

Brand Overview: Food – UK – April 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour and how it will influence what consumers are looking for from food brands.
- How leading food brands score on metrics like usage, trust, satisfaction, likely recommendation and perceived differentiation.
- The top scoring brands for particular personality traits, including innovation, value, quality and taste.
- The leaders on hot topics in the food sector – natural, indulgence, ethics, and health and wellness.

The closure of hospitality venues and shift towards at-home lifestyles that followed the coronavirus outbreak led consumers to redesign their diets and routines; since the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions, 54% of breakfast eaters have introduced some change in their breakfast eating. At the same time, lockdown periods and remote working practices determined a decline in on-the-go and out-of-home meals and an increase in home cooking and at-home eating occasions.

COVID-19 and the UK government's "Better Health" campaign have put new emphasis on health and wellbeing, placing brands with a healthy and caring image, such as Ryvita, Actimel and Activia, in a particularly positive light. However, the emotional burden of the pandemic also generated a desire for small indulgences and premium food experiences. In line with the 2008-09 recession, this creates opportunities for affordable luxury concepts such as the Magnum Mini or Gü-Zillionaires' Cheesecake as economic uncertainty leads to more conscious shopping behaviours.

The new focus on value makes it crucial for brands to highlight the original features of their products to prevent consumers from preferring own-label or lower-priced options, particularly as private-label brands tap into key trends such as health and nutrition. For example, in 2021 Waitrose & Partners launched



"The coronavirus outbreak has urged consumers to review their eating habits, triggering a rise in at-home cooking and eating occasions. As the notion of holistic wellbeing becomes more influential, brands with a healthy and caring reputation become more appealing."

– Emilia Tognacchini, Brand and Household Care Analyst

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its Gut Health: range specially designed to support gut health through formulations with *Bacillus coagulans*, calcium and chicory inulin.

Although brands with an established reputation such as Heinz, Cadbury Dairy Milk and Cathedral City can leverage consumers' familiarity with their offering to maintain a relevant role in the market, ethical and sustainable considerations are becoming increasingly influential in determining final shopping choices. This means that both heritage and newer players will need to demonstrate their commitment towards social and environmental themes, while also ensuring that they deliver authentic messaging to promote a trustworthy image and resonate with consumers in the next normal.



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Table of Contents

OVERVIEW

- **Key issues covered in this Report**
- **Products covered in this Report**
- **COVID-19: market context**
- **Economic and other assumptions**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **COVID-19 creates a new focus on health and desire for indulgences**

Figure 1: Short-, medium- and long-term impact of COVID-19 on the food through retail market, 9 April 2020

- **Brand Leaders**
- **No condiment or dressing is like ketchup... and mayo**

Figure 2: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by consumption in the last 12 months, November 2018-December 2020

- **Favourite brands inspire trust and are easily accessible**

Figure 3: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by commitment (net of "It is a favourite brand" and "I prefer this brand over others"), November 2018-December 2020

- **A link between memories and perceptions of trust**

Figure 4: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "A brand that I trust", November 2018-December 2020

- **Price and likely recommendation**

Figure 5: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by likely recommendation, November 2018-December 2020

- **Brand personality traits**

- **Heritage brands lead innovation in the food sector**

Figure 6: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "It is a brand that is innovative", November 2018-December 2020

- **Value means more than price**

Figure 7: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "It is a brand that offers good value", November 2018-December 2020

- **Different metrics drive consumers to spend more**

Figure 8: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "It is a brand that is worth paying more for", November 2018-December 2020

- **Sweet treats are the most delicious**

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Infographic Overview

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Figure 9: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Delicious", November 2018–December 2020

- **Hot topics in food**

- **Interest in health grows, but consumers are more cynical**

Figure 10: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Healthy", November 2018–December 2020

- **Indulgence and sweetness travel in parallel**

Figure 11: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Indulgent", November 2018–December 2020

- **A link between ingredients and perceptions of naturalness**

Figure 12: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Natural", November 2018–December 2020

- **Consumers aspire to more ethical lifestyles**

Figure 13: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Ethical", November 2018–December 2020

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FOOD BRANDS

- **COVID-19 creates a new focus on health and desire for indulgences**

Figure 14: Short-, medium- and long-term impact of COVID-19 on the food through retail market, 9 April 2020

- **COVID-19 puts emphasis on value**

Figure 15: Examples of 'affordable luxury' product concepts, 2020–21

- **The pandemic raises interest in physical health...**

Figure 16: Examples of new launches carrying health-related claims, 2020–21

- **...and mental wellbeing**

- **Consumers become more sceptical about health-related claims**

- **Eating occasions move within the home environment**

Figure 17: Examples of breakfast launches, 2020–21

- **The pandemic redesigns the dining experience**

Figure 18: Examples of meal-kit launches, 2020–21

- **Focus on local claims and ingredients grows**

Figure 19: Examples of launches with 'local' claims, 2020–21

- **The environment remains a top priority**

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Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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Figure 20: Reasons for buying ethical food and drink, February 2019

Figure 21: BOL Foods launches its "Time for a Fresh Start" campaign, 2020

- **Food shopping moves online**

Figure 22: Cadbury Easter Cottage Kit, 2021

BRAND LEADERS – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Chocolate for inner peace**
- **Favourite brands inspire trust and are easily accessible**
- **Use packaging to promote a differentiated image**

USAGE

- **No condiment or dressing is like ketchup...and mayo**
Figure 23: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by consumption in the last 12 months, November 2018–December 2020
- **Heinz seduces both ketchup and mayo lovers**
Figure 24: Heinz extends its mayonnaise variants, 2020–21
- **Chocolate for inner peace**
Figure 25: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by overall consumption, November 2018–December 2020

PREFERENCE

- **Favourite brands inspire trust and are easily accessible**
Figure 26: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by commitment (net of "It is a favourite brand" and "I prefer this brand over others"), November 2018–December 2020
Figure 27: Examples of launches from top favourite brands, 2020–21

TRUST

- **A link between memories and perceptions of trust**
Figure 28: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "A brand that I trust", November 2018–December 2020
- **Walkers relaunch flavours from the '90s**
Figure 29: Walkers launches "Quavers flavours that take you back" advert, 2021
- **Cadbury imagines new ways to enjoy chocolate**

SATISFACTION AND RECOMMENDATION

- **Heinz benefits from strong brand image**

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Figure 30: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by satisfaction (net of "Good" and "Excellent" reviews), November 2018–December 2020

- **Price, satisfaction and likely recommendation**

Figure 31: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by likely recommendation, November 2018–December 2020

- **Bonne Maman celebrates mums**

Figure 32: Bonne Maman celebrates Mother's Day, 2021

Figure 33: Fearn & Rosie Reduced Sugar Strawberry Jam, 2019

DIFFERENTIATION

- **Ferrero Rocher and Lindt Lindor stand out from the crowd**

Figure 34: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by perceived differentiation (net of "It is a unique brand" and "It somewhat stands out from others"), November 2018–December 2020

- **Partner with creative companies to elevate the experience**

- **Use packaging to promote a differentiated image**

Figure 35: Examples of collaborations between food brands and Dolce & Gabbana, 2020

- **Spicy flavours to stand out**

Figure 36: Pringles launches new Sizzl'n range, 2021

BRAND PERSONALITY TRAITS – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Ben & Jerry's stands for civil rights and climate justice**

- **Value means more than price**

- **Sweet treats are the most delicious**

INNOVATION

- **Heritage brands lead innovation in the food sector**

Figure 37: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "It is a brand that is innovative", November 2018–December 2020

- **Ben & Jerry's stands for civil rights and climate justice**

Figure 38: Ben & Jerry's announces launch of its Change the Whirled Non-Dairy ice-cream variant, 2020

- **Müller Corner focuses on positive emotions**

Figure 39: Müller Corner launches new Creations by Dina Asher-Smith, 2021

VALUE

- **Value means more than price**

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Full Report PDF

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Powerpoint Presentation

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Figure 40: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "It is a brand that offers good value", November 2018–December 2020

- **Warburtons partners with Love Food Hate Waste**

Figure 41: Warburtons encourages consumers to limit food waste, 2021

PREMIUM

- **A link between perceived quality and commitment**

Figure 42: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "It is a brand that is consistently high quality", November 2018–December 2020

- **McVitie's experiments with flavours**

Figure 43: Examples of new launches from McVitie's, 2020–21

- **Different metrics drive consumers to spend more**

Figure 44: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "It is a brand that is worth paying more for", November 2018–December 2020

- **Gü uses new recipes and packaging to add value**

Figure 45: Examples of new launches and seasonal packaging from Gü, 2020

TASTE

- **Sweet treats are the most delicious**

Figure 46: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Delicious", November 2018–December 2020

- **Maltesers launches new cake bars**

Figure 47: Maltesers launches new Cake Bars, 2021

HOT TOPICS IN FOOD – KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Interest in health and wellness grows, but consumers are more cynical**
- **Rowse enters the chocolate-spread market**
- **Yeo Valley introduces smart packaging**

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- **Interest in health and wellness grows, but consumers are more cynical**

Figure 48: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Healthy", November 2018–December 2020

- **Use technology to support healthy food habits**

What's included

Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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- **Time and heritage build perceptions of health and wellbeing**

Figure 49: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by agreement with "A brand that cares about my health/wellbeing", November 2018-December 2020

Figure 50: Examples of Weetabix

#HaveYouHadYourWeetabix campaign, 2021

- **Actimel launches its first plant-based range**

Figure 51: Actimel launches 100% Dairy Free range, 2020

- **Yakult promotes a holistic approach to health**

INDULGENCE AND COMFORT

- **Indulgence and sweetness travel in parallel**

Figure 52: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Indulgent", November 2018-December 2020

- **Häagen-Dazs offers double indulgence in one tub**

- **Savoury brands can offer indulgence and comfort too**

Figure 53: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Comforting", November 2018-December 2020

Figure 54: Examples of indulgent and 'savoury' snacks, 2020

NATURAL

- **A link between ingredients and perceptions of naturalness**

Figure 55: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Natural", November 2018-December 2020

- **Rowse enters the chocolate-spread market**

Figure 56: Rowse ChocoBee Chocolate Spread with Honey & Cocoa, 2021

- **Nairn's extends its gluten-free offering**

ETHICS

- **Consumers aspire to more ethical lifestyles**

Figure 57: Top ranking of brands operating in the food sector, by associations with "Ethical", November 2018-December 2020

- **Yeo Valley introduces smart packaging**

Figure 58: Yeo Valley's 'Moo-R' QR code, 2021

- **Unilever invests in packaging sustainability**

Figure 59: Magnum launches new recyclable ice-cream tub, 2021

What's included

Executive Summary

Full Report PDF

Infographic Overview

Powerpoint Presentation

Interactive Databook

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APPENDIX – DATA SOURCES, ABBREVIATIONS AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- Abbreviations

APPENDIX – BRANDS COVERED

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