

Food for Thought

1.

A rising tide lifts all boats — Most consumers purchase chocolate across the entire range of offerings, from mainstream to premium and fine chocolate. As such, industry support to help reinforce chocolate's positioning as a permissible, beloved treat in a happy and balanced lifestyle is something that helps all manufacturers, regardless of size or product.

2.

Providing choice is key — There is no one chocolate consumer. Preferences for dark, milk or white, cacao percentages, the importance of social/environmental stewardship and added flavors vary widely. With mood being the biggest purchase driver, continued innovation in flavor, texture, ingredients, packaging and branding, reflecting changing consumer preferences, will set the tone for future sales growth.

3.

Elevating the profile of American-made chocolate — The vast majority of consumers either see no difference between American and European-made chocolate, or believe European chocolate is superior. Elevating the profile of American-made items is another area of joint interest among U.S. chocolate producers.

4.

Education can help draw more consumers into premium and fine chocolate — Consumer education about the product and process will result in greater appreciation of chocolate's many textures and flavors and may encourage more consumers to consider premium/fine chocolate to be worth the splurge. Subsequent experimentation, a key characteristic among premium and fine chocolate consumers, will increase consumers' exposure to a wide variety of chocolate makers and product types.

5.

Social and environmental stewardship matters — Consumers increasingly care about how their food is made, who made it and what's in it. Using the Millennial response as a barometer for future interest, certifications in the areas of fair trade, non-GMO, organic and responsible sourcing matter to half of these shoppers. People and planet are two more "Ps" to add to the traditional 4P marketing mix: products, price, promotion and place.

6.

E-commerce is a quickly rising sales platform for chocolate — Consumers want what they want, when they want it. And if their local store does not offer it, e-commerce provides the answer. Access, preferred consumer status and high top-of-mind awareness are key elements to online research resulting in trial and continued purchases.



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