

# CONSUMER INSIGHTS



**While special interest groups have attempted to portray candy as harmful, research and consumer surveys reveal the truth about the category's role in diets and at retail.**

## Candy's Role In Diets, Retail

HOLDING A SPECIAL PLACE in the memories and experiences of consumers worldwide, candy has long been viewed as a treat that also plays an important role in holiday celebrations and special occasions.

Yet, with the rise of wellness-centric shoppers and special interest groups, candy has become something of a scapegoat, being charged with contributing to obesity and not aligning with the healthy lifestyle branding of some retailers.

Aiming to bring science and hard data to the conversation, the NCA has taken up a number of research projects and examined consumer sentiments surrounding the category and its place in a balanced lifestyle and at retail.

For example, research indicates consumers see candy products merchandised in front ends as a small treat, something three-quarters of shoppers use to reward themselves or family, according to data from 210 Analytics, LLC.

Further, a survey of parents revealed they feel in control when their kids see candy at retail, both near check stands and in aisles. In fact, 16 percent use candy to occasionally treat their children, while a majority of parents with kids younger than 18 say they like having the option to purchase confectionery at checkout.

### THE CATEGORY'S PLACE AT RETAIL

While it's readily available, only two percent of shoppers say they purchase candy at checkouts with great regularity, underscoring its position as an infrequent indulgence.

With a place as an occasional treat in the diet of many consumers, offering variety becomes incredibly important for meeting shoppers' preferences. On a national level, it takes more than 1,800 SKUs to account for 80 percent of category sales. A big part of getting the assortment right is stocking different packaging options as consumers turn more toward shareable and portion-controlled packs such as reclosable pouches, fun size options and 100-calorie formats.

In addition, 95 percent of candy is sold by

companies not marketing to children, while those who do closely follow the Children's Advertising Review Unit's guidelines, which are administered by the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc.

This is in line with shopper surveys indicating consumers should be responsible for managing both their own and their children's diets, not third parties, such as government institutions or retailers.

### CANDY'S PLACE IN THE DIET

As candy is an infrequent treat for many consumers, it has been found to be a negligible contributor to overall caloric intake, averaging less than three percent of calories in children's diets and even less for adults. This also highlights consumers' ability to moderately enjoy confectionery products.

As a result, candy has not been found to be a contributing factor in weight

gain. This has been substantiated by studies and government recommendations that find physical activity and

an overall balanced diet have more impact on weight than any single food.

This moves the conversation away from "bad" or "good" foods into a more realistic approach of how these items can fit into a daily diet. Further, studies conducted during the past year and published in medical journals indicate that weight, body mass index, blood pressure and cholesterol levels are not affected by eating candy; that children and adolescents who eat candy are not more likely to be overweight; and consuming confectionery during childhood does not predict weight or heart disease risk factors in early adulthood.

Although a main ingredient for the category across segments, sugar from candy also has less of an impact on the diet than expected.

In fact, sweetened beverages, such as sports drinks; grain-based desserts; sugar-sweetened fruit drinks and dairy-based desserts all contribute more added sugar to the average diet than candy, according to USDA's Dietary

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

