

How do you sell chocolate to online shoppers?

Wool & Water research offers insights into brand loyalty, barriers to clicking 'confirm purchase' and AR Assistants.

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Online sales for chocolate brands soared in 2020, with many companies including Hershey, Lindt and Ferrero experiencing triple-digit growth.

But what can companies learn from the last year?

Wool & Water commissioned research to identify potential obstacles and opportunities for matching that same growth in 2021 by learning more about shoppers' purchase habits, shopping experiences and interest in augmented reality (AR) to help.

The findings for chocolate companies and other CPG industries — where habit is often mistaken for loyalty — should be incredibly instructive in planning their 2021 online marketing and sales strategy:

Customers play favorites

45 percent stick to their favorite product and brand online: perhaps a reason for optimism, but also a recipe for potential burnout and eroded customer lifetime value without guiding loyal customers to new options.

Too many choices

43 percent cite being overwhelmed or not sure what they would like as the No. 1 barrier to purchasing chocolate online

Story time

49 percent want brands to share more about their chocolate and how it's sourced

Searching for (candy) love online

33 percent are actively searching for new products and brands online: your customer today is likely another company's target so providing unique and helpful experiences will attract new shoppers and build loyalty.

Making it personal

53 percent want personalized recommendations online: chocolate companies must take an honest look at their online store to make sure shoppers will find value in the site's recommendations as often they do not.

Augmented Reality for the assist

23 percent of consumers would buy from a brand offering an AR Assistant over one that does not. Adopting technology consumers are using today and moving beyond gimmick to actual utility is a competitive advantage.

Any new technology or feature should be launched with unmet consumer needs in mind and this research suggests large percentages of chocolate shoppers are overwhelmed online and want guidance more akin to what they experience in a store.

AR as part of a company's broader Extended Retail strategy is a technology that can make an immediate financial impact by growing order size, attracting new customers and strengthening loyalty at a time when more and more shoppers are ditching favorite brands to try new ones.

The survey was conducted for Wool & Water LLC in January 2021 of 215 U.S. consumers who reported buying chocolate the last 30 days and was balanced according to U.S. census data.