

Confectionery



Taste, texture and trial

As HFSS legislation tightens the noose around LHF products, some confectionery suppliers are exploring different tastes and textures to stimulate ongoing demand, while others are trading on legacy heritage and quality to retain shoppers' trust and loyalty

As the government strengthens its high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) legislation this year, suppliers are forced to take some pretty hefty decisions, which boil down to two stark choices: reformulate to include a 'healthier' offer for consumers if they didn't already have one; or stay true to their existing formulations, recognising that confectionery is primarily an area of treat and indulgence.

Of course, it's nowhere near as simple as that – there are myriad nuances and ways in which confectionery suppliers can combine that sense of treating with a potentially healthier outcome, not least being smaller formats. And, at the same time, the confectionery category faces plenty of other challenges, including ingredients supply and the ongoing need to address value. So

there's a heady mix of situations for suppliers to face going into 2026.

The past year, however, has shown resilience in the confectionery sector and, overall, suppliers are optimistic in their assessment of the year ahead, despite also harbouring a certain sense of stoic realism.

Setting the scene

UK consumers spent £9.2bn on confectionery (chocolate, sugar and gum) in 2025, an increase of £587m (+6.8%) year on year (YoY)¹, reports Daniel Barnston, head of business intelligence at Valeo Foods UK. "However, due to rising inflation in the chocolate segment this resulted in 16,389 (-2.5%) fewer tonnes of confectionery being purchased than in 2025 than in the prior year," he

says. "Within the category, sugar confectionery recorded an increase in volume purchased of 4,320 tonnes vs prior year (+2%), and spend on sugar confectionery was up +2.1%, (+£42.3m) to £2.1bn³.

"We expect to see consistent low single-digit growth in the sugar confectionery market over the next 12 months, as consumers continue to enjoy sweets, with growth supported by NPD and in-store activation," he adds.

Confectionery was one of the strongest performing categories within packaged snacking in the last year; with value sales at +6.6% – ahead of total packaged snacking at +4.6%⁴, reveals Matt Boulter, UK sales director at Mars Snacking UK. "Of all the packaged snacking categories, only fruit snacks and ice cream saw faster



value sales growth than confectionery in 2025⁵,” he says. “However, confectionery did see unit decline at -2.3%, just ahead of packaged snacking at -1.8% YoY⁶.”

Meanwhile, World of Sweets reports a +2% rise in value and a -1% decline in units for the total sweets market across 2025⁷. Sales & marketing director Helen Bradshaw says the sector has delivered a strong performance, with its Bonds of London sharing bags achieving a remarkable 14% YoY growth⁸.

Even with ongoing cost pressures, sugar confectionery has proved resilient in the last year, says Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida UK, owner of the Bebeto brand. “The sector continued to grow as consumers continued to prioritise affordable treats,” he says. “And, in the wake of

chocolate price increases, there has been a significant switching into sugar confectionery, which has contributed to both value and volume growth.

“Looking to 2026, we are optimistic because the fundamentals are strong: everyday treating remains consistent in light of bigger-ticket spending decreases,” he adds. “Innovation in textures, flavours and formats is continual and keeps the fixtures fresh, while sharing/movie night occasions continue to drive impulse purchase.”

The sugar confectionery market is in growth⁹, agrees Susan Nash, trade communications manager at Mondelez International. “The sector currently represents 23% of the total confectionery market¹⁰,” she says. “Within this, we’ve seen a rise in demand for the sour candy segment

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This supplement to The Grocer was published by: William Reed Ltd, Broadfield Park, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 9RT
TEL: 01293 613400
EDITOR: Ellie Woollven
DESIGNER: Nick Figgins
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Analysis

in particular¹¹, as sour candy appeals to consumers who are looking for little moments of fun and escapism from day-to-day life."

"Robust performance" is how Jonathan Rae, operations director at Walker's Nonsuch, describes the sugar confectionery sector over the past year, particularly with shoppers increasingly discerning about value and quality. "Within sugar confectionery, bagged formats have benefited from being a more affordable alternative to chocolate, while still delivering a sense of treat and indulgence," he explains. As Walker's is "well positioned in this landscape" with recognition of the elements that make its toffee distinctive – heritage, quality and British manufacturing – that has translated into sustained sales growth across retail and wholesale channels, he adds.

While the wider confectionery category has faced volume pressure and legacy brands have struggled, Ritter Sport's generational long-term view, prioritising quality, sustainability and brand health, has stood it in good stead, according to Benedict Daniels, MD of Ritter Sport UK & Ireland. "In the UK, we've now outperformed the category for the last eight consecutive quarters¹², and we're confident that momentum will continue into 2026," he says.

Gareth Budd, co-founder and product director at 'juice-not-junk' brand Juggle says the company is really optimistic about the year ahead, but does not underestimate the size of the challenge. "Confectionery is a huge category dominated by massive brands," he says. "It's also much-loved by consumers, with 88% household penetration¹³ and is in a strong position, albeit against a backdrop of increasing scrutiny."

With protein front and centre in consumers' dietary habits, the protein category in confectionery continues to perform well, says Rachel Austerberry, UK retail sales director at Grenade. "Worth £170.2m, the protein bar segment rose +8.8% vs the previous 52 weeks¹⁴," she reports. "Snacks that offer protein as a functional ingredient remain in high demand from shoppers across the UK. However, while protein is a key ingredient shoppers seek out when it comes to healthier snacking, it's when protein-packed snacks can also deliver on flavour that we see this category challenge more established ones such as confectionery or crisps."

HFSS – and how suppliers are tackling the promo challenge

As HFSS legislation grew tougher on the advertising of food and drink from January this year, suppliers are looking at how they can continue to get their product messages out to consumers.

With HFSS legislation limiting traditional volume promotions such as BOGOF, World of Sweets has shifted its focus to clear everyday value, with price-marked packs (PMPs) playing a critical role, reveals Bradshaw. In fact, for its Bonds of London brand, over 70% of shared bag sales are PMP-led¹. "This reflects strong consumer demand for reassurance and value, particularly during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis," she says. The company strengthened this strategy further by launching Candy Realms at £1 PMP in 2025, alongside 50 kids' novelty ranges to maintain accessible entry price points. "Together, these strategies are helping us to protect volume and continue to drive sales in a more regulated and value-focused retail environment," she notes.

PMPs also remain a "critical part" of the approach at Valeo Foods UK, particularly in the convenience and cash & carry channels, says head of confectionery Claire Ellam. She explains that the company has adapted its strategies, in light of HFSS legislation, to focus on value and visibility without relying on traditional volume promotions, like BOGOF. "PMPs help to drive awareness and penetration, ensuring our products... remain attractive to value-conscious consumers," she says.

Launching an HFSS-compliant range is a key focus for Bebeto in 2026, reveals Kervan Gida's Hulme. "With this comes cost implications where we will need to review formats and recipes to ensure our full range remains affordable and appealing to our customer base. Bebeto has always operated with an everyday low pricing (EDLP) strategy that offers a compelling single unit value and clear entry point," he notes, adding



that this has always prohibited multibuy and BOGOF promotions. As such, he does not expect the brand to be as affected as others in the category, saying: "PMPs continue to be a vital part of our wholesale product range, building trust with independents and convenience shoppers, and bolstering the EDLP clarity our brand is known for."

At Walker's, Rae acknowledges that HFSS is a key consideration. "As part of the impulse category,



we recognise that restrictions on promotions and secondary placements have changed the way shoppers encounter confectionery," he says, but adds that Walker's sales performance remains steady. "Because our toffee is frequently purchased for sharing and gifting, it's important that promotions protect brand confidence and product integrity, while still remaining accessible and appealing to a broad consumer

base," he says. PMPs remain outside the brand's strategy, as its products are sold across diverse environments, from farm shops and fine food retailer to traditional sweet

“Restrictions on promotions and secondary placements have changed the way shoppers encounter confectionery”

shops and online platforms, so consistency of value is critical, he adds.

"HFSS is the elephant in the room, but hot on its heels is ultra-processed food (UPF)," says Joggle's Budd. "Addressing these two areas of increasing focus is the inspiration behind Joggle. With these principles locked, we set about creating a sweet that exceeds consumer expectationsⁱⁱ, while delivering both non-HFSS and non-UPF.

"Joggle is unique in this regard – the result of 18 months

of bottom-up development."

At Ritter Sport, however, Daniels says the company is not changing its strategy in the face of HFSS legislation. "Our growth has been built on consistency, quality and advocacy, not price-led promotions or heavy TV spend," he says. "In a post-HFSS world, this positions us extremely well as we offer genuinely high-quality products that people choose repeatedly and we see significant opportunity to

outperform larger players as the landscape evolves.

"The idea that promotions are essential for growth is a misconception," he adds. "Many of today's strongest-performing brands, including notable challengers and disruptors, are growing without over-relying on slashing prices to drive volume growth and gain penetration. They win through quality, innovation and brand loyalty – that's how Ritter Sport has built its success."

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Polarised premium and value

While gifting and sharing have remained prominent drivers in the confectionery market, a few forces beyond these two factors are shaping demand in 2026, says Kervan Gida's Hulme. "Value-led innovation is proving that in tighter times, shoppers still want newness but they want it to feel worth it, this can be done through limited editions, unique sensory experiences such as textures, intense flavours and heat."

Premiumisation hasn't disappeared, however, he adds. "It's now more intentional and requires more justification to win in the space such as elevated textures, standout flavours and provenance cues, positioning the product as a small luxury."

At Walker's, Rae agrees that premiumisation remains a strong driver but notes that the definition of 'premium' is evolving. "Shoppers are looking beyond price and flavour alone," he says. "Traceability, authenticity and ethical sourcing are increasingly influential in purchasing decisions."

In addition, ingredient integrity is central to indulgence, he adds. "Using traditional methods and carefully selected flavours that deliver consistency and balance allows us to achieve a rounded, recognisable taste profile that consumers trust."

Consumers are increasingly looking for value, particularly as high levels of inflation continue and disposable income is squeezed, observes Mars Wrigley's Boulter. "That doesn't necessarily mean value through price; we have seen propositions that have gained traction with shoppers, including personalisation, limited-edition flavours, retro propositions and, of course, premiumisation."

The important role premiumisation plays across FMCG is evidenced by premium private-label, which has been outperforming total private-label and total FMCG since the start of 2023¹⁵, he adds. "At the same time, providing consumers with value has never been more critical and with household budgets under continued pressure, we're seeing polarisation: consumers trading up on premium treats while simultaneously seeking everyday value in core ranges such as confectionery."

Boulter also points to personalisation



as remaining popular, but says this is not just in the form of customised packaging for special occasions. Rather, consumers are seeking out products that support individual dietary preferences and lifestyles. This means vegan options, reduced-sugar variants, and even functional confectionery with added benefits.

Novelty, social influence and experiential treats, alongside continued demand for value are increasingly driving the confectionery market in 2026, says World of Sweets' Bradshaw. "Consumers are looking for products that deliver entertainment as well as taste, with social media-led discovery

playing a growing role in purchase decisions," she comments.

Value-driven products remain at the heart of consumer demand as the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact households, maintains Valeo Foods UK's Ellam. "In sugar confectionery, fun and indulgence are key purchase drivers, so bringing new, innovative flavours and formats to market is a major focus for us," she says. "Limited-edition and novelty launches play an important role in keeping the category exciting and relevant, while also offering consumers affordable ways to treat themselves."

Ritter Sport's Daniels agrees that premiumisation remains a powerful driver. "The growth of premium own-label and retailers like M&S shows that consumers will pay more when they see clear value, whether that's provenance, quality ingredients or a differentiated experience," he says. "In chocolate, exceptional taste and craftsmanship continue to define the premium space."

“Dark chocolate with a high cocoa percentage is at the intersection of indulgence and functional benefit”

'Better for you' vs self-treating

While there's a growing interest in reduced sugar, cleaner labels and functional-style gummies, the key is credibility: shoppers want benefits without sacrificing taste and texture, says Kervan Gida's Hulme. It's a similar story on 'permissible indulgence', he says, as products need to feel like a treat, but consumers want the added reassurance of less sugar, natural colours/flavours, portion control, etc.

Valeo Foods' Ellam says the level of innovation in the 'better for you' space – from reduced sugar recipes to plant-based alternatives and functional attributes

– show there is appetite, even if it's not yet mainstream. "Our approach is to balance indulgence with choice, ensuring consumers can enjoy the products they love while having access to options that fit their lifestyle preferences."

Mars Wrigley's Boulter says today's self-treating consumer wants the sensory satisfaction and mood-lifting benefits that confectionery provides, but is unwilling to compromise on health ambitions or values to get it. "We are seeing this manifest in several ways," he says. "Dark chocolate with high cocoa percentages

is at the intersection of indulgence and functional benefit, with consumers citing antioxidants and lower sugar content as justifications for purchase."

While consumers are showing growing awareness of 'better for you' cues in confectionery... this interest remains selective rather than mainstream and is often driven by permissibility rather than a desire to compromise on taste or enjoyment, says World of Sweets' Bradshaw. "For most shoppers confectionery is still viewed primarily as a treat, and indulgence remains

essential. Products that succeed tend to balance familiar flavours and satisfying textures with subtle reassurance cues, rather than being positioned as overtly functional or health-led."

Habits centred around health and wellness tie in nicely with the growing protein trend, says Grenade's Austerberry. However, not all protein shoppers are looking for the same type of protein snack – there are those embarking on active lifestyles, and those who are looking for an alternative to confectionery in the healthier snacking sector.

While personalisation has a role, Daniels believes this is often high-cost and low-margin. "We choose to invest where it makes the biggest impact: innovation, taste and quality," he says. "Limited editions can excite shoppers, but it's consistent excellence that keeps them coming back."

Premiumisation continues to play an important role in driving category growth," says Budd from Juggle. "More broadly, choice plays a crucial role in the lives of consumers, none more so than the world of food, where pricing tiers are well established."

Meanwhile, he believes retailers are right when they tell the company that consumers are increasingly seeking less processed, higher-quality treats that offer something in addition to great taste or fancy packaging. "Our research reinforces this, with nearly 90% of shoppers agreeing that more fruit, and fewer, simpler ingredients are markers of a high-quality product¹⁶."

All that said, Grenade's Austerberry believes innovation is key to driving growth in the protein bar category. "When we launch new product innovation, we not only drive sales, but also recruit new consumers to the category," she notes. The company's latest innovation – the limited-edition Soft Core Creme Egg protein bar is a completely new format, which Austerberry says is breaking new ground. "As the first ever official Creme Egg flavoured protein product, this bar is ideal for consumers looking for a snack on-the-go, some fuel between meetings or a post-gym perk," she says. "The credentials of the bar make it non-HFSS so a great solution for retailers at impulse locations."

Meanwhile, seasonal trends, such as Easter, are important points in the confectionery calendar, as Mondelez International's Nash highlights. "Easter marks one of the most exciting moments in the chocolate

calender," she says. "In 2025, Mondelez International grew Easter sales ahead of the category at +19.1% value YoY¹⁷ and remained the No.1 supplier at Easter time¹⁸."

The growing importance of online

The influence of digital platforms cannot be underestimated in the confectionery sector, particularly given the increasingly limited areas of promotion now at suppliers' disposal.

Many of Walker's long-standing wholesale partners now fulfil a significant proportion of orders online, effectively transforming their physical depots into distribution hubs, reveals Rae. This shift has changed how the brand engages shoppers. "Digital platforms allow us to communicate our story far more effectively – from heritage and craftsmanship to flavour profiles and usage occasions," he says. "It's also a more agile and cost-effective way to refresh content seasonally."

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As such Walker's is investing heavily in digital assets. "High-quality photography, video and enhanced product content are increasingly essential," he says, adding that social media supports this approach. "We're moving beyond pure product promotion into storytelling and thought leadership. LinkedIn, in particular, allows us to connect with retail partners while reinforcing brand values around sustainability, British manufacturing and long-term thinking."

Online sales and social media are both must-haves for any brand, particularly a fresh-faced challenger, says Juggle's Budd. "It's a great way to connect with consumers and hear what they have to say," he notes. "We're working with some fantastic partners to ensure we take the confectionery world by storm in 2026."

Kervan Gida brand Bebeto has launched on several e-commerce marketplaces last year, servicing both consumers and independent retailers. "With stretching targets for 2026 set to widen accessibility to the Bebeto brand, digital is a key channel we plan to connect with customers directly through," explains Hulme. "Social media is a core tool to inspire usage occasions and tell the brand story."

Digital has never been more important, says Ritter Sport's Daniels. "As Ritter Sport becomes increasingly pre-selected rather than impulse-led, a strong e-commerce presence is critical," he says. "We're investing further in digital and e-commerce as we move into 2026 to ensure we meet consumers wherever they shop. Social media will also play a key role this year. With HFSS restrictions evolving, we're focused on organic, high-quality content and partnering with one of the leading social media experts to connect and inspire our audience – more on that soon."

Online continues to grow in importance for World of Sweets, reports Bradshaw, both as a route-to-market and a source of insight and inspiration. "Digital platforms play a critical role in spotting emerging trends, monitoring rates of sale, and identifying viral products early."

Social media is central to this approach, she adds, with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube increasingly shaping confectionery discovery, particularly around novelty,



limited editions and experiential products. "We actively track social engagement, creator content, and viral momentum to inform range selection and NPD decisions, ensuring we connect retailers with products that already have strong consumer demand and cultural relevance."

"Overall, online and social channels are not just communication tools for World of Sweets – they are strategic drivers of innovation, helping us stay ahead of trends, inspire our retail partners, and continue to lead the market in bringing exciting, relevant confectionery to consumers," she adds.

“Looking ahead, it’s less about chasing every trend and more about extending proven flavours into new, relevant formats”

It's all pineapples and texture

With pineapple touted as *the* confectionery flavour for 2026¹⁹, are suppliers buying into that trend?

"We're seeing growing momentum behind tropical flavours within the sugar confectionery category, and pineapple is certainly part of that broader trend," says Kervan Gida's Hulme. However, while the company is actively exploring pineapple and other tropical notes as part of its development pipeline... it believes it essential to anchor ranges in proven, mainstream flavours that are trusted to win with shoppers, and then elevate them through format and texture. As a result, its NPD strategy for 2026 is focused on delivering playful, multi-textural experiences through combinations of gummies, centre-filled sweets, and foam formats. "These layered textures create variety within every pack and offer a point of difference on-shelf, while flavours are carefully selected to evoke

Is artificial intelligence now essential?

With artificial intelligence (AI) becoming the “invisible engine powering the next era of food and beverage retail”, according to IGDⁱⁱⁱ, “predictive analytics are improving demand forecasting and ensuring the right products are available at the right time,” it says. But how does this play out with suppliers in the confectionery sector?

AI is beginning to play a meaningful role in World of Sweets’ new product development and insight strategy, reports Bradshaw. “We use AI-driven tools to analyse trend signals, social listening data

and performance patterns, helping us to identify gaps, predict longevity and prioritise innovation,” she says. “This supports faster, more informed decision-making and allows us to combine data-led insight with our deep category expertise.”

At Ritter Sport, Daniels says AI is beginning to support its NPD process. “While still early-stage, we’re collaborating with global teams to explore its potential, and expect to accelerate this work from the second quarter of this year onwards,” he reveals.

Meanwhile, Kervan Gida’s Hulme says

that, although AI is no substitute for thorough research and ideation, it is becoming a useful tool for trend sensing and rapid concept iteration.

For some brands, however, using AI in the NPD process doesn’t yet factor, although its use in other areas is developing.

“Innovation should be driven by real consumer insights and direct feedback gathered through research and social engagement,” says Valeo Foods’ Ellam. “While AI plays a limited role in ideation, it is increasingly valuable in optimising processes, improving

efficiency, and supporting data analysis to inform decision-making. This balance ensures that creativity remains consumer-led while leveraging technology to enhance speed and accuracy.”

“When it comes to NPD, innovation remains firmly rooted in human insight, says Walker’s Rae. “Our decisions are guided by robust sales data, consumer feedback, and detailed food and drink trend analysis,” he says. “We’ve always relied on our own ideas and creativity long before AI existed, and that hands-on approach continues to guide our innovation today.”

warmth, familiarity, and nostalgia – emotional cues that resonate strongly across age groups,” he says.

At Juggle, Budd agrees that pineapple is a prime flavour for 2026, revealing: “Juggle Tropical Burst (pineapple & grapefruit) is front and centre of our launch trio, alongside Berry Blast (strawberry & blackberry), and Citrus Kick (lemon & lime) flavours. We’ve also been busy exploring what’s next,” he says, noting that it’s a closely guarded secret at the moment. “But what we can say is that consumers are more interested in finding the best possible versions of the sweets they know and love, perhaps with a subtle twist – nothing too whacky.”

Pineapple is a key flavour for 2026, agrees World of Sweets’ Bradshaw, adding that the flavour is already established across the company’s portfolio in multiple formats, price points and consumption occasions. “Its appeal lies in its fresh, tropical

profile, which resonates across age groups and works equally well in refreshment-led, indulgent and novelty formats,” she says. Looking ahead to 2026, flavours that combine familiar fruit profiles with exciting textures, such as fizzy, layered, frozen or dual-flavour formats, will continue to drive broad appeal, adds Bradshaw. “While ‘swavoury’ and ‘swicy’ remain important for innovation and social buzz, the strongest growth will come from accessible flavours like pineapple, delivered through multiple formats, supported by nostalgia, novelty and clear points of difference in NPD.”

Valeo Foods UK has not yet explored pineapple as a flavour but believes “bold playful flavours” are likely to resonate in 2026, says Ellam. While ‘swicy’ and ‘swavoury’ combinations remain niche, they continue to attract adventurous customers, so we’re monitoring these trends closely, she adds.

At Ritter Sport, Daniels says

innovation is central. “We’ve launched everything from mango & maracuja to liquorice, and even chocolate with tortilla chips. We enjoy pushing boundaries, so nothing is ever off the table. Pineapple? Watch this space.”

However, he says the UK chocolate market is relatively narrow in flavour terms, which is why formats and flavours outside the norm, such as pistachio, have performed so strongly. “Looking ahead it’s less about chasing every trend and more about extending proven flavours into new, relevant formats,” he says.

One example of combining proven flavours is Mondelez International’s partnership with Lotus Bakeries, initially established in 2024, to bring Cadbury Dairy Milk and Biscoff together, as part of Mondelez’s long-term plans innovate in the chocolate category, says Nash. “Since launching earlier in 2025, Cadbury Dairy Milk Biscoff is worth £19.7m²⁰, over-indexing

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with shoppers aged under 28²¹,” she reveals. “It taps into the consumer demand for new flavours and textures and drives cross-brand interest to help drive incremental growth,” she says. This Easter, the company has added two new products to its range: Cadbury Biscoff Filled Egg and Cadbury Dairy Milk Biscoff Ultimate Shell Egg.

When it comes to flavours, Walker’s doesn’t simply chase fleeting trends, says Rae. “While pineapple and other tropical notes are being talked about for 2026, we focus on creating varieties that have longevity and enduring appeal,” he says. “For example, pistachio is a long-lasting flavour we’re currently trialling, reflecting the type of indulgence consumers return to time and again.”

So, what does 2026 hold?

Hulme from Kervan Gida says the post-HFSS promotional reality and how well brands adapt to driving rate of sale without multibuy is the single key influence that will impact the confectionery sector across this year. “HFSS is no longer a ‘future’ issue; it’s reshaping range decisions, pack architecture, value strategy, and how shoppers navigate confectionery both in-store and online,” he says. “We plan on winning in this new landscape by delivering clear value without relying on volume mechanics, and by keeping the category exciting through innovation, standout sensory experiences, and smart digital discovery.”

How consumers respond to HFSS and the evolving retail landscape is also on the mind of Valeo Foods’ Ellam. “These changes will continue to shape how brands communicate value and drive impulse purchases without relying on traditional promotions,” she says. “At the same time, international flavour and format trends are entering the UK market faster than ever, driven by social media and globalisation. Balancing compliance with creativity will be key.”

At Ritter Sport, the key driver in 2026 will be continued penetration growth, says Daniels. “Reaching more households and becoming a pre-decided choice will underpin our long-term success and strengthen our position in the market,” he adds.

Regulatory changes and shifting consumption habits will characterise the market across 2026, says Walker’s



Rae. “With reduced access to traditional impulse placements, brands need to work harder to earn attention and communicate relevance,” he says. And, as broader lifestyle shifts come into play and conversations around moderation, GLP-1, medications and mindful consumption continue, “confectionery brands must articulate the emotional and experiential value of their products”, he notes.

Mars Wrigley’s Boulter says the continued evolution of consumer health consciousness will be a significant influence. “Today’s shoppers, particularly younger demographics, are actively seeking permissible indulgence; treats that deliver joy without guilt,” he says. “They want transparent labelling, recognisable ingredients and, increasingly, products that align with their wellness goals.

“For us, this presents both challenge and opportunity. Consumer health consciousness is an NPD consideration, but we are also mindful not to change the taste and eating experience of our core products. Confectionery is meant to be a treat and our experience tells us that consumers want the ‘real thing’ and aren’t prepared to eat a reformulated version. What we’ve been doing, however, is looking at pack sizes and how we can grow our offering to meet

multiple consumer needs, enabling shoppers to treat themselves sensibly.”

Emotionally driven, experience-led confectionery that creates social connection and purpose, alongside the need to deliver clear value will grow in importance in the year ahead, believes World of Sweets’ Bradshaw. “Consumers increasingly want products that mean something, not just taste good,” she says. “Confectionery that connects people – through nostalgia, shared moments, added value through toys or a clear give-back message – is proving particularly powerful. At the same time, these products must still deliver strong shelf impact, accessible pricing, and clear value, especially in a cost-conscious environment.”

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Is AI now essential?

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Staying true to quality and variety

DETAILS

Walker's Nonsuch Toffee

Calverley Street
Longton
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire, ST3 1QS
t: 01782 321525

KEY CONTACTS

Emma Walker
Joint Managing Director
Katie Walker
Joint Managing Director
Jonathan Rae
Operations Director
Alan Staniford
UK Sales Director

KEY BRANDS

Walker's Nonsuch



Walker's Nonsuch has enjoyed a strong year, thriving both in the UK and internationally, reveals operations director Jonathan Rae. "Our wide variety of flavours – from classic Treacle and Liquorice to trending Salted Caramel, Nutty Brazil with real Brazil nuts, and Éclairs with delicious chocolate centres – ensures there is something for everyone," he notes. "Our toffees are gluten-free and vegetarian-friendly, made in England using trusted, BRC-accredited processes. Our AA accreditation gives consumers extra confidence, while sustainability is at the heart of everything we do – from thoughtfully designed packaging to energy-efficient production."

Clarity, consistency, and experience are key to shelf standout, adds Rae. "Our packaging features a clear window to showcase individually twist-wrapped toffees, and our 150g bags have weighed the same since the early 2000s, which builds shopper trust,"



“The key is keeping prices accessible and combining classic quality with modern visual appeal”

he says. "The key is staying true to our recipe, keeping prices accessible, and combining classic quality with modern visual appeal."

Looking ahead, the company will continue to grow brand awareness through a variety of media, including expanding its digital presence. "It's all about supporting our partners while sharing our story – and there's more to come," concludes Rae.



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Grenade
Grenade HQ
Bournville Lane
Birmingham B30 2HP

KEY CONTACTS

Tom Murphy
CEO
Rachel Austerberry
UK Retail Sales Director

KEY BRANDS

Grenade
– the UK's No.1 protein bar brand⁶, holding eight of the top 10 SKUs. Best-selling flavours include OREO, Chocolate Chip Salted Caramel, and Cookie Dough, demonstrating the importance of recognisable, indulgent flavour profiles



The protein bar segment continues to outperform, now worth £170.2m and growing +8.8% year on year¹. "Protein has firmly moved beyond sports nutrition, increasingly competing with traditional confectionery and crisps as a permissible indulgence," says UK retail sales director Rachel Austerberry. "Shoppers are no longer willing to compromise on taste; protein snacks must deliver on flavour, satisfaction and convenience to win repeat purchase."

Within the protein category, two key shopper groups – those with active lifestyles and those seeking healthier alternatives to everyday snacks – overlap in their demand for snacks that are convenient, filling, high in protein and, critically, indulgent enough to replace a chocolate bar. To continue recruiting shoppers, visibility, education and innovation remain essential, advises Austerberry. "As the UK's best-selling protein bar brand², Grenade recognises the importance of these and continues to work alongside retailers to support on each of these vital pillars of growth," she says. "With one in five shoppers unable to find protein bars in-store³, improving visibility remains a major opportunity, particularly given protein bars' high rate of sale."

Innovation

Innovation is a major driver of growth in protein bars, particularly formats that blur the line between functional snacking and confectionery. Grenade's NPD both drives incremental sales and recruits new consumers into protein.

Its limited-edition Soft Core Creme Egg protein bar, for example, represents a significant step forward. As Grenade's softest bar to date and a completely new format, it combines light, fluffy protein dough with a signature yolk-coloured Creme Egg-flavoured filling, enrobed in smooth milk chocolate. "It is the first-ever official Creme Egg-flavoured protein product, bringing a highly recognisable confectionery brand into the protein space," reveals Austerberry.



“Soft Core Creme Egg protein bar is a significant step, bringing a highly recognisable confectionery brand into the protein space”

“Despite a confectionery-style taste and texture, the 45g bar contains over 13g of protein, just 2g of sugar and is non-HFSS. Positioned as an on-the-go snack, a mid-afternoon treat or a post-gym reward, it appeals to both active consumers and mainstream snackers.”

Trends and formats

Health and wellness trends mean that protein is now appearing across categories such as yoghurts and cereals. However, protein bars remain the primary entry point for shoppers.

While 42% of consumers seek out bars containing 20g or more protein⁴, smaller formats help drive penetration. “Grenade's 35g bars offer the same flavours as the core range in a lighter, lower-priced option, so are ideal as an everyday snack or part of a meal deal,” says Austerberry. “The format has proven successful, as our 35g bar sits in the top 10 best-selling protein bars⁵. Multipacks also support growth by increasing basket spend, while smaller bars encourage trial and recruitment among confectionery shoppers looking for a better-for-you alternative.”

Source

¹⁻² Circana, Protein Bars, Total Market, Value Sales, 52wks to 21.12.25

³⁻⁴ Market Measures, Consumer Researcher, 2024

⁵⁻⁶ Circana, Protein Bars, Total Market, Value Sales, 52wks to 21.12.25



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HIGH
PROTEIN

GRENADE
HIGH PROTEIN, LOW SUGAR

LOW
SUGAR

LIMITED EDITION



GRENADE®



AVAILABLE NOW

*Circana, Total UK Market, Value Sales, Protein Bars, 52wks to 28.09.25

Full of juice, free of junk

DETAILS

JUGGLE Confectionery (Linton Foods Ltd)
Timsons Business Centre
Bath Road
Kettering NN16 BNQ
t: 01536 808660
Insta/TikTok: @HelloJuggle

KEY CONTACTS

Gareth Budd
Co-founder &
Product Director
Caroline Gibbs
Commercial Director

KEY BRANDS

JUGGLE Super Juicy Jellies – available right now in three different totally delicious flavour combinations: Tropical Burst (Pineapple & Grapefruit) Berry Blast (Strawberry & Blackberry) and Citrus Kick (Lemon & Lime)



Co-founded by Gareth Budd and Peter Turrill, Joggle is here to bring joy and disruption to the sweets category by creating all-round 'better' treats for discerning consumers, says commercial director Caroline Gibbs. "Joggle is set to take 2026 by storm," she says. "Following a recent successful launch in WHSmith, we have more retailers and wholesalers lining up to join us on our super-juicy journey."

Joggle is inspired by a positive approach to modern life, notes Gibbs. "We don't take things too seriously and neither should you – where's the fun in that?" she asks. "Instead, we creatively flip the challenges, celebrate successes, and revel in the absurdity of it all. We're a cheeky, disruptive challenger brand and this life-affirming personality will be reflected in all our communication plans over the coming years."

But what's the inspiration behind Joggle? "Simply put, we do sweets differently, providing shoppers with a range of great-tasting treats, bursting with real fruit juice and made with fewer, simpler ingredients," she notes.

"Shoppers want better versions of their favourite treats¹, so who are we to argue? We also know that nearly 90% of them agree that more fruit and fewer, simpler ingredients are indicators of a high-quality product². Despite this, most products in the category contain lengthy ingredient lists and/or very little juice – in some cases, none at all.

"Our Super Juicy Jelly Sweets are so bursting with juice, there's no room for any nasties. They're packed with 10 times more real fruit juice and around half the ingredients of your typical sweets, while also providing a source of both fibre and vitamin C."



Shoppers want better versions of their favourite treats¹, so who are we to argue? Our Super Juicy Jelly Sweets are packed with 10 times more real fruit juice and around half the ingredients of your typical sweets

While this may seem a deceptively simple idea, it has taken over 18 months of careful development to get this just right, reveals Gibbs. "The confectionery category is facing some tough challenges at the moment, with HFSS the obvious – but by no means the only – one. Hot on its heels is ultra-processed foods (UPF). Addressing these two areas came naturally to the team at Joggle, where the mantra is 'less is more'.

"Nothing like it exists in the market today. We know because we had to go back to the drawing board and start from scratch to create a product that both exceeds consumer expectations for branding, taste and texture³ while also meeting the needs of the category

"But it was definitely worth the effort," she adds. "Retailers need genuine innovation and breadth of choice, as well as great quality options that deliver against shopper priorities."

Joggle realises this category is challenging to crack – full of big brands that have been around a long time. "But we're here to show consumers how it should be done. That's an incredibly bold and ambitious statement for a fledgling brand, but Joggle is the standard bearer for a new generation of sugar confectionery – one that addresses the growing concerns of the industry and shoppers in a uniquely creative way."



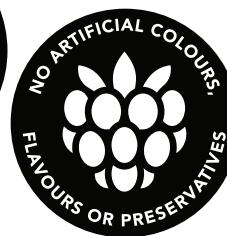
Source

¹⁻² Vypr online consumer research, n=500+
³ Wirral Sensory Services, Expert sensory panel, n=100+

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we've zhushed it into our junk free jelly sweets!



Super juicy jelly sweets so bursting with real fruit juice
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www.hellojuggle.com



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Get in contact 



Delivering sweet success

DETAILS

Kervan Gida Ltd
Swan Court
Wimbledon
London SW19 4JS
t: 01243 530550

KEY CONTACTS

Phil Hulme
Commercial Director,
Kervan Gida UK

KEY BRANDS

Bebeto

 In 2025, trend-leading confectionery brand Bebeto saw phenomenal growth, significantly outperforming the wider category, says Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida UK.

Branded retail sales grew by 41.6% year on year, compared to total category growth of just 3.2%¹, moving Bebeto up one place to rank as the 15th-largest sweets brand in the UK². “This strong commercial momentum has been supported by a step-change in brand health, with prompted brand awareness increasing by 48%, well ahead of the competitive set, which grew by only 4%³,” he says.

Textures and seasonal occasions

“In 2025, we launched 24 new SKUs, with a focus on differentiated textures such as freeze-dried and centre-filled sweets, alongside the expansion of Bebeto into three new seasonal occasions,” Hulme explains. “Being the first major confectionery brand to launch a range of freeze-dried sweets in the UK really drove growth in 2025. As the trend plateaus, we’re looking at where we can deliver genuine innovation and a clear point of difference.”

This year, Bebeto has a raft of exciting NPD planned, including Valentine’s Day Fizzy Heart Popz and Freeze Crunchy Strawberry Hearts, as well as extending its Easter range with the launch of Bebeto Hoppy Squad, the brand’s first foam sweets available in the UK, he reveals. “By introducing a completely new texture, Hoppy Squad brings fresh excitement to our Easter offer and unlocks incremental shopper appeal,” he adds. “Alongside this, we’ve developed our first-ever Easter multi-bag format, a value-added alternative to chocolate, perfect for egg hunts.”

A brand new look

A bold, distinctive look combined with meaningful product innovation is key to standing out on-shelf, says Hulme. “In 2025, Bebeto had a comprehensive pack makeover, transforming the



“By introducing a completely new texture, Hoppy Squad brings fresh excitement to our Easter offer. We’ve also developed our first-ever Easter multi-bag format”

look and feel of the brand with a more impactful, fun, and playful design that delivers strong shelf standout and clear brand blocking,” he says. “This also aligns our sub-categories under a unified visual identity.”

Focus for 2026

In 2025, sugar confectionery volume sales increased by 3.7% while chocolate declined 2.7%, despite chocolate’s stronger value growth (9.2% versus 3.2%)⁴. Highlighting a big shift among price-sensitive consumers moving away from premium-priced chocolate. Bebeto is strategically targeting these switchers by expanding into chocolate-dominated seasons, and delivering quality products that meet evolving price expectations.

To navigate the new HFSS ad restrictions, Bebeto is rebalancing its media mix and increasing investment toward exempt mass-reach channels. “This includes disruptive shopper marketing, digital out-of-home (DOOH), audio advertising, and high-impact PR in order to build fame, brand equity and cultural relevance,” says Hulme. “Our refined social strategy will prioritise brand-led storytelling that deepens emotional connections and reinforces our brand values and purpose.”

Source

¹⁻² The Grocer's Top Products 2025 in association with NIQ: 52 weeks to 06.09.25

³ YouGov Plc, n=2,064 adults, between 29 and 30 October 2025

⁴ NIQ, 52 w/e 06.09.25

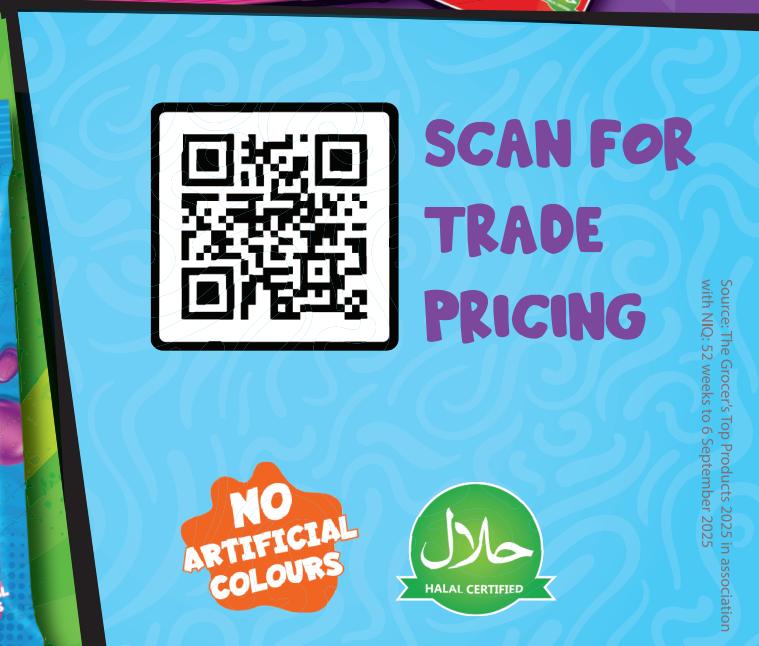


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DETAILS

Mars Wrigley UK
3D Dundee Road
Slough SL1 4LG
t: 01753 550055

KEY CONTACTS

Matt Boulter
UK Sales Director,
Mars Snacking UK

KEY BRANDS

BOUNTY®
CELEBRATIONS®
EXTRA®
GALAXY®
M&M'S®
MARS®
MALTESERS®
SKITTLES®
SNICKERS®
STARBURST®
TWIX®



As the confectionery category continues to demonstrate resilience in challenging market conditions, Mars Wrigley is positioning itself at the forefront of sustainable growth through strategic innovation and deep consumer understanding.

The confectionery sector proved its strength in 2025, delivering value sales growth of 6.6% – outperforming total packaged snacking at 4.6%¹. Mars Wrigley exceeded these figures with value sales up 7.8%², alongside notable unit sales growth of 2.8%³, illustrating that success comes from volume gains, not just price increases, reveals Matt Boulter, UK sales director, Mars Snacking UK. “Our ambitions are rooted in a long-term strategic vision – unlocking more consumption occasions and working with our retail partners to deliver sustainable growth for the entire category,” he says.

The role of permissible indulgence

‘Permissible indulgence’ is replacing the traditional boundaries between indulgence and health, as products that deliver genuine pleasure are aligned with wellness goals and personal values. While premium private-label has been outperforming total FMCG since early 2023, consumers still seek everyday value in core brands, reflecting their desire to protect small indulgences even with stretched budgets. “Consumers aren’t only trading up for luxury; they’re also doing so for authenticity and provenance,” notes Boulter. “High-quality chocolate backed up with transparent sourcing stories justifies premium price points.”

Innovation that respects heritage

The launch of Extra Plus exemplifies Mars Wrigley’s approach to innovation – a premium gum range with added



“High-quality chocolate backed up with transparent sourcing justifies premium price points”



ingredients designed to support modern lifestyles while recruiting younger audiences to future-proof the category, says Boulter. “This strategic innovation addresses the significant headroom for household penetration growth while meeting evolving consumer expectations,” he adds.

Personalisation is also driving innovation, with today’s shoppers seeking products that support individual dietary preferences and lifestyles – vegan options, reduced-sugar variants, and confectionery with added benefits. Yet Mars Wrigley remains mindful of its heritage. “In a category obsessed with the next big trend, we are betting on something bigger: timelessness,” Boulter adds. “We tap into cultural moments and trends but balance modernity with heritage, meeting evolving needs while staying true to what makes our brands iconic.”

Looking ahead

Health consciousness will significantly influence the sector in 2026, he says. Mars Wrigley’s response is a focus on pack size innovation rather than reformulating much-loved products, enabling shoppers to treat themselves sensibly without compromising on taste.

“Brands that will thrive are those that anticipate consumer needs and work constructively with industry partners,” adds Boulter. “We intend to prove confectionery can evolve while staying a cherished part of life, enjoyed responsibly across all demographics.”

Source

^{1,2} NIQ Scantrack data, Total GB Coverage to 27.12.25

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*Hydro - Sugar-free chewing gum contributes to the reduction of oral dryness. Chew whenever the mouth feels dry.

A varied and balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle are important.

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Treating shoppers year-round

DETAILS

Mondelēz International
Uxbridge Business Park
Sanderson Road
Uxbridge UB8 1DH
t: 0870 600 699

KEY CONTACTS

Susan Nash
Trade Communications
Manager

KEY BRANDS

Cadbury
Cadbury Bournville
Cadbury Dairy Milk
Green & Black's
Trebor
Maynards Bassetts
Halls
belVita
Cadbury Biscuits
Mikado
Toblerone
OREO
Ritz
Barny
Sour Patch Kids



The key to confectionery category success is delighting shoppers with a strong core range, and exciting them with new offers throughout the year, as well as taking advantage of key seasonal sales opportunities.

Chocolate success

As the UK's No.1 chocolate brand¹, Cadbury places innovation at the heart of its approach, with a deep understanding of consumer needs driving NPD. "Consumers are keen to discover new and innovative chocolate flavours, as well as limited editions, which helps drive footfall in-store," says Mondelez International trade communications manager Susan Nash.

Cadbury Dairy Milk Biscoff taps into the consumer demand for new flavours and textures to help drive incremental growth, she says. The range includes Cadbury Dairy Milk Biscoff bars and tablets as well as seasonal launches such as a Cadbury Biscoff Filled Egg and Cadbury Dairy Milk Biscoff Ultimate Shell Egg for Easter. Since launching in March 2025, Cadbury Dairy Milk Biscoff is now worth £19.7m².

Last year, Cadbury Bournville introduced Bournville Chopped Hazelnut and Bournville Salted Caramel, to broaden the brand's appeal. "Dark chocolate is deeply rooted in the history of Cadbury," says Nash. "The iconic Cadbury Bournville brand was launched in 1908 and continues to deliver its rich taste." As a result of the innovation, Bournville has seen value, volume and share growth³.

Following a highly successful launch in 2024, Cadbury Dairy Milk & More fuelled category growth by attracting younger adults to the category⁴. "It delivered high incrementality and continues to over-deliver on brand experience with a 17% repeat rate and 25% incrementality, which showcases



“Consumers are interested in discovering new and innovative chocolate flavours, as well as limited editions, which helps drive footfall in-store”



how consumers are continuing to enjoy the brands⁵," reveals Nash, adding: "With Cadbury Dairy Milk & More we are tapping into new forms of indulgence with an involving, multi-sensorial experience to excite consumers."

Sour then sweet

Last year, Sour Patch Kids expanded its range to include a new Blue Raspberry flavour, tapping into strong category growth and consumer demand for sour and raspberry-flavoured sweets. This marks the brand's first new UK flavour since Strawberry. "Sour Patch Kids has been the fastest growing candy brand over the past five years⁶," notes Nash. "Category growth and consumers' love of raspberry flavour have allowed the brand to bring exciting innovation to the confectionery fixture."

"With our broad chocolate and sugar confectionery innovation, Mondelez International continues to help retailers unlock year-round growth."

Source

¹ ©2025 NIQ data, Value Sales, GB, Mondelez, Total chocolate (client defined), w/e 08.11.25

² Nielsen Discovery, OS RMS Confectionery, Total Coverage, MAT w/e 01.11.25

³ Nielsen, Total coverage, L24 w/e 08.11.25

⁴ Kantar Worldpanel, Shopper Demographics, w/e 26.01.25

⁵ Kantar Worldpanel & Nielsen, November 2025

⁶ Nielsen Joyful Candy 05.10.25

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KitKat shifts into high gear

DETAILS

Nestlé UK
Haxby Rd
Clifton
York YO31 8JP

KEY CONTACTS

Stephanie Scales
Marketing Manager
– KitKat®

KEY BRANDS

Aero®
KitKat®
Rowntree's®
Formula 1®

KitKat has been providing the UK with better breaks since 1935, maintaining its position at the forefront of the category ever since. The iconic brand is worth £338m annually¹, outperforming overall confectionery at +11.4% YoY² and growing its share by an impressive 16ppts YoY³.

Now, with a new global partnership, world-first innovation and expansion of a hugely successful new platform, 2026 is set to be another stand-out year for the nation's favourite way to break, says Stephanie Scales, marketing manager for the brand.

Official Chocolate Bar of Formula 1®

In January, KitKat announced its first full season as the Official Chocolate Bar of Formula 1®. To mark the collaboration and drive excitement both on and off the track, the brand launched a first-of-its-kind bar in the shape of a Formula 1® racing car – available now across the UK and Ireland in single and multi-pack formats. KitKat will also feature at key Formula 1® races in Nestlé's top markets during the 2026 season, but the partnership goes beyond trackside visibility, delivering immersive fan experiences through social media engagement, exclusive merchandise, prize promotions, limited-edition products and high-impact in-store activations to ensure the brand is in pole position with shoppers.

The brand will also be back on screens, reaching households with targeted ads during the Netflix series, Drive to Survive, giving fans unique ways to engage with Formula 1® and keeping KitKat top of mind.

Building on sharing bar success

In 2025, KitKat launched its first-ever block sharing bar, helping chocolate fans UK-wide to 'break better' and inspiring moments of connection, reveals Scales. "Available in three flavours – Double Chocolate, Salted Caramel and Hazelnut – each sharing bar features multiple break-off pieces: ideal for enjoying with friends and family," she says.



“In January, KitKat announced its first full season as the Official Chocolate Bar of Formula 1®”

The launch was supported by an iconic (and much hyped) immersive experience in partnership with nostalgic movie rental brand Blockbuster, encouraging people to step away from their everyday life and rewind to a simpler time. The activity drew over 6,000 members of the public, highlighting the ongoing strength and resonance of the brand among existing KitKat fans and new generations.

"Flying off shelves since launch, KitKat Sharing Bars are already worth £23.1m⁴ – impressive for a chocolate brand that had previously not played in this space," reveals Scales. "The new addition also contributed to the general format's +10.5% value growth in 2025, exceeding the total category⁵. This year, the brand will expand the platform with an exciting new flavour – more on this to come."

90 years of better breaks

For almost a century, KitKat has honed its winning balance between a consistent brand experience and localisation to achieve maximum impact and profitability – from customising its flavours and recipes to local preferences to targeting key consumer groups in different markets, she adds. "2026 will be no different, with an innovation pipeline and level of consumer-first thinking that makes KitKat the one to watch."

Source

¹⁻² Circana UK, All Outlets & KWP Discounters, UK, Nestlé Kit Kat Chocolate, Sweets, & CBBS, Value Sales & Value Sales % Change vs YA, 52 w/e 27.12.25

³ Circana (UK), All Outlets & KWP Discounters, UK, Nestlé Kit Kat Chocolate, Sweets, & CBBS, Value Sales vs YA, 52 w/e 27.12.25

⁴⁻⁵ Circana (UK), All Outlets & KWP Discounters, UK, Blocks, Chocolate, Sweets, & CBBS, Value Sales vs YA, 52 w/e 27.12.25



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An incrementality powerhouse

DETAILS

Ritter Sport
5th Floor Minerva
29 East Parade
Leeds LS15PS

KEY CONTACTS

Benedict Daniels
Managing Director
Christian Boulter
Sales Director

KEY BRANDS

Ritter Sport
Amicelli



Ritter Sport has emerged as the fastest-growing block chocolate brand in the UK, outperforming the total market by 48.9%¹, accelerating ahead of both mass and premium competitors. But what is it that is leading to such unprecedented success?

In a category where many brands are struggling to maintain penetration, Ritter Sport, alongside Amicelli, is doing the opposite, recruiting new shoppers, driving repeat purchases and reshaping the future of chocolate.

This kind of growth in an established and highly competitive category underlines Ritter Sport's position as a genuine disruptor, challenging the norms, says Benedict Daniels, managing director at Ritter Sport UK & Ireland. "This performance is driven by a clear value proposition that resonates with today's increasingly discerning shopper," he explains. "More selective than ever about which brands they engage with, consumers today demand real quality and great value; at Ritter Sport, it is our passion to deliver both."

Quality-led value drives growth

Even as raw material costs remain well above pre-spike levels, Ritter Sport has stayed disciplined on pricing and quality. "Some brands pushed through sharp price rises while quietly compromising on quality," notes Daniels. "We've stayed true to our credentials, so shoppers still see Ritter Sport as outstanding value."

This consistency is driving record penetration and exceptional loyalty, he notes. Ritter Sport now boasts one of the highest repeat purchase rates in block chocolate².



“The limited-edition Pistachio variant has become one of 2025’s most successful innovation launches”



NPD that cuts through and converts

Ritter Sport's innovation is firmly rooted in quality and taste. "The limited-edition Pistachio variant has become one of 2025's most successful innovation launches, driven initially by the Dubai chocolate trend before evolving into strong mainstream demand. It has significantly outperformed combined competitor Dubai-style products, while remaining highly accessible in price," says Daniels.

The SKU became the fastest-ever selling Ritter Sport product at Sainsbury's, and broke into Tesco's top 15 block chocolate SKUs within just two weeks³. Across grocery multiples, it now ranks in the top 20% of category SKUs⁴. To date, Ritter Sport has sold over 3.4m units of the product⁵. "The Pistachio block brought new shoppers into the category," says Daniels.

With major innovation planned for Q1, including the most ambitious launch in the brand's 114-year history and a series of national consumer roadshows, Ritter Sport is proving that a challenger can be a powerhouse, transforming a mature category and reigniting shopper excitement. Daniels concludes: "Ritter Sport consistently delivers incremental category value, which galvanises our trade partnerships and propels us to new heights. We grow the whole category, delighting consumers along the way with our exceptional taste, quality and innovation."



Source

¹ Nielsen Scantrack, L5W, L12W, L4W, 06.09.25

² Retailer X Data, Latest 52 weeks, Full year 2025

³ Dunelm, L2W w/e 03.03.25

⁴ Nielsen Scantrack, 52 w/e 28.12.24

⁵ Internal company data

THE UK'S FASTEST GROWING BLOCK CHOCOLATE BRAND*

- Delivering 4 X more growth than our share of market*
- Adding chunks – 2/3 of our growth is incremental to the category †
- Over 2 million households now enjoying Ritter Sport*



Quality Chocolate Squared



Sources: *Nielsen Scantrack & Homescan L52W, L12W . 06.09.2025. †Retailer X data, L52W, Full year 2024

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- An AMORE-ISH combination of crispy wafer, smooth Hazelnut crème and silky milk chocolate
- Already listed seasonally in Asda, Morrisons, Waitrose & now Tesco
- An incredible 70% of seasonal sales were incremental to the category at Christmas†



Amicelli®

Source: †Retailer X Data: L12 WE 27.12.25 Value Sales Boxed & Gifting

Heritage, swagger and growth

DETAILS

Valeo Confectionery Limited
38 Barnard Road
Bowthorpe
Norwich NR5 9JP
t: 01253 761201

KEY CONTACTS

Kevin Moore
Managing Director
Michael Inpong
Chief Marketing Officer
Kevin McAuley
Chief Commercial Officer

KEY BRANDS

ROWSE®
KETTLE®
BARRATT®
POPPETS®
FOX'S®
TAVENERS®

Key highlights for retail

- Nine SKUs across Wham®, Flumps® and Fruit Salad® refreshed with high-impact packaging
- New NPD to excite shoppers: Wham® Tangy Rockets, Wham® Sour Belts & Sweet Eggs, Wham® Chewy Asteroids, Flumps® Jumbos, Flumps® Originals, and the timely Flumps® Hearts, Fruit Salad® Fruity Mix, Fruit Salad® Squishy Sunburst, Fruit Salad® Duo Combo
- George the Jaguar, Barratt®'s bold new mascot, adds playful personality and clear range navigation at fixture
- a PMP range that underpins value perception and conversion in convenience and cash & carry



Barratt Sweet Shop is unveiling a bold new rebrand across its iconic portfolio – bringing fresh swagger, vibrant energy and a new masterbrand identity to one of Britain's best-loved confectionery names, reveals Michael Inpong, chief marketing officer at Valeo Foods UK. The ambition? Rekindle the playful spirit that has defined Barratt for generations while recruiting the next wave of sweet lovers.

Meet George: the spirit of our founder

The rebrand centres around a new brand mascot, George – named in tribute to George Barratt, the 21-year-old entrepreneur who opened the first pick'n'mix shop in Shoreditch in 1848. Since then, the Barratt brand has continued this spirit of innovation with products such as Dip Dab, Sherbet Fountain, Refresher and Flumps – sweets that didn't just sell, but shaped British confectionery culture.

The new George character captures that same fearless energy. He's cheeky, confident and unapologetically fun – bringing personality back to the fixture and helping shoppers instantly navigate the full Barratt Sweet Shop range.

Innovation with attitude

At the heart of the relaunch is a punchy innovation pipeline that blends nostalgia with bold, contemporary flavours. Leading the charge is Wham Tangy Rockets, the 2026 hero product, tapping into the continued demand for tangy, tongue-tingling hits. Seasonal launches like Flumps Hearts add timely spikes of excitement and incremental sales. And a 36-month rolling innovation plan is in place to keep the category fresh, relevant and high velocity.

This revitalised design brings the entire portfolio together under the



“Barratt has always stood for flavour, personality and fun. This relaunch celebrates our heritage while propelling the brand forward”

new Barratt Sweet Shop masterbrand, supported by clear product call-outs and vibrant colour blocking for maximum impact at fixture. It's a confident look that honours George Barratt's pick'n'mix heritage. For value-driven shoppers, PMPs remain a core conversion driver – reinforcing trust and boosting impulse in convenience and wholesale.

Bringing the swagger back to sweets
2026 will see Barratt Sweet Shop hit the market with a nationwide campaign spanning OOH, digital and in-store, aiming to add a burst of joy to an often commoditised category. And, as part of its commitment to youth culture and grassroots creativity, the company has forged a new partnership with Skateboard GB and the Irish Skateboard Association to support grassroots skate communities and back national teams on their journey to LA 2028.

Inpong says: "We're bringing back the swagger. Barratt has always stood for flavour, personality and fun. This relaunch celebrates our heritage through George while propelling the brand forward with a new look, exciting innovation and partnerships that tap into the culture of the next generation."



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Bringing fun, flavour-led NPD

DETAILS

Vidal Candies UK
16 Great Queen Street
Covent Garden
London WC2B 5AH

KEY CONTACTS

Chris Plummer
Country Manager
Joe Major
International Brand Lead

KEY BRANDS

Vidal
Rolla Belta
Lotta Lollies
Um Bongo
Dipper

Over the past year, Vidal Candies has delivered a strong performance, fuelled by sustained consumer demand for fun, flavour-led confectionery, says international brand lead Joe Major. "One of the standout contributors to this success has been our novelty range, which achieved over 20% year-on-year growth¹," he says. "This reinforces the importance of innovation within the category and continues to shape our forward strategy. Another key highlight was the launch of our Halloween TUB in Costco. Perfect for seasonal sharing, it performed exceptionally well and played a meaningful role in strengthening Vidal's brand presence and growth in the UK market."

To build on this momentum, Vidal is introducing a major new product in Q1: Jungle Jelly. "This expands our novelty portfolio and is designed to attract both new shoppers and loyal fans seeking fresh, exciting formats," says Major. "Looking ahead, we have a strong pipeline of NPD, with novelty central to our approach, including a standout brand collaboration with Um Bongo. As a trusted and nostalgic name, Um Bongo brings instant recognition and a sense of fun to the fixture, helping us drive incremental trial and broaden category appeal.

"In Q2, we will also launch a new range of price-marked packs (PMPs), acknowledging the vital role these play in the convenience channel. This range will feature three unique edible products, delivering strong value while maintaining Vidal's creativity and quality."

Drawing on decades of global experience in making sweets, the company has also handcrafted some of the best-selling favourites from its pick-and-mix range and elevated them with a gooey soft centre, giving them a fresh twist that will excite shoppers and drive repeat purchase, he reveals.

And finally, in a completely new concept designed to inject even more fun and curiosity into the category. Sour Medley brings together a mash-up of



“Jungle Jelly expands our novelty portfolio and is designed to attract both new shoppers and loyal fans seeking fresh, exciting formats. Looking ahead, we have a strong pipeline of NPD”

Vidal's most popular edible shapes combined with its biggest, boldest flavours. "By layering different textures and delivering a unique mouthfeel, this range offers shoppers something genuinely new within the sour segment. Launching in Q2, Sour Medley – nostalgic sweetness with an exciting sour twist – is set to drive discovery, trial and repeat purchase."

On-shelf standout

Strong partnerships, bold design, and continuous packaging evolution combine to ensure shelf stand-out, says Major. "To help do this, we collaborate with brands that already hold strong consumer equity – such as Um Bongo. These capture attention, create recognition, and add an element of fun that resonates with our core audience.

Our marketing strategy for 2026 builds on our momentum in 2025, where a major milestone was the launch of our social media channels across TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, collectively generating over 10m views. This has given us a strong foundation of awareness and engagement to build on.

"By combining strong digital activation with customer-focused support, we aim to strengthen brand visibility, accelerate NPD performance and maintain the excitement that has fuelled our growth so far."

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Driving growth for grocers

DETAILS

World of Sweets
Jubilee Drive
Loughborough
Leicestershire LE11 5TX
t: 0330 202 0903

KEY CONTACTS

Helen Bradshaw
Sales and Marketing
Director
Kathryn Hague
Group Head of Marketing
Rebecca Taylor-Bell
Head of Category
Development

KEY BRANDS

Gumi Yum Surprise
Bluey™
Bonds of London
Candy Realms
Crazy Candy Factory
Anthon Berg
Pez
Warheads

World of Sweets is heading into 2026 with a clear focus on driving confectionery growth for grocers by delivering ranges that align with how shoppers are buying today: impulse-led, trend-driven and powered by standout licensing, reveals sales & marketing director Helen Bradshaw. "Through a balanced portfolio that blends viral innovation, trusted family brands and proven core lines, we are helping retailers unlock incremental sales and margin across key missions," she notes.

Leading this strategy is Gumi Yum Surprise, one of the most disruptive confectionery launches in recent years. "As exclusive UK distributor, we are bringing a format that fuses confectionery, collectability and social-media theatre, delivering excitement, and repeat purchase," says Bradshaw.

Created by Zuru, one of the largest global toy manufacturers, it is the world's first 3D injection-moulded gummy and toy surprise. Consumers unwrap eight juicy, fruit-flavoured gummy layers, to finally reveal a high-quality toy surprise inside an egg.

Gumi Yum Surprise is already achieving double-digit rates of sale in leading UK supermarkets¹ and matching Kinder on EROS in convenience multiples², underlining its strength in driving both value and volume. The range is currently available in Wildlife and Transformers, with Gumi Yum Surprise getting ready to unleash its most mischievous surprise yet – think playful chaos, laugh-out-loud fun and a whole lot of personality. Who's involved is still a secret... but fans of cheeky little troublemakers will want to keep their eyes peeled this June.

Spotting trends early

Beyond individual brands, World of Sweets' competitive advantage lies in its ability to spot and commercialise confectionery trends early, adds Bradshaw. "With a global supplier network of more than 300 partners, the business has direct access to emerging innovation before it reaches the UK mainstream," she says. "Deep category expertise, long-standing relationships



“Gumi Yum Surprise, featuring the world's first 3D injection moulded gummy and toy surprise, is one of the most disruptive confectionery launches in recent years”



and continuous trend insight enable us to actively track new formats and concepts from key global hotspots including Japan, Korea and Dubai, alongside Europe and the US. This enables the business to move at pace, secure exclusivity and deliver relevant, on-trend products to grocers first."

Alongside trend-led innovation, World of Sweets continues to invest in trusted licensed brands that meet evolving shopper and regulatory needs. Bluey Pressed Fruit Roll multipacks are HFSS-compliant, making them ideal for grocers navigating tighter restrictions while still delivering fun, branded appeal. Available in Strawberry & Apple and Mango, the multipacks support lunchbox, after-school and on-the-go missions.

Core performance remains equally strong. Bonds of London share bags continue to outperform the wider sugar bag sector, up 19.8% YoY vs 2% market growth³. By modernising classic sweet shop favourites while keeping trusted flavours, Bonds' sugar bags remain a high-rotation fixture for grocers, and its ongoing charity partnership with Vicky McClure's Our Dementia Choir further strengthens consumer trust and community connection.

By combining viral innovation, early access to global trends and proven core brands, World of Sweets is positioned to help grocers stay on-trend and drive solid growth.

Source

¹⁻² Circana/IRI, September to December 2025
³ Circana/IRI, Total Market, Value, 52 w/e 06.09.25

ZURU

Gumi Yum Surprise

5M
TIKTOK
LIKES



THE ViRAL GUMi EGG DRiViNG DOUBLe DiGiT ROS*

in leading UK supermarkets

Unwrap 8 juicy fruit layers of gummy candy
27 exclusive wildlife toys to collect

* Circana data

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