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Dessert Trends And Sales Strategies In The Café Industry

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Abstract: *This qualitative study examines the variables influencing dessert trends and sales tactics in the café sector, paying particular attention to innovation, health-conscious customer behavior, and the expanding power of digital media. The study reveals a trend toward natural ingredients, dietary-inclusive products including vegan and gluten-free desserts, and creative fusion flavors through semi-structured interviews with fifteen café owners and managers. The report also emphasizes how crucial social media marketing and aesthetic appeal were for increasing consumer involvement and revenue. According to research, to stay competitive in a market that is changing quickly, effective cafés strike a balance between cost, health trends, originality, and internet presence. Although limited by a small sample size and the absence of direct consumer insights, the study offers valuable implications for product development and promotional strategies in the café dessert sector.*

Keywords - *dessert trends, café industry, health-conscious consumers, innovative desserts, sales strategies*

Introduction

As customer preferences and wider cultural trends change, the café industry's dessert scene is also changing dynamically. To stay competitive and appealing to a wide range of patrons, cafés are rethinking their dessert options considering rising health and wellness awareness, shifting dietary preferences, and the expanding power of digital media. From the viewpoint of café owners, this study investigates the main elements influencing dessert trends and the associated sales and marketing tactics. This study attempts to offer insights that might help café businesses make decisions about product development and marketing by looking at new topics related to health-conscious consumer behavior, creative dessert ideas, and clever promotional strategies. Implementing strategies like outdoor seating and diverse product offerings can help cafés stand out in a saturated market (Rambe et al., 2023). The integration of digital technologies, including remote sensing and data analytics, has revolutionized customer experiences and operational efficiencies in specialty coffee shops (Maspul, 2023). Digital platforms are facilitating personalized customer interactions and enhancing convenience through online ordering and delivery services (Maciejewski & Mokrysz, 2019). Innovative cafés are blending smart technologies with traditional cultural elements, enriching customer experiences and fostering loyalty (WANG, 2024).

The café industry, particularly in the dessert segment, is influenced by various factors that shape trends and sales strategies. Key elements include consumer preferences, product quality, marketing strategies, and the physical environment of cafés. Understanding these factors is crucial for cafés to enhance customer satisfaction and drive sales. Consumers prioritize high-quality desserts and diverse menu options, which significantly impact their spending behavior (Woo et al., 2022; Lee, 2022).

The growing interest in healthier dessert options is driven by consumer demand for nutritious alternatives to traditional sweets. This trend is reflected in the increasing popularity of non-dairy frozen desserts, plant-based ice creams, and innovative baked goods that prioritize health benefits. The following sections outline key aspects of this movement. Consumers seek healthier options, prompting manufacturers to create products with lower sugar and saturated fat, and potentially fortify them with essential nutrients (Craig & Brothers, 2022). Consumers prioritize health benefits and low-fat content, indicating a shift towards dairy-free alternatives that align with health-conscious preferences in the frozen dessert market (Shuwetha et al., 2025). a method for creating unique flavors by combining comestible pieces from different sets, encouraging experimental fusion-style desserts. It includes predetermined flavor suggestions and rewards for successful combinations, fostering innovation in dessert flavor development (Wood, 2008). Nostalgia has become a powerful driver in the food industry, particularly in desserts. Consumers are drawn to products that evoke memories of their past, providing a sense of comfort and emotional connection. This trend is evident in the resurgence of classic desserts like s'mores and red velvet, which are often associated with childhood memories or special occasions (Simpson et al., 2024; Saraniyan, 2023). Comfort food consumption is often linked to stress relief and emotional coping mechanisms. Desserts like s'mores and red velvet, which are rich, indulgent, and familiar, are particularly appealing during stressful times (Shen & Liu, 2024) (Bergenholtz, 2022). While nostalgia and comfort remain central to dessert trends, there is a growing demand for healthier, more sustainable options. Consumers are seeking indulgent yet guilt-free treats that align with modern dietary preferences (Insany & Taufiq, 2025; Chystiukhina, 2024). Consumers' emotional attachment to nostalgic desserts is a key driver of their popularity. These desserts often evoke

memories of childhood, family traditions, or special et al., events (Simpson 2024; Saraniyan, 2023). Effective marketing strategies for dessert offerings include leveraging social media to promote unique and seasonal items, which can attract a younger demographic (Yulius, 2024)

Methodology

This qualitative study utilized a semi-structured interview, believed to give participants greater latitude to answer questions on their own terms than standardized interviews (May, 1997). The quality of the data generated is influenced by the interviewer's experience, skill, and commitment (Kumar, 2005). 15 participants for this study were chosen using purposive sampling technique. The data collection happened in April 2025. The interview was recorded using Google Forms. All of the fifteen (15) participants were given a letter of request to conduct an interview. Every participant was given a hard copy of the letter of request. The interview was conducted during their lean time at the vicinity of the café. An organized workflow of questionnaire was set and a timetable to manage the interview properly and accurately. Every participant was given an identical series of questions on their own perspective about factors affecting dessert rends and sales and strategies in the café industry. The data was coded, examined, evaluated, and verified after transcription. Through the process of interview transcription, the researcher might obtain a deeper understanding of the subject by listening to and reading the transcribed interviews again. Coding began as soon as all the data had been fully transcribed. Keyword codes are considered an essential part of qualitative research and are used to categorize and organize content (Sarantakos, 1998). Following the coding process, the data was examined, categorized, and organized into themes and further sub-themes. Each of the developing subjects was given a specific code. Interpreting the data, which involved highlighting any similarities and differences as well as any recurrent patterns, came next. Data verification was the next stage, which included going over the transcripts and codes again to make sure that the comprehension is sound. This method allows the researcher to validate or modify previous concepts (Sarantakos, 1998). The research adhered to ethical standards throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by assigning pseudonyms and securely storing data. Participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. The study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines for qualitative research.

Results and Discussions

Health-Conscious Trends

There is a growing demand for desserts made with natural ingredients, catering to veganism and conscious consumption, as consumers seek healthier options without artificial additives (Chystiukhina, 2024). Dessert trends emphasize visual appeal, healthy ingredients, and personalization. Sales strategies should focus on social media marketing, promoting vegan and natural products, and highlighting environmental friendliness to attract consumers seeking conscious consumption and innovative experiences in the confectionery market.

> "*The café dessert industry is evolving rapidly, influenced by changing consumer preferences, health trends, and social media appeal. Most of the consumers are Health-Conscious that's why I will add a dietary-Inclusive Desserts like vegan, gluten-free, keto, and low-sugar options, and Natural sweeteners like honey, agave, and monk fruit are replacing refined sugar." – Participant 8*

> "*Healthier Options – More people want sweets that are lower in sugar, dairy-free, or packed with protein. Ingredients like oat milk, coconut sugar, and almond flour are popping up more." – Participant 11*

> *"We would improve by offering more variety to cater to different tastes. While our current desserts are popular, adding healthier options like low-sugar or gluten-free treats would attract a wider audience. This would give customers with dietary preferences or restrictions more choices while maintaining the quality they expect." – Participant 12.*

> *"As the owner of Cafe. Yes,I've noticed a growing interest in healthier and more mindful dessert options among our customers. Many people are opting for desserts that are lower in sugar or made with alternative ingredients, like coconut flour or natural sweeteners. There's also an increasing demand for plant-based and vegan desserts, as more customers look for treats that align with their dietary choices. This shift in preferences is something we're keeping an eye on, as it helps us adapt our menu to meet the evolving needs of our customers." – Participant 2.*

Growing interest in healthier dessert options

Research into bakery products has led to the development of alternatives that replace unhealthy ingredients with more nutritious options, such as using Stevia and inulin in cookies (Watawana et al., 2024). Sales of non-dairy frozen desserts have surged, with a variety of bases such as coconut, almond, and oat milk being utilized (Craig & Brothers, 2022). Despite their popularity, many of these products contain high sugar and saturated fat levels, indicating a need for healthier

formulations (Craig & Brothers, 2022). Price and health benefits significantly influence purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of competitive pricing in the market (Shuwetha et al., 2025).

Demand for lower sugar content and mindful eating choices

These innovations cater to the rising demand for reduced-sugar and high-fiber products, aligning with consumer health consciousness (Watawana et al., 2024). Growing demand for health-focused desserts, catering to consumers with health conditions, athletes, and the general populace, emphasizing the potential of honey and beekeeping products to create nutritious, flavorful, and safe dessert options (Chechitko & Adamchuk, 2024).

Innovative Dessert Offerings

Unique and fusion-style desserts represent a dynamic intersection of culinary traditions, where innovative techniques and cultural influences converge to create novel experiences. This synthesis not only preserves traditional flavors but also reimagines them in contemporary forms. The following sections explore the characteristics and examples of unique and fusion-style desserts.

> *"Yes, I've experimented with a few unique desserts flavors this past year, like lavender honey cheesecake and matcha coconut macarons. Customers were generally excited and curious, with many praising the innovative combinations, though there were some who were hesitant about the floral notes in the lavender honey. One challenge was balancing the new flavors without overwhelming the classic tastes people love. It took some tweaking to find the right balance, but overall, the feedback has been positive, and it's been fun introducing more adventurous options." – Participant 2.*

> *"Upon planning we need to think what are the customers always buy and make something more like that but they're not the same. It's like adding a new flavor on that specific product so the customers have a lot of choices." – Participant 7*

> *"We focus on simple but creative twists using available ingredients to manage costs. For example, our Banana Muffin uses local bananas, which keeps costs low while offering a fresh, homemade flavor. We also test small batches of new desserts before adding them to the menu to ensure they are both affordable and popular with our customers." – Participant 8*

> *"We plan to add new flavors and seasonal desserts to keep our menu exciting. We are considering introducing more premium doughnuts and local-inspired pastries, like an ube-flavored muffin, as many customers request unique, trendy flavors." – Participant 10*

Unique and fusion-style desserts (twists on classic flavors)

The deconstruction of traditional Indonesian desserts, such as Es Cendol and Klepon, into modern entremets. These desserts maintain their original flavors while presenting them in innovative forms, appealing to contemporary palates (Yanti et al., 2022). Incorporate diverse grains and unique flavor profiles, resulting in a novel palate experience. This approach emphasizes the use of traditional ingredients in innovative combinations (Yoshihiko, 2008). Fusion desserts blend elements from different culinary traditions, creating unique flavor profiles. For instance, combining Japanese and European techniques can yield innovative desserts that reflect both cultures' heritage (Şirin & Gençer, 2024). The integration of mandala thinking and multisensory techniques in dessert design courses has been shown to enhance creativity, leading to the development of unique fusion desserts that engage multiple senses (Chen, 2025).

Nostalgic and comfort-style desserts (s'mores, red velvet)

Brands are leveraging nostalgia to reconnect with consumers. For instance, the revival of retro-style products, such as vintage-themed packaging or limited-edition releases, has proven effective in evoking positive emotional responses (Zhuang, 2023) (Волик, 2023). Nostalgic branding strategies, such as retro packaging and storytelling, strengthen consumer loyalty by creating an emotional bond between the consumer and the product (Zhuang, 2023) (Gręboszkrawczyk & Pointet, 2020).

Portable and easy-to-eat desserts (cookies, muffins, bite-sized items)

The cylindrical snack wrapper is designed to protect cookies while being easy to handle. It includes multiple layers such as an aluminum foil wrapper for oil resistance and a PVCD processing wrapper to block oxygen. The design also features a string mechanism that allows the wrapper to be easily opened and resealed, ensuring freshness and ease of access (Gyu et al., 2020). These desserts are designed for convenience and enjoyment, often made using mini muffin pans. Examples include Lemon Chess Tartlets and Chocolate Salted Caramel Mini Cupcakes, which are both fun to make and consume (Bloom, 2020).

Sales and Marketing Strategies

Utilizing social media platforms has proven effective in increasing brand awareness and customer engagement, as seen in the strategies employed by Mamata Dessert & Café (Putri, 2024). Implementing a comprehensive marketing mix strategy, as demonstrated by Givie Dessert, significantly

impacts sales volume by addressing various consumer needs (Azaria et al., 2023).

> *"Social media is crucial in increasing our dessert sales as it helps us reach a wider audience and keep our customers updated. One successful marketing effort was when we featured our product in a special post. The post highlighted its creamy filling and soft texture, which received many likes, shares, and customer inquiries, leading to a noticeable increase in orders for that product." Participant 10*

> *"The café dessert industry is always changing, shaped by health trends, creativity, social media, pricing, and quality. More people want healthier options, so cafés are offering low-sugar, plant-based, and allergen-free treats. At the same time, unique flavors and eye-catching designs help them stand out. Social media boosts sales by making desserts more shareable, while good pricing keeps customers interested. Most importantly, quality and consistency build loyalty. Places like Indigo Coffee succeed by balancing these factors, showing that innovation, smart marketing, and customer satisfaction are key to staying competitive." Participant 11.*

> *"By showcasing visually appealing photos, engaging with customers, and promoting special offers, which helps attract new customers. it also enables direct feedback and word-of-mouth marketing through shares and reviews" – Participant 13*

> *"Due to social media, many business owners are now using social media as platform for their marketing strategy and because of it, the frequent changing of trending food happens." – Participant 6*

Importance of visual appeal (fresh, delicious, Instagram-worthy)

Dessert trends emphasize visual appeal, healthy ingredients, and personalization. Sales strategies should focus on social media marketing, promoting vegan and natural products, and highlighting environmental friendliness to attract consumers seeking conscious consumption and innovative experiences in the confectionery (Chystiukhina, 2024). The visual appeal of desserts plays a crucial role in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the context of social media platforms like Instagram. A significant percentage of consumers, approximately 68%, base their dessert choices on how visually appealing the items are, highlighting the importance of aesthetics in food selection (Dave, 2025). Instagram has transformed the marketing of desserts by emphasizing vibrant colors, creative plating, and unique textures, which are essential for capturing attention and encouraging sharing (*The Instagram Effect: Transforming Soft Serve Marketing in the Digital Age*, n.d.).

Role of social media in promoting desserts and driving sales

Employs innovative marketing strategies, including social media promotion and collaborations with platforms like Grabfood and Gofood, to enhance visibility and attract customers, while also focusing on product development and maintaining quality to meet consumer preferences (Putri, 2024). Enhance the online promotion strategy by creating high-quality content, exploring new advertising channels, and analyzing online performance (Liu, 2024).

Offering a variety of dessert options (seasonal and limited-time items)

Product assortment significantly influences consumer preferences and can enhance satisfaction by catering to diverse tastes and seasonal trends (Simonson, 1999). The development of new dessert products should consider consumer feedback and trends in the market. An integrated approach to product development can help in aligning offerings with consumer expectations and preferences. Offering a variety of desserts, particularly seasonal and limited-time items, can drive sales performance by creating urgency and encouraging repeat visits from customers (Guiné et al., 2020).

Conclusion

According to this study, changing customer preferences—in particular, the need for dessert alternatives that are healthier and more considerate—have a big impact on dessert trends and sales tactics in the café sector. Café owners are adjusting by adding fusion-style desserts that combine tradition and innovation, as well as dietary-inclusive sweets like vegan, low-sugar, and gluten-free options. Products that appeal to nostalgia, aesthetically pleasing sweets, and portable goods also satisfy consumers' utilitarian and emotional needs. Additionally, social media has become an essential tool for interacting with customers, advertising distinctive desserts, and raising brand awareness. Developing Instagram-worthy images and utilizing limited-time or seasonal products to create buzz and foster client loyalty are essential components of successful marketing. Consistent innovation, quality, and affordability continue to be the cornerstones of long-term success.

Notwithstanding its insightful findings, the study's shortcomings—most notably its limited sample size and lack of consumer opinions—emphasize the need for more extensive research that incorporates quantitative data and a range of customer perspectives.

Recommendations

Cafés should include more dietary-conscious and health-conscious desserts to their menus, such as vegan, gluten-free, and low-sugar alternatives. Brand awareness may be increased by fortifying their social media presence with eye-catching content and influencer collaborations. Providing seasonal and nostalgic sweets piques customers' curiosity and fosters emotional bonds. Small batch testing fosters innovation by assisting with cost control and concept refinement. Direct client feedback collection guarantees that goods live up to expectations, and the use of analytics and digital technologies may enhance operational efficiency and customize services. When combined, these tactics will support cafés in remaining adaptable to changing market trends and competitive.

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