instance, at Christmastime people tend to buy chocolate products, especially chocolate ginger bread, because those are just available at special seasons of the year.

The third step of the process is called the **perceptual organization**, “which involves the comparison between a perceived event and categorical knowledge”. Consumers know that chocolate might be bad for their teeth and could lead to obesity because of its high level of sugar; nevertheless consumers still purchase chocolate because of experience. The affectionate and tender taste of chocolate apparently makes up for all the other disadvantages, which chocolate causes. Furthermore the fourth step is called **cognitive interpretation**, “which involves the use of schemata and scripts to make sense of sensations as such, or to go beyond them – perceptual inferences”. People are aware of their sensations and feelings. Therefore if people relate a feeling of happiness, excitement or on the contrary sadness with chocolate they might buy the product, in order to experience the same emotions again. For instance, if women discover some kind of stimulation because of the serotonin in their brains, they might continue consuming chocolate because of its pleasing effects on them.

¹⁴ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.17

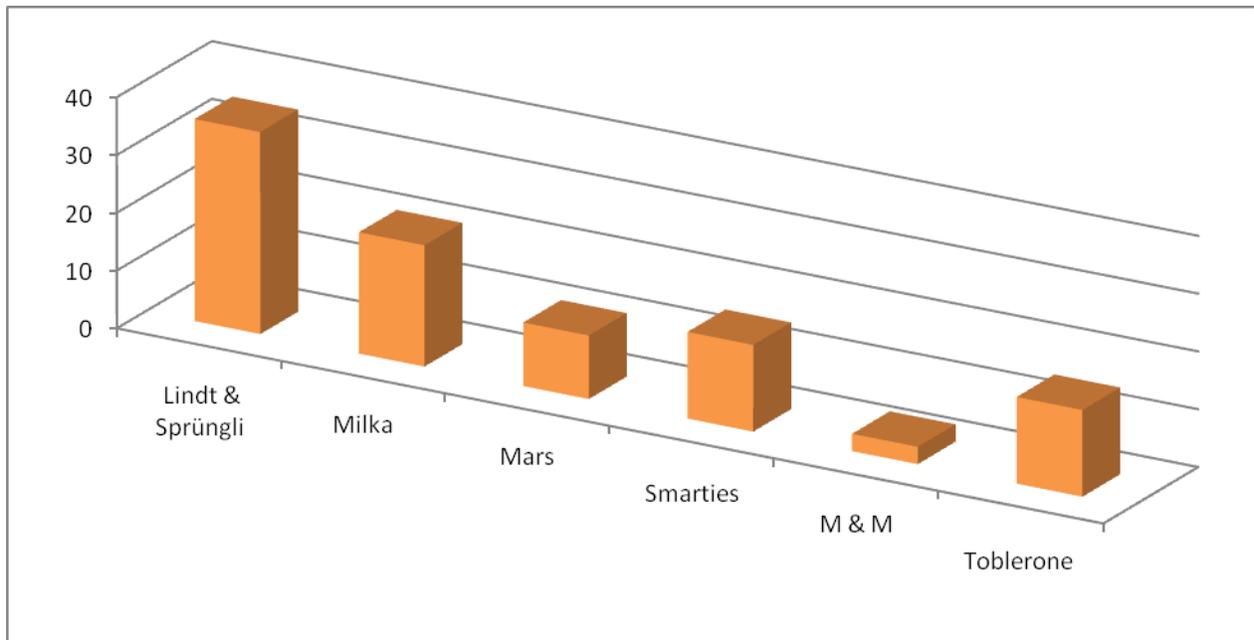
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In addition to that, the final and last step of the consumer perceptual process involves **cognitive elaboration**, “which means that consumers learn or re-discover a consumption experience”. Most of all people I talked to or handed out questionnaires had experienced a weight gain or teeth problems, which were both caused by chocolate. Nevertheless, this people who experienced a cognitive elaboration were still buying and consuming chocolate by knowing its harmfulness. As result chocolate has a high level of addiction, so called chocoholism, which might just be found by “drugs” such as cigarettes and alcohol.

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What kind of chocolate do people prefer?

My research about consumption behavior shows that, although I had provided the people a broad range of brands to choose from, 6 brands of them were enormously dominant.



The graphic illustrates the most dominant chocolate brands concerning my survey and its number of people, who would call them their favorites. More than 35% of people would choose the chocolate products from Lindt & Sprüngli, rather than Milka or M & M. Furthermore another surprise might be that Toblerone, one of Switzerland's well – known brands was just chosen by 15% of people. In order to fully understand the results of that outcome we have to examine the terminology of consumer involvement, which will give us insight in the reasons or motives of the consumers.

For that reason, **consumer involvement**¹⁵ “is the degree and kind of participation we have with the intended product in the sense that we are ready to put the necessary effort to acquire a product given the available resources to satisfy our end” has 4 different stages, which explain the involvement in the intended products.

First of all there are **Brand loyalists**, “who are highly involved with a product and with the product category”. For instance, Lindt & Sprüngli is one of the biggest and oldest chocolate producers in Switzerland, therefore many people were already aware of the products of Lindt & Sprüngli long before Mars, Smarties or M&M tried to conquer the market. The second group of people are **information**

¹⁵ 2007 Prof. Dr. Panayotis Zamaros; Consumer Behavior p.16

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seekers “who are not highly involved with a product but with the product category”. Therefore that group of people might cherish Lindt and Sprüngli above other brands, not because of the quality of the chocolate, more because of the reputation and image which the company represents. Mars and Smarties are too Americanized, therefore these brands do not represent in such a manner the feeling of Switzerland than Lindt does.

In addition to that third category of buyers is **routine brand buyers** “who are highly involved with a product but not with the product category. This group of people adores chocolate, although they do not emphasize with a certain brand. Therefore, routine brand buyers consume Lindt products because of its taste and not because of its brand.

The final category of buyers is **brand switchers** “who are neither involved with a product nor with a product category”. Those people do not care what kind of chocolate they consume, and who it was produced from.

Therefore, as a result it cannot be clarified without a doubt what might have caused such a ranking of chocolate brands, because customers have different tastes and motivations.

Conclusion

The study of consumption behavior concerning chocolate concluded that people tend to make chocolate a part of their lives. Chocolate is a candy, which everyone has at least once consumed not matter for what reason. The survey also illustrates that people buy and eat chocolate for various reasons, which are mostly emotional and related with feelings.

Furthermore, one major theme of my study is that chocolate triggers certain impulses which cause desirable and also undesirable feelings like no other food does. Excitement, happiness but also depression and sadness can be caused by consuming chocolate. Those feeling can cause an addiction, like it is common with actual “drugs”. My research results about addition were convincing enough to concluded, that the level of an addiction to chocolate is rather high, because more than 80% of people could not imagine a life without chocolate.

In addition to that as result, consumer buy chocolate because of its taste, the feelings it causes and socializing effect is has at special occasions. Therefore chocolate will always be consumed, because no one of the people I asked wanted to miss the tender and gentle feeling of a chocolate brick melting in someone`s mouth.

Consequently, the consumption behavior of people is driven and influenced by their experience and their knowledge about chocolate. Additionally, my study supports the idea that people, who had a bad experience with chocolate, will nevertheless consume it because of its magnificent method to stimulate certain brain receptors, which cause the feeling of being in love. Every one of the 100 people I handed out the questionnaire combined chocolate with love.

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Annex A

Questionnaire

Chocolate Survey

The questionnaire which follows is part of a study concerning consumption behavior of chocolate. It is crucial as part of a research for consumer behavior class. It will just take a few minutes to fill out the questionnaire. Your participation is completely voluntary, and your answers will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation.

Please fill all of the questions!

1. Which do you prefer:
 White chocolate Milk chocolate Dark chocolate

2. Which is better?
 Chocolate milk Chocolate ice cream

3. What is better?
 Sex Chocolate

4. How many chocolate bars do you approximately consume a week?
 ½ - 1 1 - 3 3 - 5 5 - 7 More than 7

5. When you consume chocolate, what kind of feelings occurs to you?
 Happiness Sadness Depression Excitement

6. Do you think someone could become addicted to chocolate?
 Yes No

7. Which of the following are your favorite chocolate brands?
 Lindt & Sprüngli Toblerone Kinderschokolade Nestlé Munz
 Milka Nesquic Merkur Minor Lienert
 Migros Chocolate Stollwerck Trumpf M & M Ritter Sport
 Smarties Wawi Merci

8. How often do you consume chocolate?
 Every day 3 - 5 Times a week Once a month Almost never

9. Could you imagine a life without chocolate?
 Yes No