

# Tradition Meets Market: Consumer Behavior and Brand Competition in the Diwali Sweets Segment

Priya Samak<sup>1</sup>, Vrushali Bhurke<sup>2</sup>, Om Bacche<sup>3</sup>, Ayan Khan<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Assistant Professor, PES's Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Warje, Pune - 411058

<sup>3,4</sup>Student of FYBCOM Class, PES's Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Warje, Pune – 411058

## Abstract

Diwali, the quintessential "Festival of Lights," serves as a profound socio-cultural and religious anchor for millions in India and the global diaspora. Rooted in the spiritual victory of light over darkness, the festival is a vital catalyst for **social togetherness and the reconnection of familial and platonic bonds**. Central to this period of harmony is the tradition of sharing sweets (*Meetha*), which are revered both as *Naivedya* (sacred offerings to the Divine) and as a symbolic gesture of hospitality. Consequently, the market experiences a significant **upward trend in demand**, as offering sweets is the primary mode of welcoming guests and expressing affection.

This research investigates the dualistic nature of the market, where a distinct divide exists between individuals who cherish the **emotional labor of making homemade sweets** and those who gravitate toward **established brand outlets**. For many, homemade sweets represent purity, tradition, and the sanctity of the domestic hearth. Conversely, the modern consumer's preference for branded outlets is driven by a sophisticated behavioral pattern involving meticulous **brand selection, guaranteed quality, and standardized quantity**. The study further explores the geographical reach of these preferences, analyzing the role of **domestic and international brand coverage** in maintaining cultural identity for Indians living abroad.

A pivotal contribution of this paper is the examination of the burgeoning **institutional demand**. Beyond household consumption, sweets are highly sought after by **corporates, government offices, and various manufacturing and service industries**. In these sectors, sweets are distributed to employees and business associates as a **token of love, appreciation, and professional goodwill**, further fueling the seasonal economic surge.

The paper evaluates the competition between **traditional Indian sweets and contemporary chocolates**, weighing factors such as cost, popularity, and the psychological impact of **premium packaging and labeling**. By applying the **7 P's of Marketing** (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence), the study illustrates how brands bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. Valuable additional insights into "**Conscious Indulgence**"—where health-conscious consumers seek nutritional transparency and artisanal craftsmanship—are provided to offer a holistic view of this evolving market. This research serves as a definitive guide to understanding the intersection of deep-seated religious values and the commercial complexities of a globalized festive economy.

**Keywords:** Diwali Confectionery Economics, Consumer Behavioral Patterns, 7 P's Marketing Mix, Institutional Gifting Dynamics, Indian Mithai vs. Global Brands.

### Introduction:

The landscape of Indian festivities is undergoing a profound transformation, where ancient rituals meet modern commercial sophistication. While the essence of Diwali remains anchored in the spirit of **reconnecting and togetherness**, the methods through which these bonds are celebrated have evolved. The traditional "sweet-sharing" custom has transitioned from a simple domestic gesture into a high-stakes economic driver. This paper seeks to explore the tension between the nostalgic heritage of the Indian kitchen and the rapid "brand-ification" of the festive season.

A significant catalyst for this research was a **comprehensive Google Survey** which captured the voices of **over 100 diverse participants**. By engaging both the youth—who represent the "aspirational consumer"—and adults—who act as the "traditional gatekeepers"—the data revealed a striking shift in **consumer behavioral patterns**. While the heart may lean toward **homemade delicacies** for their perceived purity, the modern lifestyle often dictates a preference for **brand outlets**. This choice is governed by a rigorous selection process involving **brand coverage, quality assurance, and the prestige associated with international labeling**.

Beyond the household, this study identifies a massive surge in **institutional demand**. In today's professional ecosystem, **corporates, government offices, and manufacturing hubs** have adopted sweets as a vital tool for relationship management. These entities view premium confectionery as a "token of love and affection," a strategy that has pushed brands to innovate within the **7 P's of Marketing**. From the **Physical Evidence** of ornate, sustainable packaging to the **Process** of ensuring global delivery for the diaspora, the marketing mix is the engine driving this growth. By analyzing the choice between **timeless Indian Mithai and the global appeal of chocolates**, this research provides a unique window into how the "Festival of Lights" fuels a multi-dimensional, globalized marketplace.

### Research Methodology:

This study employs a robust **mixed-methods research design**, integrating quantitative breadth with qualitative depth to ensure a holistic understanding of the festive confectionery market. The **Primary Research** phase was anchored by a **digital Google Survey**, which successfully aggregated perspectives from **100+ diverse respondents**, spanning the tech-native youth to the tradition-preserving older generation. This was complemented by **ethnographic interactions and structured discussions with homemakers**, providing deep insights into the emotional nuances of "homemade versus branded" preferences and the sanctity of kitchen traditions.

In the **Secondary Research** phase, the students visited several **reputable websites and research citations** to find high-quality information. This online search focused on understanding the current levels of sweet consumption and how **consumer preferences and behavioral patterns** are changing in the modern world. By looking at official reports and market studies online, the students were able to compare real-world survey results with broader market trends. This combined method ensures the research is grounded in both real-life experiences and verified global data, making it an effective and original study.

### Data Analysis and Findings :

The empirical phase of this research, driven by a primary Google Survey, yields critical insights into the shifting paradigms of festive consumption. By analyzing the responses of 105 individuals, we identify clear behavioral patterns that define the modern Diwali confectionery market.

### Purchase Frequency and Market Surge

The data confirms that Diwali remains a massive catalyst for market activity. A significant **73.2% of respondents observed a marked increase in purchases** compared to normal days. While 50.7% of individuals purchase sweets "sometimes" during the festival, 32.4% make it an annual ritual, and a small but active segment (5.6%) engages in multiple purchase cycles throughout the festive period.

### Evolution of Product Preference: The Mithai-Chocolate Rivalry

One of the most impactful findings is the diversification of the "Festive Platter."

- **The Rise of Packaged Sweets:** A dominant **54.9% of consumers now prefer packaged sweets**, signaling a shift toward standardized quality and convenience.
- **The Chocolate Transformation:** While traditional sweets remain culturally significant, **62% of participants agree that the demand for chocolates has increased** significantly in recent years.
- **Drivers for Chocolate Selection:** Consumers are choosing chocolates over traditional sweets primarily due to **Health (31%), Packaging (28.2%), and Taste (21.1%)**. This suggests that chocolates are perceived as a "modern, cleaner" alternative to open-market Mithai.

### Procurement Patterns and Brand Trust

The "Place" element of the marketing mix shows a clear winner: **Branded Outlets**.

- **Dominance of Brands:** Over half of the respondents (**53.5%**) procure their festive treats from branded outlets.
- **The Role of Online Stores:** Digital retail is gaining ground, with **26.8% of consumers** opting for online stores, likely driven by the convenience of home delivery and a wider variety of global brands.
- **The Homemade Shift:** Only **7% of respondents** now rely solely on homemade sweets, highlighting the "Commercialization of Tradition" where external brands have successfully filled the gap once held by domestic kitchens.

### Economic Expenditure and Revenue Perception

The financial commitment of consumers during Diwali is substantial.

- **Average Spending:** The majority of consumers (**45.7%**) spend between **₹500–₹1000**, while a significant **28.6% spend up to ₹2000**.
- **Revenue Perception:** Interestingly, **53.5% of participants believe that chocolate companies now earn more revenue** than traditional sweet producers during Diwali. Furthermore, **47.9% feel that local sweet shops are losing business** to these branded chocolate entities.

### The Hygiene and Quality Paradox

Health and safety have emerged as primary consumer concerns.

- **Adulteration Awareness:** A staggering **59.2% of respondents have faced issues related to adult-**

eration or poor quality during the Diwali rush.

- **Production Concerns:** 69% of participants are aware of the mass-production methods used during festivals, and 28.2% believe these large-scale processes "always" affect hygiene and freshness.
- **The Support for Local Producers:** In a heartening trend for small businesses, 57.7% of respondents expressed a willingness to support small local producers if they maintained high hygiene and packaging standards. This presents a massive opportunity for local artisans to reclaim market share through better "Physical Evidence" (Process and Packaging).

### Health Consciousness and Awareness

The modern consumer is significantly more mindful than previous generations.

- **Impact Awareness:** 70.5% of respondents are fully aware of the negative health impacts of excessive sugar and chocolate consumption.
- **The Choice for Health:** Despite the tradition of indulgence, the fact that 31% of users select chocolates specifically for "Health" reasons indicates that "Conscious Indulgence" is the future of the industry.

### Summary of Findings Table :

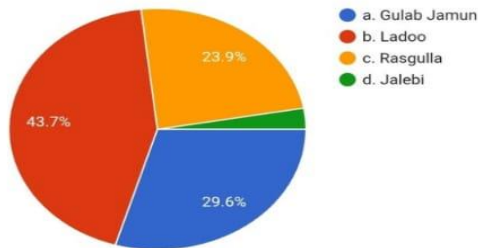
Metric	Primary Finding	% Response
Market Surge	Increase in purchase compared to normal days	73.2%
Preferred Source	Branded Outlets	53.5%
Product Shift	Preference for Packaged Sweets	54.9%
Quality Issues	Experience with Adulteration/Poor Quality	59.2%
Future Trend	Willingness to support local shops (if hygienic)	57.7%

### Google Form Link :

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScfenMvd22SG7VU6nmILOKD0ddaUM\\_LNCFNrWEabYuim5VDlw/viewform?usp=publish-editor](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScfenMvd22SG7VU6nmILOKD0ddaUM_LNCFNrWEabYuim5VDlw/viewform?usp=publish-editor)

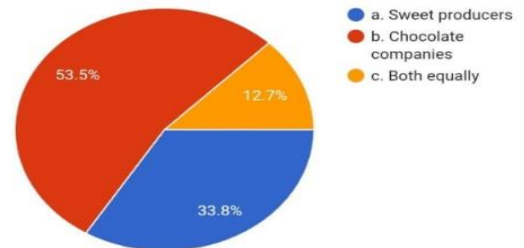
16. Which Indian sweet is famous for being a spongy, syrupy dumpling made from chhena (cottage cheese) and soaked in a light sugar syrup?

105 responses



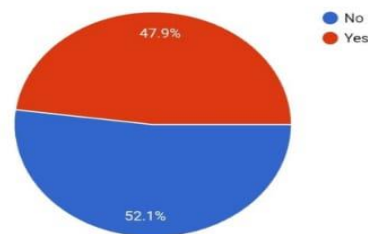
15. Which sector do you think earns more revenue during Diwali – sweet producers or chocolate companies?

105 responses



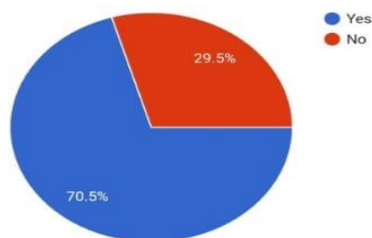
18. Do you think local sweet shops are losing business due to branded chocolate companies during festivals?

105 responses



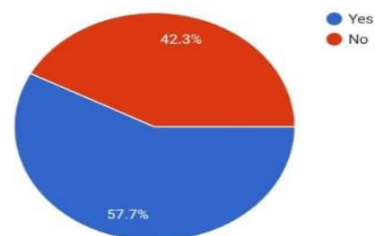
20. Are you aware of the health impacts of excessive sweet and chocolate consumption during festivals?

105 responses



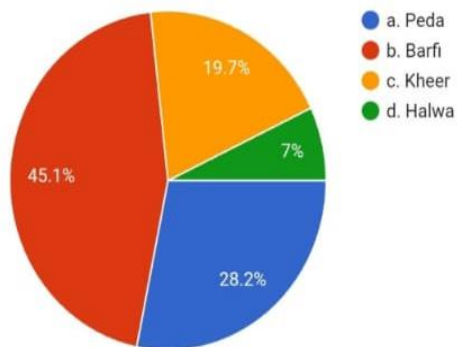
19. Would you support small local sweet producers if they maintain good hygiene and packaging standards?

105 responses



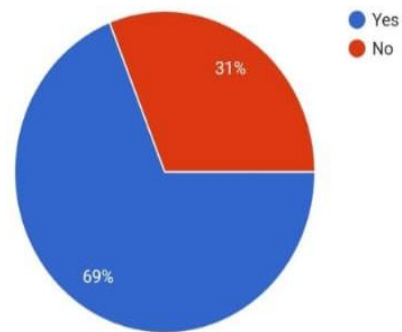
12. This festive sweet is often decorated with varq (edible silver foil) and is traditionally made from a paste of cashews or other ground nuts, then cut into diamond or square shapes. What is it?

105 responses



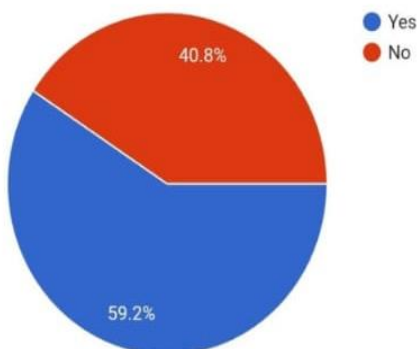
11. Are you aware of how sweets and chocolates are mass-produced during festive seasons?

105 responses



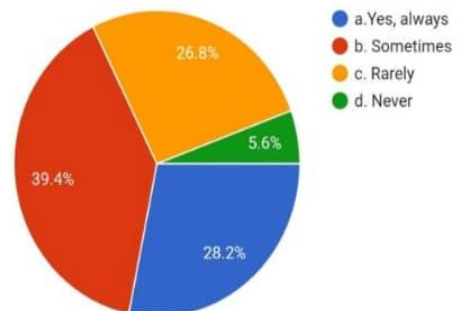
13. Have you ever faced issues related to adulteration or poor quality in sweets during Diwali?

105 responses



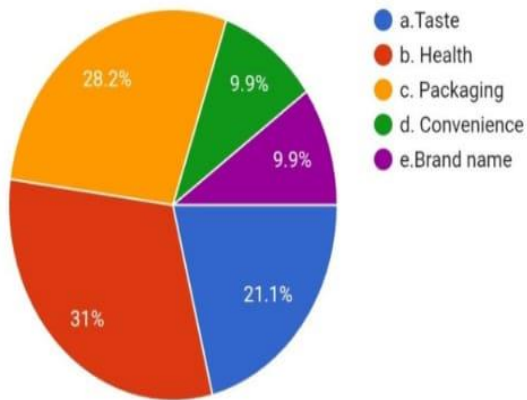
14. Do you think large-scale production of sweets during Diwali affects hygiene and freshness?

105 responses



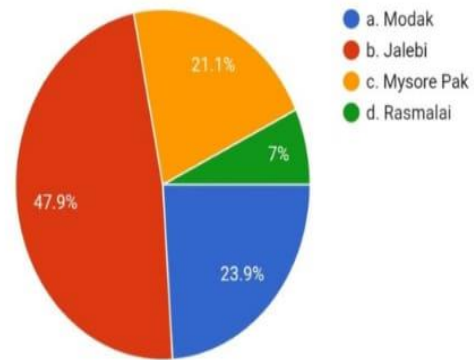
7. What are the main reasons for choosing chocolates over traditional sweets?

105 responses



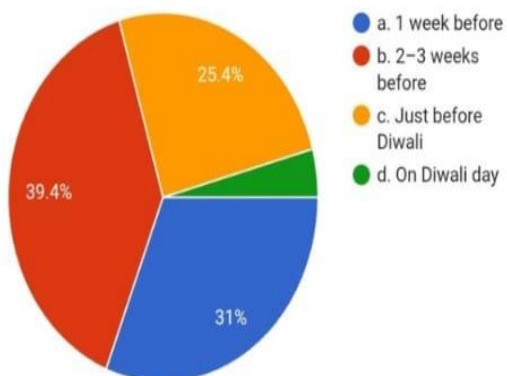
10. Which deep-fried, spiral-shaped Indian sweet is soaked in sugar syrup immediately after frying, giving it a crispy yet juicy texture?

105 responses



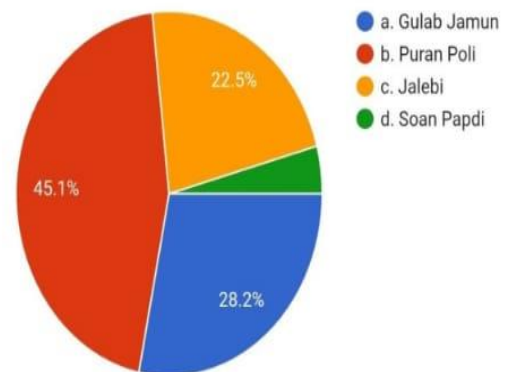
8. How early before Diwali do you usually start purchasing sweets and chocolates?

105 responses



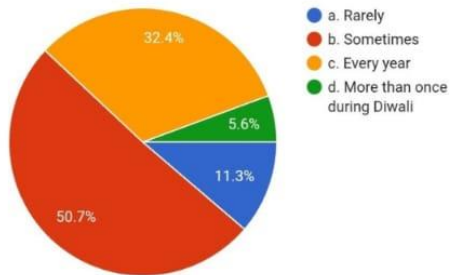
9. Which sweet is considered one of the most popular and best-selling traditional sweets in Pune?

105 responses



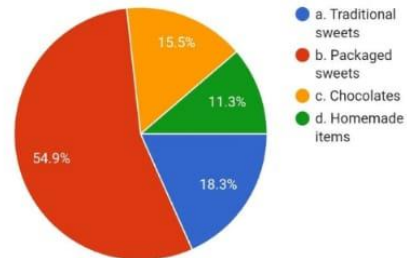
1. How often do you purchase sweets or chocolates during the Diwali festival?

105 response



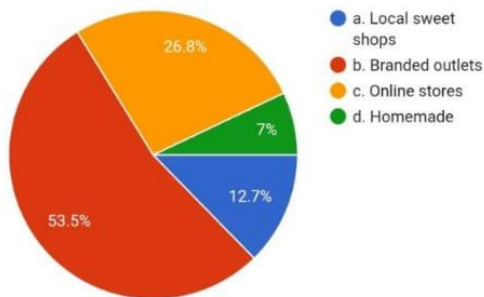
2. What type of sweets or chocolates do you prefer most during Diwali?

105 responses



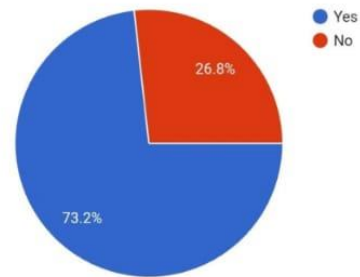
4. From where do you usually buy sweets and chocolates during Diwali?

105 responses



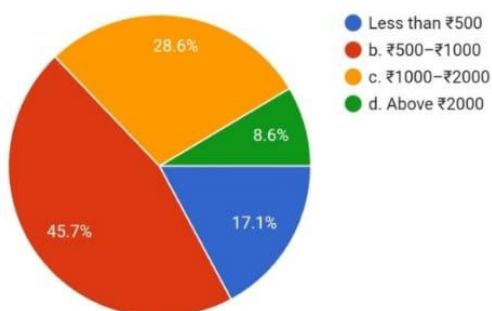
3. Do you observe an increase in sweet and chocolate purchases in your family compared to normal days?

105 responses



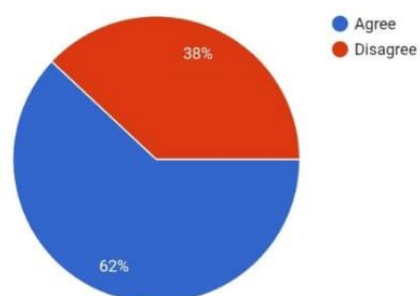
5. What is your average spending on sweets and chocolates during Diwali celebrations?

105 responses



6. Do you believe the demand for chocolates has increased compared to traditional sweets in recent years?

105 responses



### **Advantages of the Diwali Sweet Economy :**

The tradition of exchanging sweets during Diwali offers a multi-faceted benefit to society, the economy, and the corporate world. Below are the detailed advantages identified through our research and survey:

#### **1. A Profound Indication of Love and Affection**

Sweets serve as a non-verbal language of care. In Indian culture, the act of giving something sweet—whether homemade or branded—is a physical manifestation of one's wishes for the recipient's sweetness in life. For the diaspora, sending a box of sweets across borders is a powerful emotional bridge that says, "You are remembered," despite the distance.

#### **2. A Unique and Iconic Way of Celebration**

While festivals globally involve food, Diwali is unique because confectionery is the central protagonist. The sheer variety—from silver-leafed *Kaju Katli* to saffron-infused *Laddus*—creates a sensory experience that is specific only to this time of year. This uniqueness defines the Indian festive identity on the global stage.

#### **3. Strengthening Connections with People, Relatives, and Associates**

Diwali acts as a social "reset" button. The tradition of visiting homes to deliver sweets facilitates face-to-face interaction, helping to mend strained relationships and strengthen existing bonds. It transitions from a private family affair to a communal celebration, fostering a sense of belonging within a neighborhood or a social circle.

#### **4. Creation of Professional Goodwill and Brand Development**

In the corporate world, gifting sweets is a strategic tool for "Relationship Marketing." When a company sends a premium box of sweets to its employees or business associates, it builds **Professional Goodwill**. This gesture humanizes the corporation, transforming a cold business contract into a warm, long-term partnership. For the sweet brands themselves, being selected for corporate gifting accelerates their brand development and market reputation.

#### **5. Substantial Creation of Revenue**

The "Diwali Surge" is the backbone of the Indian confectionery industry's annual turnover. The massive demand leads to a high velocity of money in the economy, benefiting everyone from the large-scale brand owners to the small-scale dairy farmers and sugar producers. It provides a seasonal economic stimulus that sustains many small businesses for the rest of the year.

#### **6. Expansion of Retail Footprint and Market Visibility**

For brand outlets, Diwali is the prime time to increase their **Footprint**. To handle the rush, many brands set up temporary "pop-up" stalls or expand their digital presence on quick-commerce apps. This increased visibility often leads to a permanent increase in their customer base, as first-time festive buyers often turn into year-round loyal customers.

#### **7. Fostering a Healthy and Happy Social Environment**

The exchange of sweets triggers a psychological "feel-good" factor. The atmosphere of giving and receiving creates a positive social environment, reducing stress and promoting communal harmony. In a professional setting, it boosts employee morale and creates a "happy workplace" culture, which is essential for long-term productivity.

#### **8. Preserving and Promoting the Importance of Indian Culture**

Every box of traditional sweets is a lesson in heritage. By continuing this practice, the younger generation stays connected to ancient recipes and the stories behind them. On an international scale, it

acts as "Soft Power," introducing the rich culinary depth of Indian culture to non-Indians and the global market.

### 9. Boosting Allied Industries (Packaging and Logistics)

A significant but often overlooked advantage is the boom in **ancillary sectors**. The demand for sweets creates a massive ripple effect in the **packaging industry** (box manufacturers, printers) and the **logistics sector** (couriers and delivery partners). This creates thousands of seasonal jobs, contributing to a holistic increase in employment.

### 10. Catalyst for Product Innovation and Fusion Trends

The intense competition during Diwali forces brands to innovate. This leads to the "Evolution of the Palate," where traditional sweets are reimagined as "Health-conscious" or "Fusion" treats (e.g., sugar-free or chocolate-coated Mithai). This innovation keeps the ancient tradition relevant in a modern, health-aware world, ensuring the industry does not become stagnant.

### Disadvantages of sweet and savory consumption in Diwali :

Despite the socio-economic benefits, the surge in sweet and savory consumption during Diwali presents several systemic disadvantages. Our research and survey data highlight the following concerns:

#### 1. Health Implications of High Sugar Intake

Traditional Indian sweets (*Mithai*) and contemporary chocolates are dense in refined sugars and saturated fats. Excessive consumption leads to acute health issues, including sudden spikes in blood glucose levels, weight gain, and dental problems. For many, this seasonal over-indulgence can trigger long-term metabolic imbalances.

#### 2. Risks Associated with Savory (Namkeen) Gifting

The trend of gifting "Savory Boxes" as an alternative to sweets often results in a hidden health crisis. These snacks are typically deep-fried, leading to a high intake of trans-fats, reused oils, and ghee. This contributes significantly to rising cholesterol levels and cardiovascular strain among consumers.

#### 3. Acute Danger for Vulnerable Groups (BP and Diabetic Patients)

For the millions of Indians living with hypertension and diabetes, Diwali is a high-risk period. Statistics indicate a **15% to 18% rise in blood sugar levels** among diabetics during the festive month. The high sodium content in savories and the glucose load in sweets can lead to emergency medical situations for those with pre-existing conditions.

#### 4. Prevalent Market Adulteration

The massive gap between supply and demand during the peak week of Diwali creates a breeding ground for unscrupulous practices. Common adulterants like **starch in khoya, detergent in milk, and synthetic colors** are frequently reported. These substances are toxic and can cause severe food poisoning and organ damage.

#### 5. Negligence of Hygiene in Unorganized Sectors

While branded outlets follow strict protocols, local or non-branded vendors often operate in substandard conditions during the festive rush. Issues such as improper storage, fly infestations, and lack of clean water in the manufacturing process pose significant biological risks to unsuspecting buyers.

#### 6. Economic Strain of Premium Branded Purchases

The "Brand-ification" of Diwali has made festive participation expensive. Established outlets often practice premium pricing during the peak season. For middle- and lower-income groups, the pressure to buy "branded" for social status can lead to unnecessary financial strain.

### 7. Erosion of the "Homemade" Tradition

As convenience takes precedence, the cultural joy of making sweets at home—a ritual that once fostered familial bonding and the transfer of ancestral recipes—is rapidly diminishing. This "commercial diversion" leaves many families feeling deprived of the authentic, soulful experience of a traditional Diwali kitchen.

### 8. Overshadowing of Small-Scale Artisans

The dominance of mass-produced, branded sweets often marginalizes small-scale traditional confectioners (*Halwais*). These local artisans, who use regional techniques, struggle to compete with the marketing budgets and retail footprints of large corporations, leading to a loss of culinary diversity.

### 9. Environmental Impact and Post-Festival Waste

The "Physical Evidence" of gifting—ornate plastic trays, non-recyclable foils, and excessive decorative packaging—results in a massive environmental footprint. Cities often report an extra **50 to 800 tonnes of plastic waste** on the day after Diwali, much of which ends up in landfills, polluting land and water bodies.

### 10. Loss of Seasonal Seasonality and "Conscious Eating"

The year-round availability of "Festive Specials" due to industrial manufacturing has led to the **loss of the seasonal charm** of Diwali treats. Furthermore, the aggressive marketing of sweets as "essential for happiness" often bypasses the concept of conscious eating, encouraging a culture of binge-consumption that persists well beyond the festival dates.

## Way Forward: Toward a "Conscious and Swadeshi" Diwali

The future of the Diwali confectionery and gifting economy lies in a transition toward **holistic well-being and cultural sustainability**. To mitigate the health and environmental risks identified in this study, the following strategic shifts are recommended:

### The "Health-First" Gifting Evolution

- **From Deep-Fried to Dry-Roasted:** There is an urgent need to replace oil-laden *Namkeens* with **roasted or air-fried savorys**. Offering roasted foxnuts (*Makhana*), baked millets, or spiced seeds provides the same "festive crunch" without the harmful trans-fats and high-calorie burden.
- **The Sugar-Free Revolution:** Brands and households should prioritize **natural sweeteners** like dates, figs, jaggery, or stevia. Moving toward "Sugar-Free Mithai" ensures that children, adults, and especially diabetic patients can participate in the joy of *Meetha* without clinical risks.

### Redefining the "Token of Affection"

- **Useful Articles and Intellectual Gifting:** Beyond food, gifting should evolve toward **utility and wisdom**. Gifting **books, journals, or artisanal utility items** (like copper-ware or hand-painted stationery) ensures that the "token of love" lasts longer than a week and adds genuine value to the recipient's life.

### Radical Shift in Physical Evidence: Sustainable Packaging

- **Plastic-Free Initiatives:** The industry must aggressively discard single-use plastic trays and metallic wraps.
- **Eco-Friendly Alternatives:** We must embrace **biodegradable packaging** such as recycled kraft paper, jute pouches, and banana-fiber boxes. Using **seed-paper labels** (which can be planted after use) transforms waste into a living memory, aligning the festival of light with the health of the planet.

### Empowerment of "Swadeshi" and Cottage Industries

- **Support for Local Brands:** There should be a conscious motivation to buy from **local cottage industries** and "Swadeshi" (locally-made) articles. Supporting village artisans for *Diyas*, lanterns, and hand-woven gift wraps keeps the wealth within the community and preserves traditional craftsmanship.
- **Promoting Women Entrepreneurs:** A significant way forward is encouraging **homemade "Faral" (festive snack) orders from lady entrepreneurs**. By choosing these small-batch, artisanal home-chefs, consumers ensure better hygiene, a "mother's touch" in taste, and direct financial empowerment for women in the domestic sector.

### Ethical Marketing and Consumer Education

- **Transparent Labeling:** Brands should adopt "Front-of-Pack" labeling that clearly states the nutritional value and origin of ingredients. This builds **Brand Trust** and empowers consumers to make informed, healthy choices.
- **The "Joy of Making" Campaign:** To prevent the loss of domestic traditions, social campaigns should encourage families to make at least one "signature sweet" at home, ensuring the cultural transmission of culinary heritage to the next generation.

### Conclusion:

The "Festival of Lights" represents far more than a seasonal peak in consumption; it serves as a profound socio-economic mirror reflecting India's transition from a tradition-bound society to a modern, brand-conscious economy. This research has demonstrated that while the foundational values of **reconnection, togetherness, and spiritual lineage** remain the festival's heartbeat, the commercial landscape has undergone a radical transformation. Our empirical data, derived from 105 diverse participants, establishes that the Diwali sweet market is now a sophisticated ecosystem where the "emotional currency" of gifting is increasingly mediated by organized brands and corporate structures.

A primary finding of this study is the emergence of a "Choice Paradox." While nostalgia continues to anchor a preference for homemade delicacies, the logistical realities of urban life have propelled **branded outlets** to a dominant market position. These entities have successfully leveraged the **7 P's of Marketing**—specifically through premium packaging and standardized quality—to gain the trust of both individual households and the institutional sector. The survey reveals a significant shift where sweets are no longer just food items but are strategic tools for **professional goodwill** and brand development within government and service industries. However, this commercial expansion has introduced critical challenges, ranging from high-calorie health risks and market adulteration to the environmental burden of non-biodegradable waste.

Looking forward, the research proposes a visionary shift toward **"Conscious Indulgence" and "Swadeshi" sustainability**. The future of this industry lies in reconciling ancient culinary heritage with modern wellness needs. By advocating for **sugar-free formulations, roasted savories**, and the intellectual gifting of books over perishables, the market can mitigate systemic health concerns. Furthermore, the empowerment of **women entrepreneurs** for artisanal "Faral" orders and the promotion of **cottage industry articles** represent a vital return to grassroots economic empowerment. Transitioning to **eco-friendly packaging** and seed-paper labeling will ensure that the "Physical Evidence" of the festival no longer leaves a permanent ecological scar.

Ultimately, the essence of Diwali is the victory of light, which in a modern context translates to **informed, ethical, and healthy celebration**. By supporting local artisans and prioritizing sustainable practices, consumers and corporations alike can ensure that the sweetness of the festival is shared responsibly. This study serves as a definitive framework for understanding how tradition can be preserved not by resisting change, but by steering it toward a more inclusive, healthy, and environmentally conscious global future.

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