

# Blog

## **When in Rome, do as the Romans, or: How we found 34 ways to the consumer's heart**

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In a blog post last month, we talked about consumer, customer and macro trends and how we pool them into 'Benefit Territories', the fundamental needs and cravings that consumers expect food companies to satisfy in the coming years. (<http://solutions.barry-callebaut.com/news/individualistic-and-expressive-thoughtful-and-caring-meet-chocolate-consumer-2016>)

Talking to consumers and distilling trends is great: it gives us an idea of how consumers think. But to be able to co-create true innovations with our customers, we felt we had to understand not only how consumers think, but also how they *live*. What are the real tensions in their lives? What do they aspire to? What are they bored with? In short: what should tomorrow's chocolate experiences be about? Because that is the relevant context for the great quality ingredients we need to develop.

So for the past year, we've been immersing ourselves in the lives of the consumer across all our activities and market segments (confectionery, bakery & pastry, home baking, ice cream & desserts, drinks & dairy, biscuits & cereals).

Our research was done in four major cities: London, Paris, Rome and Brussels. It was in-depth look at the world of consumers – we talked to them (and their friends), we went grocery shopping with them and we cooked and baked with them.

Even for us as a B2B company, it's incredibly refreshing and inspiring to talk directly to the consumer. It also provided us with a fascinating, unfiltered look into the life of a 21<sup>st</sup> century consumer. Here's what we found.

I was delighted to learn that consumers, regardless of age and country of residence, are more interested than ever in trying new things. Actually, they indicated to us that some categories are quite boring to them at present, and that for them, some category borders are no longer clear or relevant. In fact, consumers are taking innovation in their own hands, freely mixing and merging food and taste – think juice smoothies with crunchy chocolate, or chocolate milkshakes with crunchy super foods.

It encourages us to push the limits of the chocolate category.

It also became clear to us once more that observing the consumer up close and personal is important, because relying on interviews alone only offers a partial insight into their lives and perspective on the world.

One consumer, for instance, surprised us with his intense focus on promotions in the supermarket shelf – he was so focused on promotions that he had trouble seeing products that were NOT in promotion – as if he had some kind of promotion ‘Spidersense’. This helps us understand our retail and mass-market customers and the competitive landscape in which they work better.

We also couldn’t help but notice the sizable gaps between what the consumer will tell you, and how they behave. You might see a consumer cook with a white label chocolate, despite their earlier statements that they “never buy anything but the very best premium chocolate”.

In fact, consumers’ cupboards are stocked with products that they claim they ‘never buy’ (some grown people apparently find it a little bit embarrassing to tell an interviewer that they love cocoa drinks).

Which brings me to another important insight that these consumers gave us: food is often about nostalgia, rituals, and childhood memories. There is no product that has an emotional resonance like biscuits, bakery, chocolate and ice cream. For a chocolate company, it’s crucial that we never lose sight of this.

It’s also interesting to know that consumers dunk a surprising range of breakfast foods in their coffee, milk or tea – surprising, but so recognizable.

Finally, food is about culture, in big ways and small ways. In France, biscuits are considered a normal breakfast – we kind of guessed that, based on what we can find in the supermarket shelves.

What was more surprising is that in Italy, a huge gelato (think 4 scoops, with whipped cream) makes for a perfectly fine *lunch* on hot days. We were skeptical at first, but several people confirmed that gelato lunch is officially a thing in Italy, we had no choice but to try it for ourselves. (It’s awesome.)

All these insights and impressions, combined with our market research and our R&D, are a treasure trove of innovation – which we fueled even more with a nice little product hunt among our team.

### **Defining the “Concept Platforms”: let 1000 ideas bloom**

Based on the research and impressions, we set to work on “Concept Platforms”.

As the name implies, they aren’t *products*. They are a description of a chocolate experience, rooted in the zeitgeist, but not so specific that they are only interesting for one segment or region. Concept Platforms are flexible and robust.

They set a consumer-relevant context guiding us while co-creating with our customers and our chefs. Depending on the customer's brands and strategic programs, every concept platform can generate more than 1000 different manifestations.

Too abstract? Let's try it with a few examples:

#### **Mademoiselle biscuit – rejuvenating the biscuit category**

Consumers want to indulge themselves. They want more intense experiences, more premium, more tailored to their preferences.

During the day there are many moments when you really want to treat yourself with a biscuit that tastes divine and doesn't fill you up. The Mademoiselles are a chef's signature range of very thin biscuit treats shaped as elegantly as a lady, in different sizes – and these delicate treats are perfect to create multisensory experiences using sensational ingredients, textures, baking and topping techniques.

The Mademoiselles are glamorous and fabulous biscuits, and they're designed to deliver a light, but intense and exquisite taste experience that always delights and never bores.

#### **Pinata cake – disconnect & re-connect**

Consumers want to disconnect digitally to re-connect emotionally; baking at home for friends to show your skills or just for family fun and bonding. Sharing a delicious cake is a great way to show your loved ones that you care about them, but traditional cakes often miss the exciting sense of surprise.

The Pinata is the answer to this need: it's a delicious cake decorated on the outside and filled with all sorts of surprising decorations added into the centre after baking. Just place the cake on the table, slice in, and watch everyone's surprise as the filling spills out. They can enjoy all sorts of new tastes, colors and textures!

#### **Bbq desserts: bitey, yet chewy**

Along the same lines of disconnecting & connecting: barbequing is fun, but why does it need to stop when it's dessert time? Please, not grilled bananas – *again?*

Here's Barry Callebaut introducing the "BBQ dessert" platform: grill them until caramelized on the outside, bite into them to discover the yummy melted heart (think marshmallows, chocolate, caramel, berries and much more). Finally, a truly delicious BBQ dessert. Enjoy your BBQ for even longer.

#### **Rough smoothie drink: joie de vivre!**

Drinks are also a very exciting category where we'll see lots of innovation the next years. Expect some surprises from us there, but here's a first sneak peek: millennials are looking for wholesome food fitting their wholesome life. They want their foods tasty AND good for them – which reflects the positive choices they make in their lives: *joie de vivre!*

The Rough Smoothie Drinks are healthy smoothies with different textures, like the Smoothie Shake: an exciting array of fruity smoothies with chocolate bits, nuts or fruits that will melt, crack or burst in your mouth and excite your senses. Just shake up the ingredients and enjoy!

**One more thing**

Oh, and for that Roman lunch of gelato - we have you covered with a range of ice creams inspired by artisanal Italian gelaterias. (Because you *just know* that you want to try that for yourself next summer.)

**BARRY CALLEBAUT AT ISM 2016**

In the next days, we'll be introducing some of our newly developed Concept Platforms to the world in more detail. We are now testing other Concept Platforms with consumers in a few key markets to refine them with our customers.

And for those of you lucky enough to be at ISM in Cologne, you can get up close and personal with a number of our Concept Platforms at the Barry Callebaut STUDIO, where five craftsmen and –women magically combine great quality ingredients into chocolate experiences for your indulgence.

Come and visit our Barry Callebaut STUDIO at Hall 10.2, Booth C10/D19 from January 31 until February 3, 2016.

**TALK TO US and FOLLOW US!**

Even if you can't visit our STUDIO, you can still follow all of our creations, trends and products that we will present during the four ISM days. Just follow us on the various social media channels listed below - also using our special hashtags:

- #GlobalChocolatier
- #BC\_ISM
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