



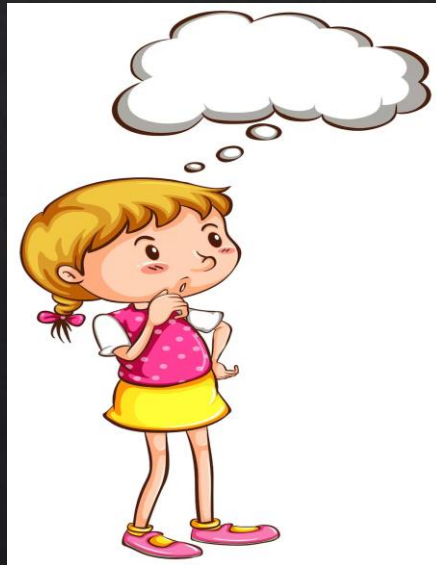
Indian Consumer Perception of Sweetness

Presenter: Nirmala Metwal

Agenda

1. Consumer response to the word “Sweet”
2. Historical backbone: The journey
3. Factors shaping sweetness perception
4. Interplay of other sensory attributes in sweetness perception
5. Consumer motivation towards sweet snacks
6. The Sugar Paradox
7. The now- emerging themes
8. Thought Starter

When I say the word “sweet”, what comes to your mind?



When you ask the same question to consumers.....

Emotional Associations

- Happiness and Joy
- Comfort and Warmth
- Nostalgia/memories

Functional Associations

- Sensory Pleasure
- Cravings satisfier
- Mood Elevator



Context and Occasions

- Rewards and Treats
- Gesture/welcome food
- Celebrations

Product Associations

- Rasgulla/Chocolates/Ice cream
- Indian Sweets

Few mentioned: "not good for health."

Historical backbone → how we got here

Ancient Times (3000+years ago)



Sweetness was
*natural, raw, and
sacred*

Classical Era



India gave sugar to
the world- Sanskrit
“*Sharkara*” became
“Sugar”

Medieval Trade Routes & Colonial Era



Sweetness became
luxury, linked to *trade*
and *power*
In *Colonial era*, sugar
became an “industry”,
regional cross pollination

Modern Day



Sweetness is now
*perception, culture and
innovation*

What shapes consumer perception to Sweetness



Cultural & Rituals drivers

- Religious & Ritual Significance
- Ayurvedic Influence



Regional Nuances



Sensitivity & Taste Preferences

- Higher Hedonic Peak
- Cross Model Expectations



Agriculture & supply shaping taste



Consumer Psychology

- Sweetness as Social Bonding
- Indulgence vs Health Trade off

The Many Facets of the Sweetness Spectrum

Not only taste and flavor: Intensity, Balance and other sensations associated with the “sweet” experience

Balanced Sweetness
& Sweetness
Intensity
(Strength)

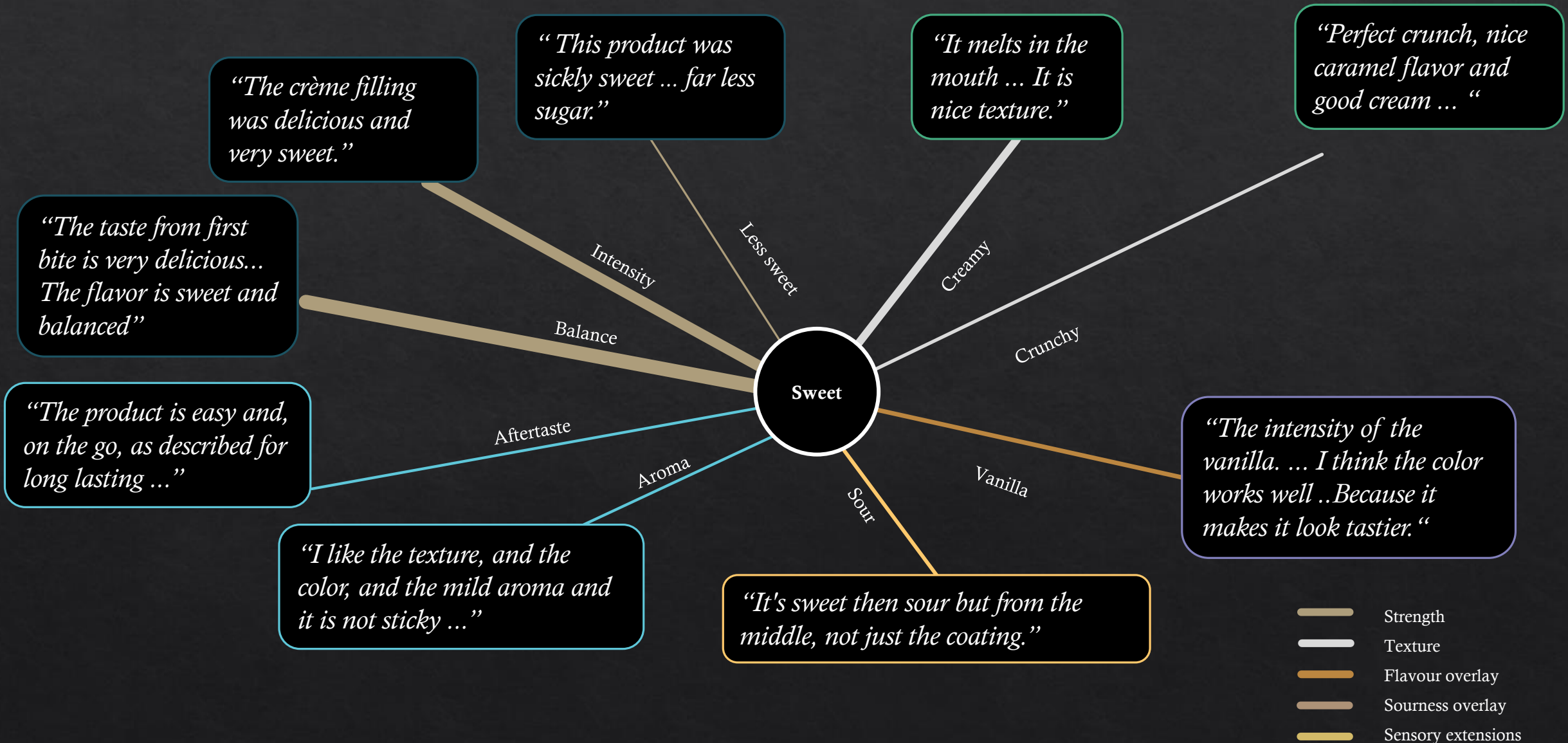
Creamy
Sweetness/Sweet and
crunchy
(Texture)

Sweet aftertaste

Caramel/Vanilla
Sweetness/Cardamom/
Condensed
(Flavour Overlay)


Sweet & Sour
(Sour overlay)

The key to succeed in the sweetness business: Balance




Consumers Sweet Snacking Motivations

Emotional motivations



Desire for
something
sweet




Me time



Unwind &
Relax



Relieve
boredom



Treat / reward



Improve
mood/Stress relief

Functional motivations



Energy



Nutritional
daily fill



Hunger
and thirst



Complement

Social motivations



Shared time



Shared
experience



Shared
celebrations

The Sugar Paradox



Feeling better about myself for taking action...being in better physical shape...consuming fewer calories



But whenever I feel stressed and hungry, I prefer to eat it, it eases my negative feelings



THE CONCERNS

I feel anything above limit is harmful, as sugar makes one's health slow

Sometime sweet consumption leads to feelings of guilt or regret, if my health goals are compromised.

I struggle to control cravings and limit sweet consumption

THE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS

It makes me feel better / improves my mood

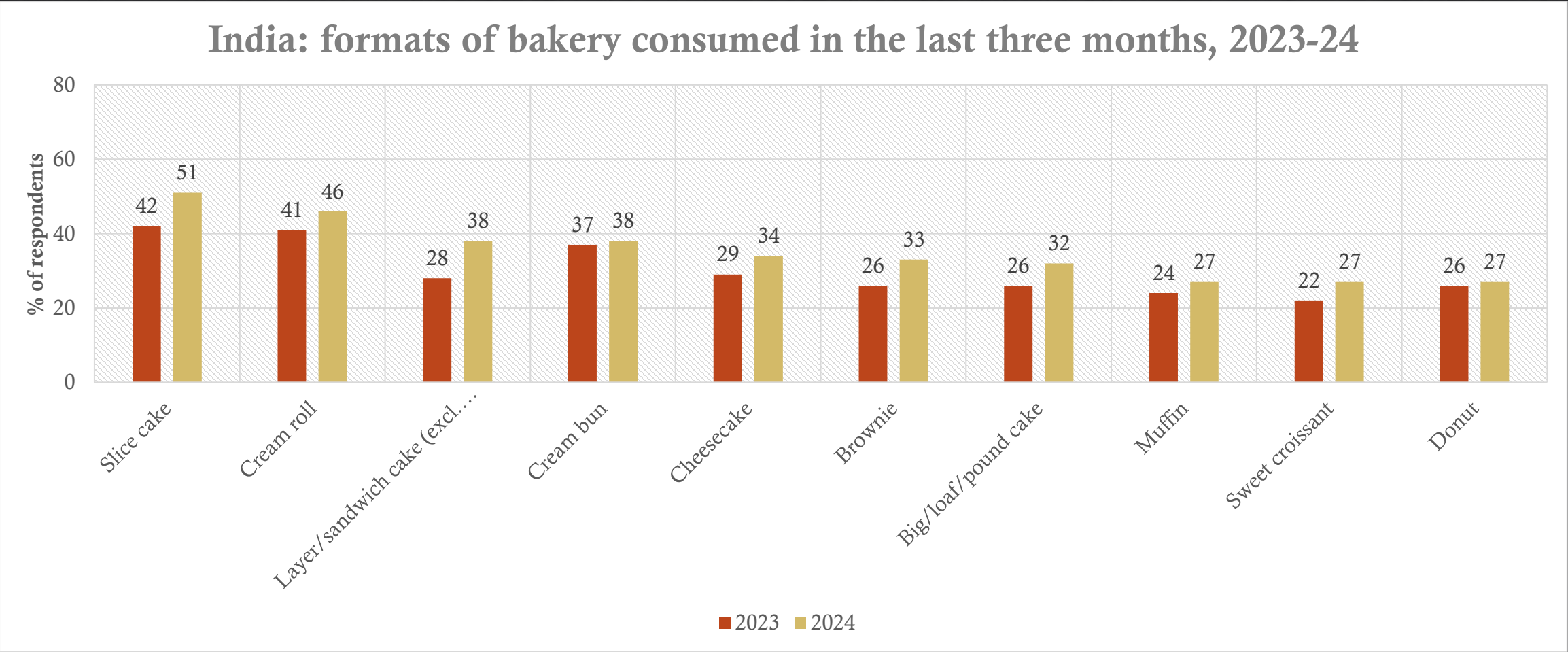
I'm celebrating or marking a special occasion

I share sweet to my friends and brother and eat together and have some fun

I want a reward or treat for myself

Indians are embracing all formats of sweet bakery, but cakes and cream rolls are leading the growth trend

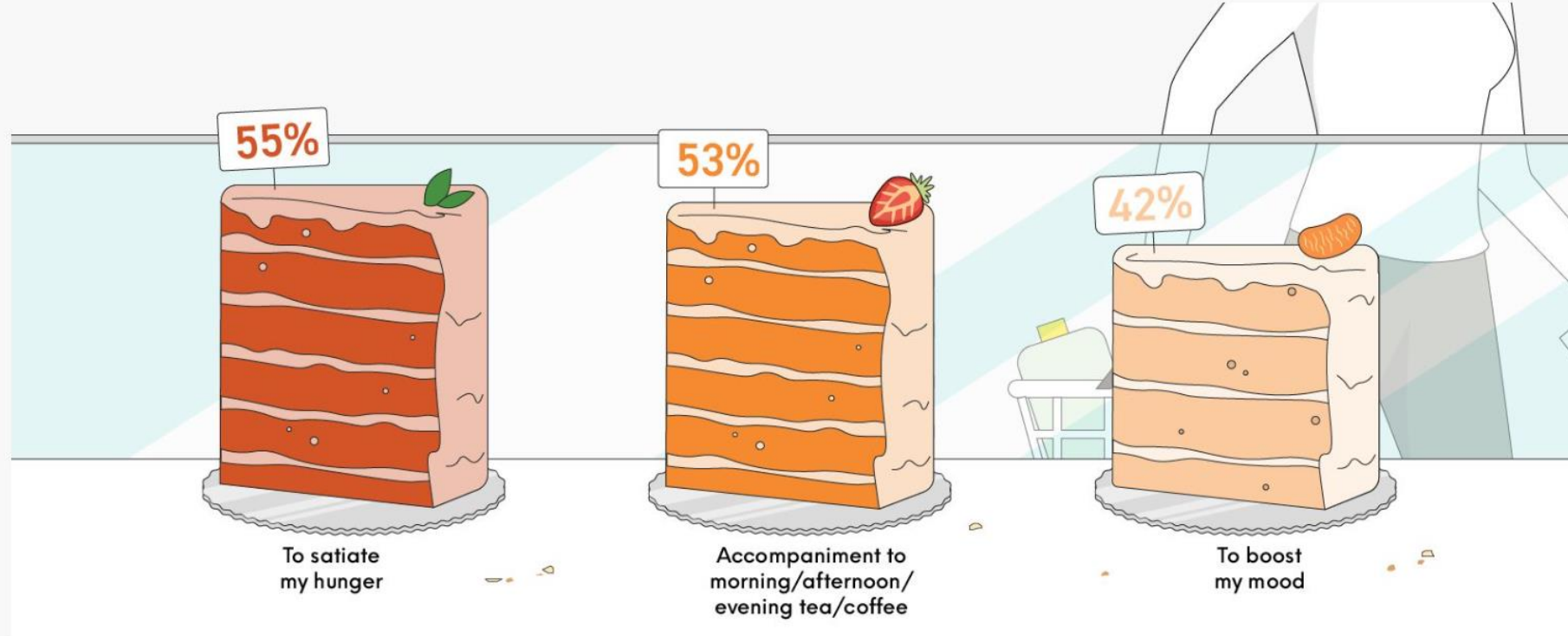
Since 2023, the market for sweet bakery products has expanded across all formats, with significant growth in cream rolls and various cake formats.



Functional and Emotional factors are the key drivers for the consumers

Stand out by highlighting hunger-satisfying satiety, perfect tea/coffee pairings and mood-enhancing benefits in slice cakes

India: top three reasons for consuming slice cake in the last three months, 2024



Base: 1,540 Indian adults aged 18+ who have consumed slice cake in the last three months

Source: [Ipsos Observer/Mintel, September 2024](#)

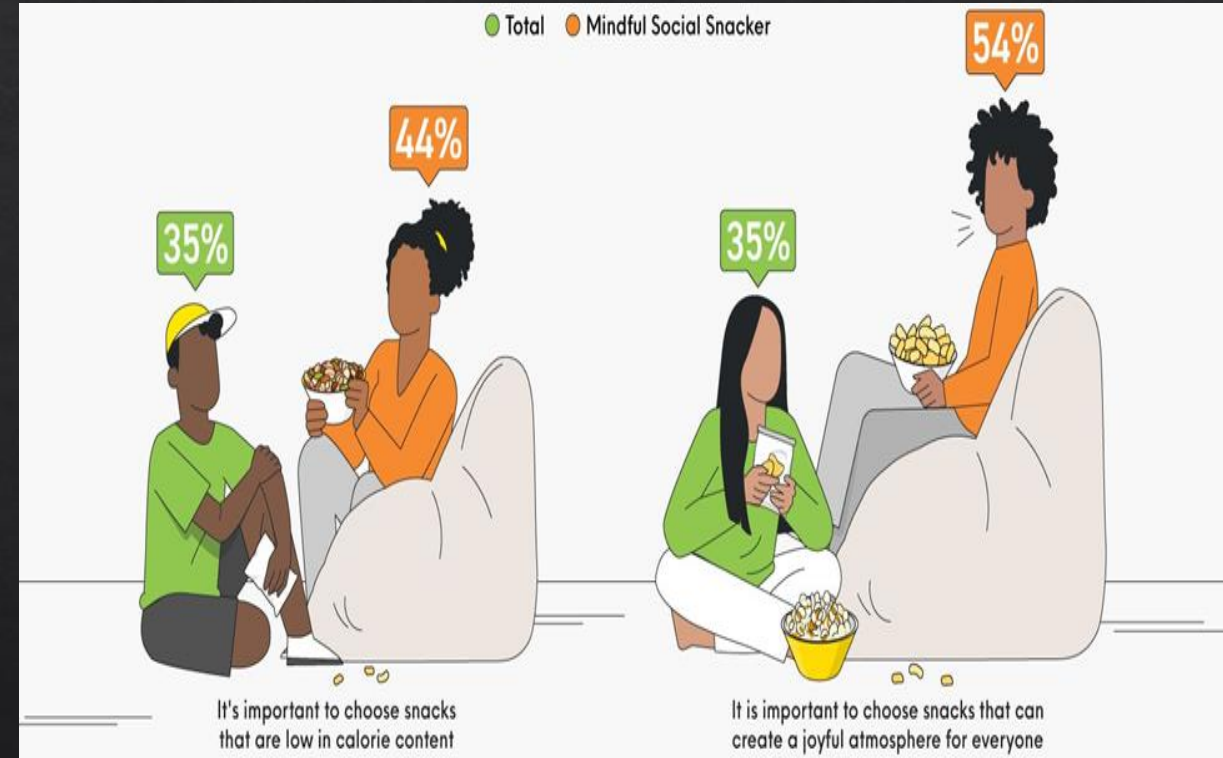


"Sorry, not sorry!" – heavy mental load drives desire for unguilty pleasures

50% of Indians actively seek ways to relieve stress, and this has nudged consumers to take a more holistic approach to their health.

The Now: Some Emerging Themes

- ◆ Permissible Indulgence
- ◆ Unguilty/Guilt free Indulgence
- ◆ Personalization
- ◆ Portion Control
- ◆ Multisensorial Experiences
- ◆ Health-Conscious snacking
- ◆ Social & Emotional snacking



Consumers increasingly demand healthier versions of indulgent foods

While taste remains paramount, as per recent trend consumers are seeking healthier food/drink variants.

SWEET BISCUIT

55%

of Indian consumers are willing to pay more for healthier biscuits than regular biscuits

SNACK

48%

of Indian consumers look for healthy snacks all/most of the time

ICE CREAM

31%

of Indian ice cream consumers are willing to pay a premium for healthier ice cream

Sweetness a complex Interplay between
**traditional preferences , growing health
consciousness and influence of global trends.**

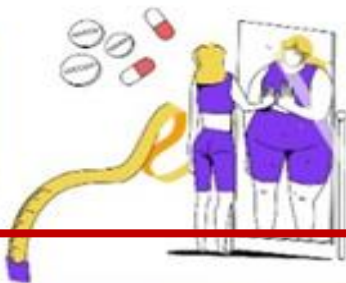
“Obesity is Multidimensional”

KEY
FACTOR

Driving the rise of Obesity In India

High-Calorie, Low-Nutrient Diets

Increased consumption of refined carbohydrates and saturated fats.



Easy Access to Processed Foods

Widespread availability of packaged, ready-to-eat meals



Use of Genetically Modified Crops

Altered food composition impacting metabolism and weight gain.



Physical Inactivity

Declining engagement in sports, exercise, and outdoor activities.

Sedentary Lifestyles

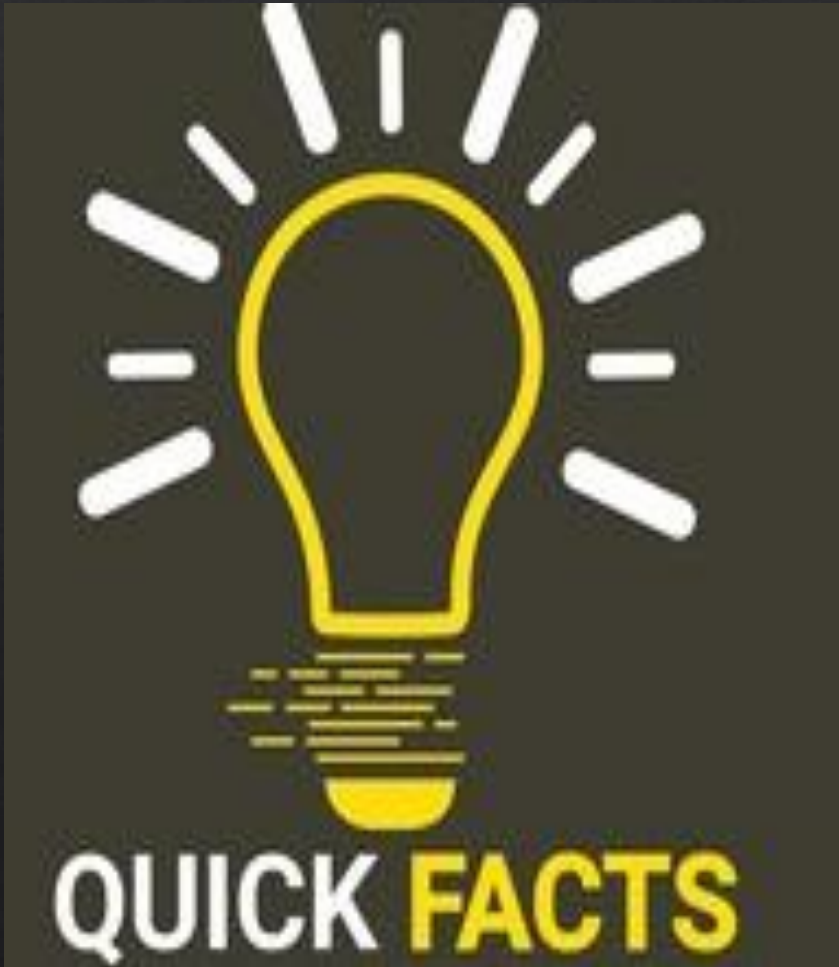
Long hours of sitting, excessive screen time, and minimal movement in daily routines.



Processed food is one of the factor. Multiple factors contributes to obesity.

MODERATION is the key as part of a healthy lifestyle (mental, emotional and physical wellbeing)

Consumer Behavior Global Vs India



- Majority of GLOBAL consumers estimate sugar intake via
 - common sense
 - ingredient lists
 - nutrition facts panels
 - looking at portion size

Indians mostly through INTERNET SEARCH

- Majority of consumers in developed market consult a doctor WHEREAS in INDIA consumer get influenced by SOCIAL MEDIA

Some Thought Starter....

INDUSTRY

- Smarter/Innovative way of product development
- Segment Targeting
- Seasonal Strategy
- Healthier Alternatives
- Marketing campaign

GOVT

- Public awareness on Calorie Intake/doctor consultation vs social media
- Label reading awareness
- Encourage Reformulation and Innovation
- Incentivizing or recognizing manufacturers compiling to the policy
- Mindful snacking awareness in partnership with Industry

In India, Sweetness is not just a taste – it's an experience, a celebration, and a story that keeps getting redefined

Thank You