Critical Success Factors for Online Chocolate Business

Leon Langemaat

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'Critical success factors for online chocolate business '.

Aeres University of Applied Sciences
Dronten, The Netherlands

Dalhousie University
Truro, Canada

Prepared for Professor Cynthia Akkermans
Prepared by Leon Langemaat
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Preface

Laying here before you is a thesis that finds out what aspects are important to successfully sell chocolates online. This thesis is to proof that I have mastered the capabilities to graduate from the International Food Business program at the Aeres University and Dalhousie University in Dronten, The Netherlands and Truro, Canada.

This thesis will investigate to what degree which aspects matter the most to successfully sell chocolate online. In this world of the immense popularity of chocolate and the global usage of the internet, there is much to learn about how to get the most success out of the combination of these aspects. Thus, in this thesis, the aspects that matter the most to the successful online sales of chocolate will be investigated. The given information from the introduction will be separated in to two categories:

- The product technical that matter the most to consumers.
    - Product flavours
    - Chocolate trends
    - Product service aspects: e.g., vegan, fair trade,
- the second category will be dedicated to the online aspects that have a high importance that a consumer.
    - Online service
    - Required E-commerce aspects

The reason that I have chosen this topic and research question, is because of my internship at Chocoladebezorgd in Hoogeveen. Working at this company with this very original product inspired me to delve further into the matter of marketing chocolate online and see what potential (new) information can be learned for the company and the public good.

I hereby also would like to take this opportunity to thank Cynthia Akkermans from Aeres University and Chocoladebezorgd for the guidance of finishing my International Food Business studies.

I hope you will have a pleasant and informative read.

Hoogeveen,

Leon Langemaat

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Summary

Today, online business offerings are seemingly increasing in popularity in response to consumer demands, reflecting on e-commerce developments. In relation to e-commerce and online service important factors identified in literature include design, customer service, security/privacy, and fulfilment. It is further suggested that the combination of these lead to a high quality in E-service, providing promise for customer satisfaction and increased customer trust. The popularity of chocolate products leads to increased chocolate consumption within developed nations. Current work identifies important factors for intensifying the consumer to buy product including for example, indulgent moments, healthy chocolate, trustworthy chocolate, and chocolate taking new forms. Further literature noted factors for example, type, price, and brand. Although e-commerce models have emerged within the food industry, there is little research within the success factors within online chocolate sales. The aim of this research is to identify and assess the key factors that that drive the online business, for example, flavour, trends, and service. This paper is developed for online chocolate business to give an insight to the important consumer related aspects in respect to decision making. To find the necessary data, a survey was used and distributed through the directory of Chocoladebezorgd inquiring several factors that influence customer satisfaction and trust when ordering chocolate online. The survey adopted the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5 (not important at all - to very important) to analyse the identified factors. The outcome of the survey showed the following key factors. In respect to product offering, assortment and originality were highlight valued by the recipients. Within the area of online service, a user-friendly website, easy and safe transaction, security, and privacy were described as crucial factors. As the key factors are identified within existing literature, and evaluated through the survey, it can be concluded that the identified factors should be considered when implementing or are currently active in online chocolate business. Practitioners can use the results of this research to prioritise focal within the online business activities.

1. Introduction

Chocolate is one of the most craved foods in the world (Meier, Noll, & Molokwu, 2016). For example, in the U.S.A, an individual is estimated to consume chocolate once every two until three days (Meier, Noll, & Molokwu, 2016). Typically, chocolate products are consumables that tend to have a high amount of fats and sugars that people nowadays are avoiding (Meier, Noll, & Molokwu, 2016). Despite emerging health trends, chocolate is still highly popular (Meier, Noll, & Molokwu, 2016). This is related to organoleptic aspects (taste, smell & texture) of chocolate, the indulgence that is obtained, and the association with happiness (Meier, Noll, & Molokwu, 2016). How can this satisfaction still be achieved by companies if the chocolate is sold online? Which aspects does a chocolate company have to possess in terms of service, chocolate flavours/trends and what online aspects matter the most? These questions are going to be important to know for the chocolate sector of now and in the future.

Traditional food-retail follows the brick-and-mortar scheme, where consumers are shopping in-store (Shopivo, 2019). In contrast, online shops are those that offer home delivery, click-and-collect at store, or offer other pick up-locations (Shopivo, 2019). Compared to brick and mortar, online channels offer several advantages including faster completion of shopping, time saving, items can be easier to find, and there is a higher level of convenience (Shopivo, 2019). Some disadvantages of online shopping opposed to traditional brick and mortar include shipping time and costs, and no physical interaction or comparison with the product (Shopivo, 2019).

Rise of small chocolate businesses in The Netherlands.

To give some insight in respect to the online chocolate market and the changes in the sector, there is evidence showing that the chocolate market in The Netherlands is undergoing recent change (CBS, 2021). The Dutch statistics centre (CBS) stated that the number of small companies (1-20 employees) in the cacao industry has increased significantly in The Netherlands from 2007 to 2021 (CBS, 2021). This is shown in Table 1. The number of businesses in the cacao, chocolate and confectionary processing industry increased with 165% and 163% (CBS, 2021). The amount of big(ger) companies in this sector (over 20 employees) have remained approximately the same (CBS, 2021).

Table 1: changes in the number of small business companies in the cacao and confectionary industry (CBS, 2021).

Type of company	Number of companies in 2007 (1 to 20 employees)	Number of companies 2021 (1-20 employees)	Change in percentage (%)
Cacao & chocolate processing industry	100	265	165%
Chocolate and confectionary industry	95	250	163%
Confectionary and chocolate wholesalers	210	225	7,14%
Chocolate and confectionary stores	460	470	2,17%

Another phenomenon that has occurred in The Netherlands is the degree of innovation in respect to chocolate which has begun to rise significantly since 2014 (Duijn & Menkveld, 2019). Represented in Figure 1, the innovation in chocolate was minor compared to other sweets until 2014. However, since 2014, the innovation doubled each year, while the innovation in sugared sweets decreased (Duijn & Menkveld, 2019). Figure 1 shows that the chocolate market has been going through a change and companies are starting to become more creative and unique with its products.
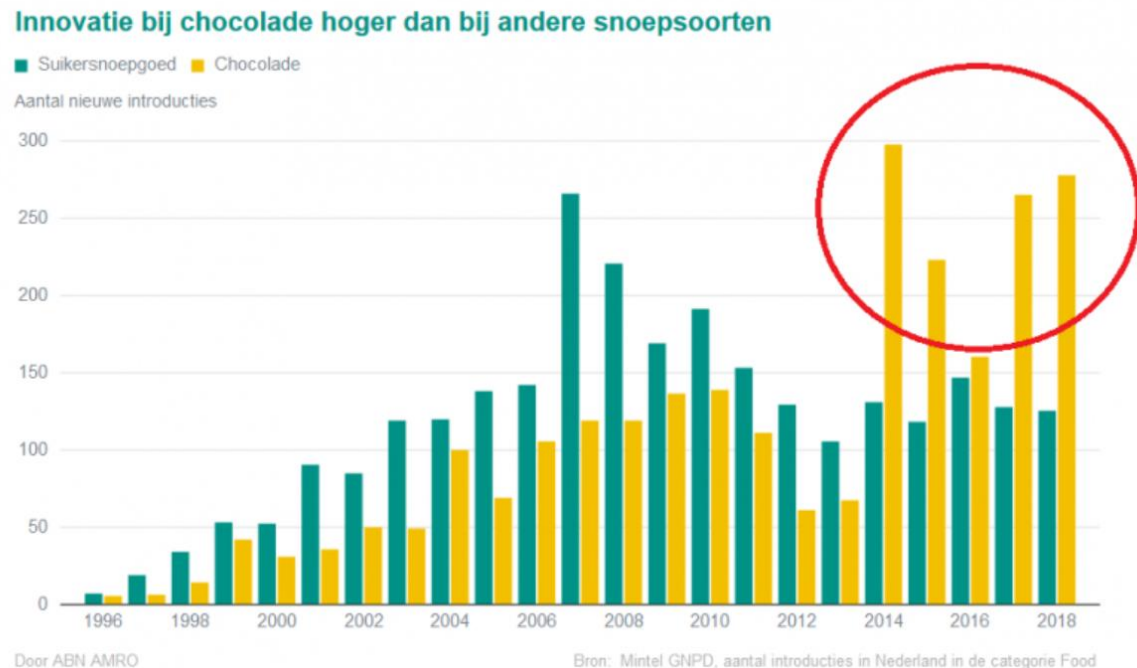

Figure 1: Innovation in chocolate is higher than other candies (in number of new introductions), whereas yellow represents innovations in chocolate in relation to green, innovation in candy. (Duijn & Menkveld, 2019)

The remaining part of this paper is divided into different sections: the current consumer trends in chocolate, the important consumer preference aspects of chocolate and the important aspects of purchasing online. Next, the materials and methods are explained, following by the results, discussions, conclusions, and the recommendations that answered the sub-question and the main research question.

1.1 Consumer trends chocolate

In this section, the current consumer trends among chocolate consumption for 2021 and beyond are investigated. This information could be relevant and useful to analyse to find out which trends are popular and rising in terms of chocolate consumption. This will be elaborated in this section by an explanation by research done on European consumers by one of the biggest chocolate producing companies worldwide, Barry Callebaut. Within this study, Barry Callebaut identified the following trends for chocolate in 2021 and beyond (Barry Callebaut, 2021):

1. **Indulgent moments**
2. **Good for me**
3. **Chocolate I trust**
4. **Taking new forms**

Indulgent moments

The search for indulgent moments means that consumers are looking for comfort, relaxation and a moment of sensation or happiness. (Barry Callebaut, 2021) Through a study among European consumers, Barry Callebaut found out the following:

- '' 59% of European consumers find chocolates with multiple textures and flavours more premium ''
- '' 66% of European consumers think upscale chocolates should come with a story about where it comes from and how it was made''. '' This helps consumer to set its mind free from the daily normal life and allow itself to imagine of travelling the world''.
- ''43% of European consumers love an excuse to have a celebration''. Consumers are looking for any reason to celebrate life and enjoy the events whether big or small.

(Barry Callebaut, 2021)

This indicates that consumers are less likely to buy less expensive chocolate products and are more looking for something special with a story about the production. For a chocolate business it therefore indicates that it is important to have original products, to show transparency of where the chocolate comes from and how the final chocolate products are made. It indicates that chocolate almost needs to have the obligation to be original, tasty and have a sensation when consumed. Because of these indulging trends, multisensory consumption is becoming popular in terms of chocolate consumption (Barry Callebaut, 2018). Multisensory means the following: 'relating to or involving several physiological senses' (Merriam-Webster, 2021). In terms of multisensory consumption, this would mean that consumers are looking for an experience that can trigger multiple senses. An example could be chocolate that contains multiple high-quality flavours combine with unique/attractive packaging. Barry Callebaut state in its annual consumer survey that '54% of consumers actively seek out premium versions of their favourite chocolate confectionary' (Barry Callebaut, 2018). It is also stating that '47% of consumers think that chocolate confectionary products that have multiple flavours and textures are more premium'' (Barry Callebaut, 2018). According to this survey, there are three aspects that are necessary to elevate an ordinary product to a unique multisensory product: **superior taste, beautiful looks, and surprising textures** (Barry Callebaut, 2018)**.**

Good for me

Barry Callebaut identified three mayor health developments for the current and upcoming consumer needs when consuming chocolates (Barry Callebaut, 2021). At first, Barry Callebaut identified the vegan and dairy free trend (Barry Callebaut, 2021). Results show that 39% of the European millennials think that dairy free and/or vegan chocolates are healthier than chocolates that do contain dairy or animal products (Barry Callebaut, 2021). Another Polish study also proved that consumers seek more ecological responsible chocolates such as vegan chocolate (Yusuf & Perez-Jimenez, 2021). The second prominent health trend under chocolate consumers is the importance of organic (Barry Callebaut, 2021). The report states that 63% of European consumers are interested in buying organic products (Barry Callebaut, 2021). The final significant health trend identified, is the availability of chocolates with a reduced sugar content (Barry Callebaut, 2021). It was discovered from the consumer survey that 55% of European Millennials think that the best chocolates are the ones where sugar is reduced (Barry Callebaut, 2021). All these trends show that consumers find it important to consume healthy chocolate without losing quality in taste. Especially under the younger generation this is significantly becoming more important (Barry Callebaut, 2021). To conclude the ''Good for me'' trend, it is thus important for a chocolate business to not only be tasty, and a joy to eat, but the importance of having healthy

products in the assortment are also rather important to take into consideration when having an online chocolate business.

A study proved that it is possible to create a healthy product that can have similar taste and expectation opposed to regular chocolate (Pandey. A, 2010). This was done by implementing sugar and whole milk replacing ingredients to make a healthier chocolate product. The test swapped whole milk powder for full fat soybean flour and stevia mannitol blend as a replacer for sugar. This resulted into a healthier product than the original chocolate that typically contains high doses of sugar and/or dairy (Pandey. A, 2010).

Chocolate I trust

The food industry is becoming increasingly more dynamic (Trienekens, Wognum, Beulens, & Van der Vorst, 2011). Transparency is of high importance to guarantee food quality in the supply chain and to show to consumers where the origins of the product come from (Trienekens, Wognum, Beulens, & Van der Vorst, 2011). Transparency means openness and communication to consumer and stakeholders (Trienekens, Wognum, Beulens, & Van der Vorst, 2011). Barry Callebaut studied the importance of transparency and traceability through a survey among European consumers (Barry Callebaut, 2021). Results indicated that the traceability, transparency, and local products are much appreciated by consumers when purchasing chocolates (Barry Callebaut, 2021). Retrieved from the Barry Callebaut survey was that '' 61% of European consumers want to know more about where their chocolates come from and what is in it'' (Barry Callebaut, 2021).

Another study that investigated the perception of quality in terms of food labelling for chocolate consumers, also proved that traceability and transparency of chocolate is important (Silva, Bioto, Efraim, & Castilho, 2017). It was shown that almost 90% of the recipients found that country of origin matters on the labelling of chocolate (Silva, Bioto, Efraim, & Castilho, 2017). Additionally, it mentions that 80% of recipients stated that its willingness to pay more for chocolate is higher if the chocolate is certified for organic, origin and rainforest alliance (Silva, Bioto, Efraim, & Castilho, 2017).

Taking new forms

The last trend identified in the study by Barry Callebaut relevant for chocolate brands is to ''take new forms'' (Barry Callebaut, 2021). This means that the product and the concept of chocolate products are evolving. Among these new evolvements is the trend of gifting of chocolate (Barry Callebaut, 2021). Businesses are for example offering chocolate boxes to be sent out as gifts with unique, high-quality, and personalized gifts (Barry Callebaut, 2021).

1.2 Important consumer aspects of chocolate

Over the past 10+ years the interest of consumers grew to learn more about the process of chocolate. Example growing conditions and the processing of chocolate and where it comes from (Engeseth & Pangan, 2018). A Study by a Dutch newspaper and the Dutch statistics organization called GFK, claimed that in 2019, 6,9 million households in The Netherlands purchased Fair trade products (Trouw, 2020). This totals to an amount of 87,4% of the Dutch households that purchased Fair Trade products (Trouw, 2020). The desire of purchasing Fair-Trade products has been increasing steadily as well (Trouw, 2020). In 2018 this percentage was 83,8% and in 2017 this was 78,5% (Trouw, 2020). This shows an increase in the consumer purchasing of almost 10% in two years.

A study has proclaimed that the goal of food authentication on the food label, (country of origin, Fair Trade) is to validate to the consumer that a product is produced and marketed on a safe and regulated way (Perez, Lopez-Yerena, & Vallverdu-Queralt, 2020). Therefore, it guarantees a safe product to the consumer and according to the necessary quality standards (Perez, Lopez-Yerena, & Vallverdu-Queralt, 2020). Thus, the country of origin is regarded as an important aspect of chocolate consumption (Perez, Lopez-Yerena, & Vallverdu-Queralt, 2020). However, the results within this study also show that chocolate consumers are more focused on quality features such as taste and the brand and not on the origin of the chocolate (Perez, Lopez-Yerena, & Vallverdu-Queralt, 2020).

A different research stated that the willingness to pay increased when a test group were given chocolate products that had elaborate label information about the product (Lucie, 2008). On this label, the sourcing of the chocolate was illustrated (Lucie, 2008). The test group was given different chocolate products amongst three different testing stages (Lucie, 2008). In the first stage, the test group was merely tasting several chocolate products without any information on brand and sourcing information (Lucie, 2008). Gradually the test group was given the same chocolates, but with more information about brand and sourcing of the label (Lucie, 2008). Conclusions of this test showed that the willingness to pay did increase when the testing group was given elaborate information about the product (Lucie, 2008). The stages that the testing group experienced are illustrated below:

Stage 1: generic tasting test without information on brand/ fair trade etc.

Stage 2: visual test, where only packages of the different chocolate products and brands were shown.

Stage 3: both tasting and elaborate information was given about the product.

(Lucie, 2008)

In 2014, within a study involving Flemish students, the importance for several consumer aspects of purchasing chocolate was investigated (Rousseau, 2014). The study asked the students to pick three aspects that mattered the most in the decision making of purchasing chocolate. As illustrated in Figure 2, most of the aspects that were important for the recipients were the type of chocolate, the price and the (additional) filling that was in the chocolates (Rousseau, 2014). The mentioning of Fair Trade, environmental impact, and country of production were among the least picked desires in terms of purchasing chocolate (Rousseau, 2014). The results from the study also show that the use of an organic label for chocolate products was found not to be important for Flemish consumers in this study (Rousseau, 2014).
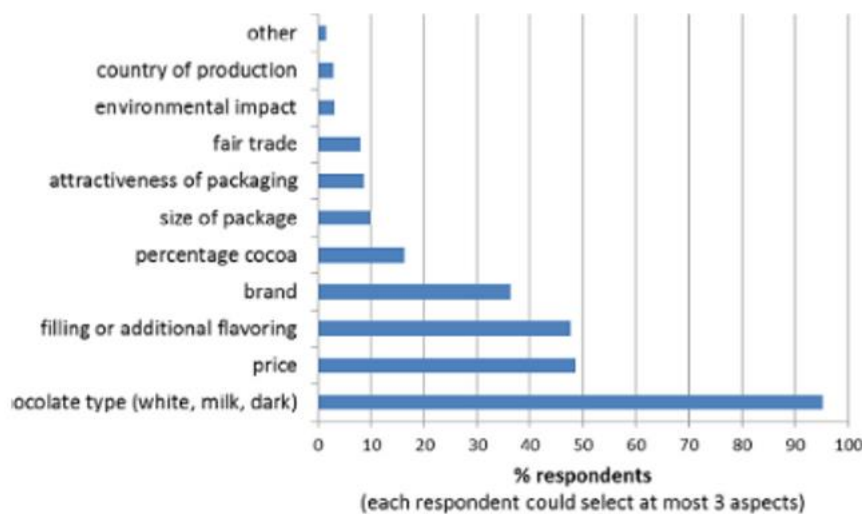
Figure 2: Which three aspects do consumers find the most important when buying chocolate (Rousseau, 2014)

In terms of packaging, there has been a change in the development of packaging in the last years (Krishna, Cian, & Aydinoglu, 2017). Companies are developing packaging that is more engaging and interactive (Krishna, Cian, & Aydinoglu, 2017). Packaging is a critical aspect of a business' quality of the product (Krishna, Cian, & Aydinoglu, 2017). It can affect attention, comprehension of value, perception of product functionality, and consumption, with important consequences for consumer experience and response (Krishna, Cian, & Aydinoglu, 2017). It is therefore indicated that the packaging of a product is highly important for a customer for its decision-making process of buying chocolate.

1.2 Important aspects of purchasing online

A second key topic to the current research is E-commerce and online shopping. At this moment, the digital population of the world contains of 4.66 billion active internet users (Statista, 2021). Besides that, there are also a worldwide active mobile internet users of 4.32 billion (Statista, 2021). Putting this in perspective, the usage of the internet amounted to 4 billion in 2017 worldwide, totalling to an increase in 577% compared to the internet usage in the year 2000 (Liao, Hu, Chung, & Huang, 2021). It can be indicated that the online market is therefore also influencing the food market. Furthermore, food companies (small-medium sized in particular), understand that the use of the internet and E-commerce can be used to create a competitive advantage by classifying its customers better (Da Liang-Rong & Mun Lim, 2011). Understanding the behaviour of consumers can help businesses to develop the correct marketing strategy to correctly reach its target group (Da Liang-Rong & Mun Lim, 2011).

Nowadays, consumers are more likely to turn to E-commerce then to traditional shopping (Cheow, Yeo, Goh, & Rezaei, 2017). The vast enormity of the E-commerce market indicates that consumers do not have to travel to stores and shops for everything. According to the study by (Liao, Hu, Chung, & Huang, 2021), consumers find the perceived risk of buying online higher compared to buying in a traditional store, this despite the growth of the online purchasing (Liao, Hu, Chung, & Huang, 2021). Perceived risk is defined as: the degree to which people express uncertainty about services or goods (Liao, Hu, Chung, & Huang, 2021).

An executed study in terms of successful E-commerce, concluded that a high-quality online service is key to become a successful online business (Paolo, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019). The study shows several factors that positively change/affect the quality E-commerce. The most important factors are website design, customer service, security/privacy, and fulfilment (Paolo, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019). The combination of these lead to a high quality in E-service (Paolo, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019). The high quality of E-service will lead into two phenomena's: customer satisfaction and customer trust (Paolo, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019). The combination of these two phenomena, result in a high and positive word-to-mouth advertising, site revisiting and an intention to repurchase (Paolo, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019). As mentioned, one of the most essential aspects for an online business to grow and to become successful is when consumers/customers that already have had a priorly satisfactory experience with a certain brand product (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). So how can a business achieve this? It needs to find a way to achieve **E-loyalty** through **E-satisfaction** (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003)**. E-satisfaction** is defined as: ''Contentment of the customer with respect to his or her prior purchasing experience with a given electronic commerce firm'' (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). **E-loyalty** is defined as: ''the customer's favourable attitude toward an electronic business resulting in repeat buying behaviour'' (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). An important aspect for an online business to grow and to become successful is when consumers/customers that have already had a priorly satisfactory experience with a certain brand product come back (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). So how can a business achieve this? Figure 3 illustrates this:
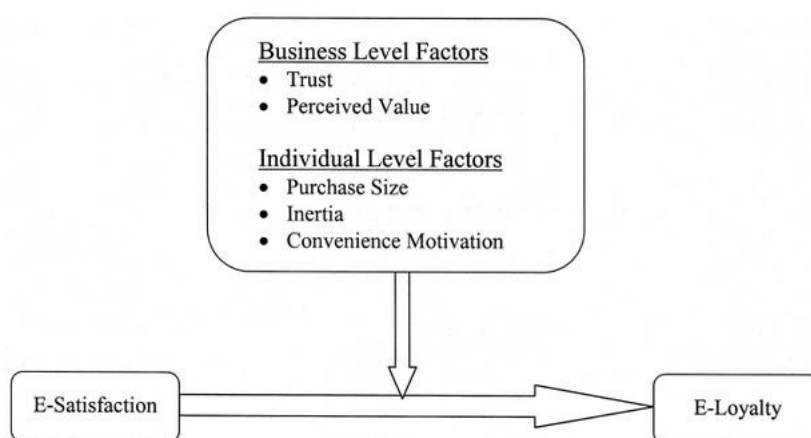

Figure 3: Factors leading from E-satisfaction resulting to E-loyalty. (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003)

After obtaining E-satisfaction, business level factors and individual level factors determine whether E-loyalty can be obtained (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Obtained from a highly cited (3270 citations), and still relevant study done in 2003, factors have been identified from business level factors and individual level factors necessary to achieve E-loyalty (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). To achieve this E-loyalty from the business level factors, trust and perceived value is necessary to elevate E-satisfaction to E-loyalty (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Meaning the consumers' trust needs to be high enough to come in combination with perceived value. Aspects that will lead to the trust of the consumer are for example the reliability and safety of the website and providing a safe transaction (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). For perceived value, it is important to find out whether consumers find the products' value worth the payment (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). If the quality of the bought chocolate can exceed the quality expectation, the perceived value for the consumer can motivate the consumer to come back in the future. Additionally, individual level factors contribute to achieve E-loyalty for a

successful online business. Purchase size is an important aspect to help achieve this (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Purchase size means the amount a consumer spends on a product (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). When this is lower, the E-loyalty will moderate but will be higher when a consumer has more money to spend. Thus, the higher the spending limit for a consumer, the higher the chances are to obtain E-loyalty (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Inertia is another important factor that contributes to achieving E-loyalty (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). The degree of inertia to a consumer contributes whether a consumer would want to change for a different website for the future (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). If the satisfaction from purchasing for the first time meets the consumers' expectation enough, the likeliness to change to a competitor decreases thus remaining loyal to the initial business (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). The last important factor for achieving E-loyalty is the convenience motivation (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). This part of motivations to achieve E-loyalty focusses on the convenience of ordering the desired products (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). This indicates that scrolling through the website and the ease of doing a transaction have to meet convenience expectations of buying online rather than going to a traditional store or shop (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003).

1.4 sub-questions and main research questions.

At this moment there is much information shown about E-commerce and the motivation for online shopping. There is also much information shown about what is trending and important about chocolates itself for consumers. What is not known is to what extent the combination of these aspects matters to successfully market chocolate online to customers and to consumers. The outcome of this report can be helpful for small to medium sized business that are already active in the online retail of its chocolate or that have plans to start this up. The outcome of this research can also be helpful for other online business that are (going to be) active in the online retail of its product. This is because the results would give a clear insight about where the consumer stands on online purchasing, but also which product technical trends are important. However, the main target of this research is to support small/medium scale chocolate businesses to sell chocolate online. These trends should also be able to be derived to other (similar) food sectors on how to adapt itself to these preferences and trends. Hence, the main research question that has been investigated was:

What are the critical success factors to further develop the online sales of chocolate?

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were answered:

1: What do consumers expect in relation to product offering?

2: What do consumers expect in terms of service for online purchasing of chocolate?

3: How can a company motivate customers to buy chocolate online multiple times?

The key objectives of the research are to identify through a quantitative questionnaire research i) consumer expectations when buying products from online chocolate companies, ii) product related factors in respect to consumer expectations, and iii) factors that create return customers of online chocolate companies. By covering the three objectives, the aim to identify critical success factors will be uncovered.

2. Research methodology

The main question is answered through quantitative research using an online survey. The quantitative research was executed via the client directory of Chocoladebezorgd. This is a company that sells artisanal bonbons online through its web shop and has been successful in marketing and selling its products online (Chocoladebezorgd, 2021).

By sending out this survey through the customer directory, a dedicated target group was reached that already bought chocolate online. The directory consists of people that have ordered as a business client and consumers that have ordered through the web shop for private reasons and therefore, can clearly indicate its preferences. The amount of people in this directory are 12.402 recipients. There are people from all ages, professions, and incomes etc. In terms of personal questions, the survey asked the recipient merely for age and gender. The relevance for extensive consumer data was considered irrelevant as the focus on the survey was to find out what consumers' preferences were in terms of ordering of online chocolate and not to find out other personal data. Because the directory already has experience with online ordering, this factor eliminates the problem of consumers filling in the survey and having no or few experiences with online purchasing of chocolate. Based on the population size, a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% the predicted sample size was to be 373 (Creative Research syste,, 2021). The reason for using these numbers, was because this was considered a commonly used service to make an estimation of the data that would be received from the survey. The website is a free public tool to apply for research. It can be noted that more than enough data has been gathered to have answered the main research question as 1205 people had responded to the survey.

Descriptive research

The survey itself has been put together by Google forms and the questions were asked to the recipients with the 5-point Likert scale method of asking questions. With this research method, the recipient could answer questions and judge to what degree is agreed to the question asked. The recipient could scale from point 1 (not important at all) to point 5 (very important) to answer the survey questions (Macleod, 2019). During the questionnaire, the recipient remained anonymous. The recipient was merely asked for age and gender. The reason that the recipient was merely asked for gender and age, is because the aim of the research was to find out the importance levels of consumers. In that case other demographics and factors such as income, become irrelevant. The reason for using the 5-point Likert scale is because of its clear and easy method of measuring. It has also been a highly popular method of measuring outcome (Chyung, Roberts, Swanson, & Hankinson, 2017). This method also uses the neutral point, which is beneficial for the recipients. Because of the knowledge of the subject, the recipient could use its true 'neutral' opinion and are not forced to agree or disagree (Chyung, Roberts, Swanson, & Hankinson, 2017).

1: What do consumers expect in relation to product offering?

The following sub-question covered all the information about the chocolate product itself. The question was asked through the 5-point Likert scale. Questions were asked about the online assortment, fair trade chocolate, vegan chocolate, country of origin, package attractiveness and originality of the product/concept. For example, the questions were asked to the recipients as such: *How important do you find the presence of a fair-trade logo when you buy chocolate online?* The answers will be lined up as: 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important).

2: What do consumers expect in terms of service for online purchasing of chocolate?

This sub-question answered the perspective of what E-services it finds important in terms of chocolate purchasing chocolate online. As such, the questions asked in the survey were based on this known information that was given through this research. The question will be asked through the 5-point Likert scale. Questions were asked about the online service a business has to offer to meet a consumers' expectations in terms of buying online chocolate. The questions were asked in the following manner: E.G. *How important do you find the importance of a user-friendly website?* The answers will be lined up as: 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important)

3: *How can a company motivate customers to buy chocolate online multiple times?*

These last questions were translated through the survey by asking the recipient why the consumer was motivated to purchase online chocolate and to find out the willingness to come back once the experience and the quality of the chocolate (ordering) exceeded once's expectations. The obtained information from these survey questions provided insight on how to achieve E-loyalty for online chocolate purchasing. The questions were asked through a drop-down selection where the recipient named three of the previous aspects that were asked during the survey that are found most important to come back in the future.

The collecting of all the data from the survey was done by bar- charts and tables to make it visually clear. With these charts and tables that were made from the obtained information, the data was analysed and used to draw the conclusions for this research and to answer the sub-questions and main research question. By using graphs and tables for every question, all the variables were explained. Every question asked was processed into a graph and table to illustrate the scatter of how recipients found importance of certain aspects. For example, the question: ''How important do you find the presence of vegan chocolate in the assortment'' was explained by showing the level importance (1 to 5) on the x- axis and the percentages were filled in on the y-axis. the data was separately analysed for male and female recipients. For all the questions, the standard deviation and the average of the answers were illustrated upon each question. All these data gave the answers and conclusions to answer the main-and sub questions.

3. Results

The survey was sent to the recipients of the customer directory of Chocoladebezorgd. Within two weeks, 1205 of 12402 recipients filled in the survey. The expected number of filled in survey's was expected to be lower. In total, 9,7% of the customer directory filled in the survey. It was therefore believed that more than enough data has been awarded to give a clear image of the opinions of the customers of Chocoladebezorgd.

Table 2: Overview of the number of recipients in numbers and percentages

Man	**113**	**9,42%**
<25	9	7,96%
25-40	40	35.4%
41-56	44	38.94%
57-75	20	17.7%
Woman	**1092**	**90.58%**
<25	46	4.23%
25-40	323	29.71%
41-56	530	48.76%
57-75	188	17.30%
76>	5	0.5%
Total	**1205**	**100%**

As illustrated in Table 2, the survey was filled in by 113 (9,42%) males and 1087 (90,58%) females. Many of both male and female recipients fell in the age group of 25-40 and 41-46 years old. In total, the percentage for the male recipient in the age group of 25-56 years old was 74,34%. For females, this amount totalled to 78,47%. In the survey, most questions required participants to rank the importance of certain aspects on a scale from 1-5. The meaning of the ranking was: 1= not important at all, 2= unimportant, 3= neutral, 4= important, 5= very important.

3.1 What do consumers expect in relation to product offering?

To evaluate the expectations of consumers in relation to product offering, the recipients were asked to give its opinion on the level of importance about the available assortment, amount of choice, the origin of chocolate, Fair Trade chocolate, vegan chocolate, attractiveness of the packaging, and originality of the product/concept of an online chocolate business.

Table 3: overview of the average answer and the standard deviation on the product offering aspects

Aspect	Average answer	Standard deviation
Assortment	4,6	0,59
Fair trade chocolate	3,98	0,96
Origin of chocolate	3,4	1,2
Vegan chocolate	2,50	1,26
Attractiveness of packaging	4,0	0,87
Original product/concept	4,24	0,74

For the available assortment, it was found that 96% of the recipients found this aspect 'important or very important, resulting in an average rank of 4,6 and standard deviation of 0,59. In Figure 4, the recipients obtained are shown, including the responses for male and female recipients. the tables and the figures showed no significant difference between men and women. The only difference was that women had a higher degree of '' very important'' filled in, showing a slightly higher importance for women on this aspect. Males therefore had a slightly lower importance for the available online assortment for ordering chocolate.

Table 4: Responses in numbers obtained in relation to available product assortment.

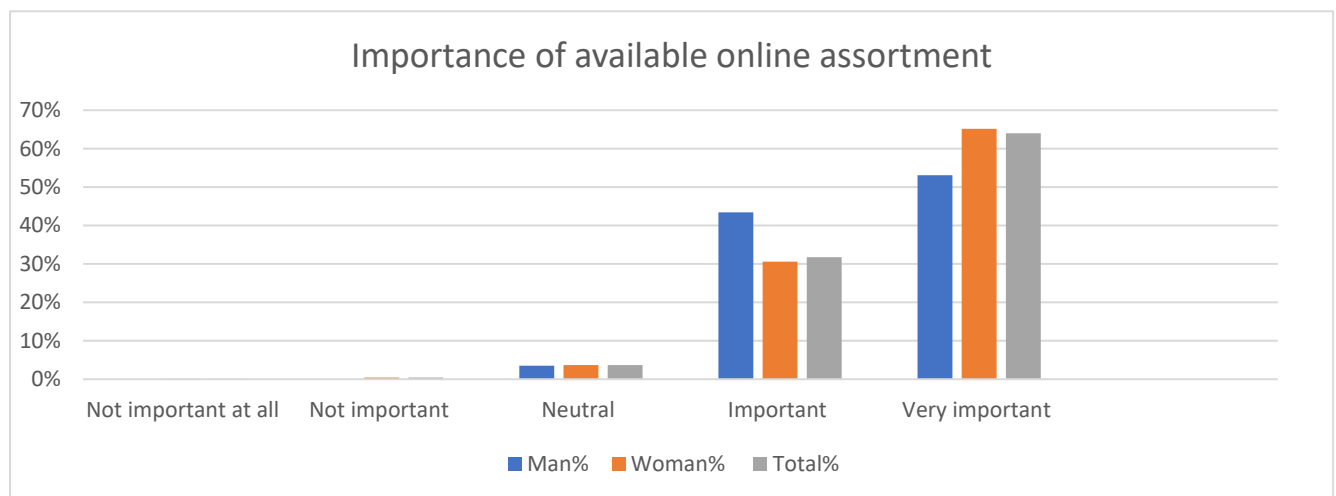| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man			4	49	60	113
Woman	1	4	40	334	713	1092
Total	1	4	44	381	771	1200

Figure 4: Responses (in %) obtained in relation to available product assortment

After asking the recipient about the importance of an online assortment, a follow-up question was formulated to ask about whether a high/low assortment was preferred for an online chocolate web shop. In Table 5, it is reflected that the recipients highly preferred a high online assortment of chocolate. In total 86,5% of the recipients stated that a high online assortment is preferred, rather than a low online assortment, respectively resulting to 3% in total. Furthermore, 10,3% of the recipients showed no preference for this.

Table 5: Responses in (%) obtained in relation to a preference for a high or low offered online assortment.

	Total	Male	Woman
No preference	10,30%	11,50%	10,20%
High	86,50%	85,80%	86,50%
Low	3%	2,70%	3,30%

For the importance of Fair Trade, it was found that 72,6% of the recipients found this aspect 'important or very important, resulting in an average answer of 3,98 and standard deviation of 0,96. In Table 6 and Figure 5, the recipients obtained are shown, including the responses for male and female recipients. The obtained tables and the figures show that for women, the presence of Fair-Trade

chocolate was marked ''very important'' 11,5% higher compared to male recipients. Furthermore, no significant differences were found between males and females.

Table 6: Responses in numbers in relation to the importance of Fair-Trade chocolate.

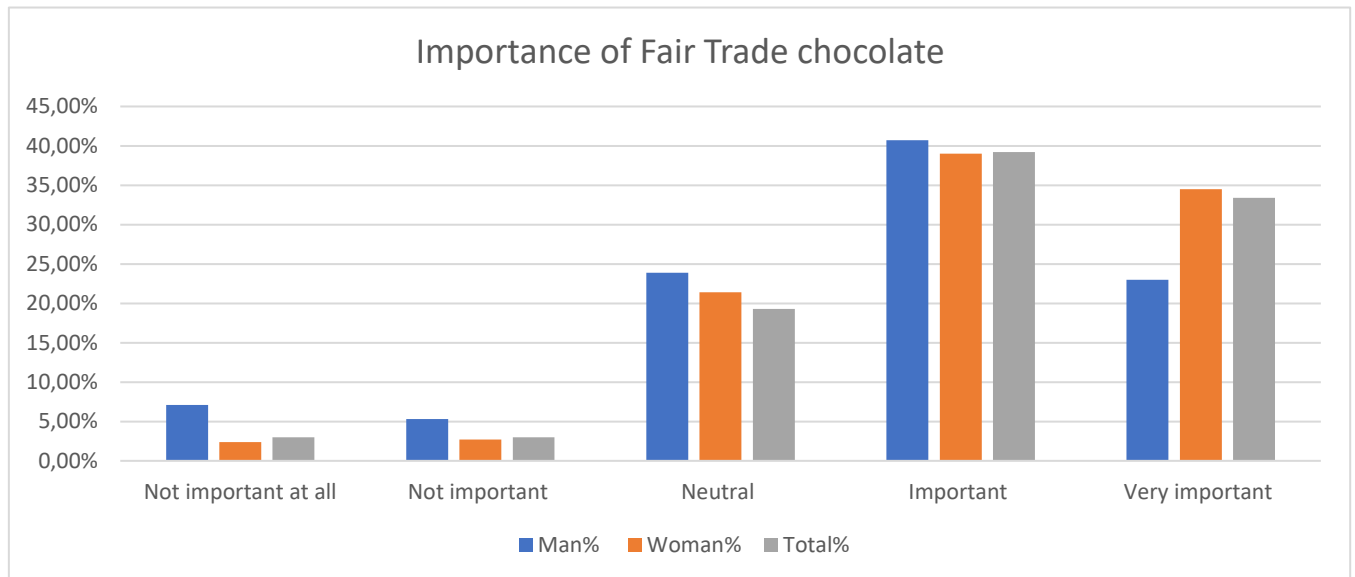| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man	8	6	27	46	26	113
Woman	26	30	233	426	377	1092
Total	34	36	260	472	403	1205

Figure 5: Responses (in%) obtained in relation to Fair Trade chocolate

For the origin of chocolate, it was found that the opinions of the recipients were scattered. The average answer of 3,4 and the standard deviation also shows that this is the case. To illustrate this, Table 7 and Figure 6 show the scattering of the recipients for males and females as well. The table and the figure show no significant difference between men and women. In total, 55% of males and females, found this aspect to be ''not important at all'' to a neutral'' opinion on this aspect.

Table 7: Responses in numbers in relation to the importance of the origin of chocolate

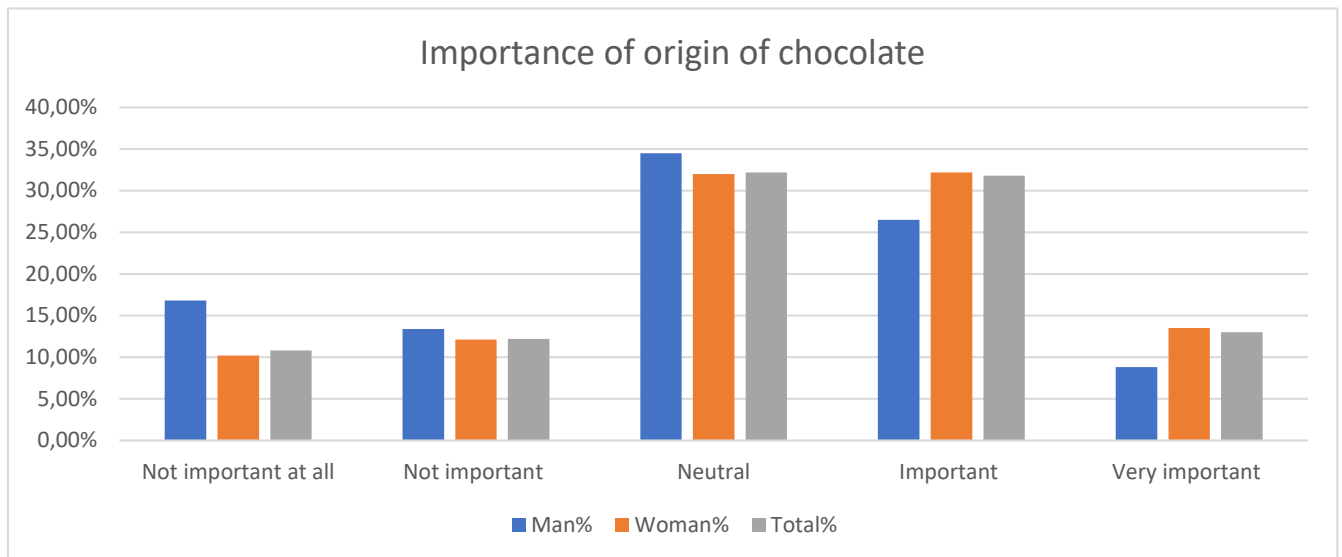| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man	19	15	39	30	10	113
Woman	111	132	349	353	147	1092
Total	130	147	388	383	157	1205

Figure 6: Responses (in%) obtained in relation to the origin of chocolate

In respect to the factor of vegan chocolate, it was found that most of the recipients did not find this aspect to be important. The average answer of 2,50 and the standard deviation of 1,26 indicate this as well. 69% of the male recipients marked this aspect to be 'not important at all' to 'not important''. Compared to females, this amount totalled to 48,5%. The male percentage of recipients that found this aspect ranked as 'neutral' was 14,2%. Compared to the female recipients this percentage totalled to 31,6%. 21,5% of the total recipients found this aspect to be 'important' or very important. Furthermore, no significant differences were discovered between the male and female recipients.

Table 8: Responses in numbers in relation to vegan chocolate

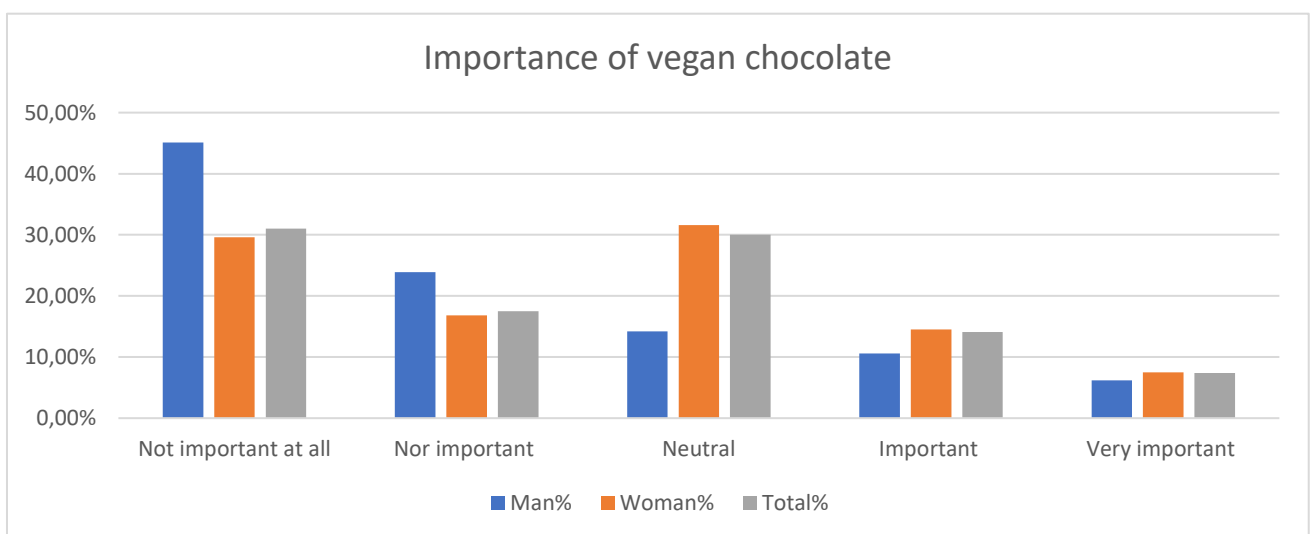| Labels		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man		51	27	16	12	7	113
Woman		323	184	345	158	82	1092
Total		374	211	361	170	89	1205

Figure 7: Responses (in%) in relation to vegan chocolate.

Results from this question show that attractive packaging has a high importance when purchasing chocolate. The results for this aspect also show an average answer of 4,0 and a standard deviation of 0,87. In total from all recipients show that 77% find the attractiveness of chocolate packaging is either ''important'' or ''very important''. For males, this percentage totals to 73% and for women this percentage totals to 77% as well. Results for this aspect are also reflected in Table 9 and Figure 8. Furthermore, no significant differences between male and female recipients are discovered.

Table 9: Responses in numbers in relation to the importance of attractive packaging

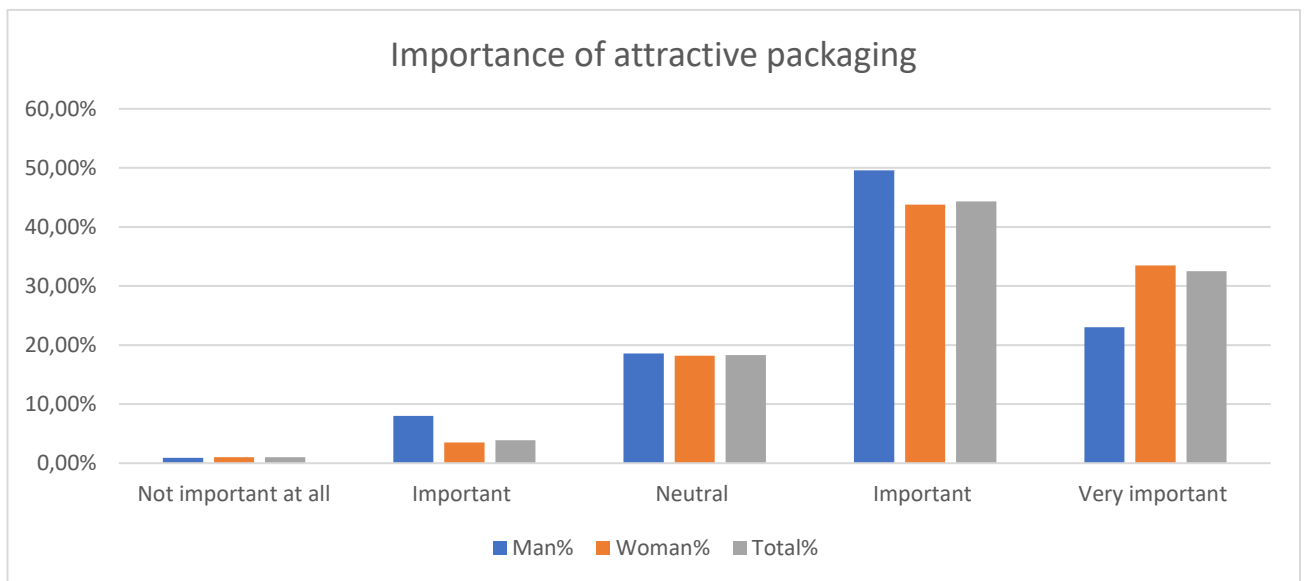| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man	1	9	21	56	26	113
Woman	11	38	199	478	366	1092
Total	12	47	220	530	391	1205

Figure 8: Responses (in%) in relation to the importance of attractive packaging

The results derive that originality in the product has a high importance for consumers. In total, 86,5% of all recipients answered that attractive packaging was considered ''important or '' very important''. For males and females this percentage was respectively considered on 86,7% and 86,6%. Also, the average answer of 4,24 and the standard deviation of 0,74 show a uniform result that originality in either the product or concept of the online chocolate business is important for the recipients. The results showed no significant difference between male and female recipients.

Table 10: Responses in numbers in relation to original product/concept

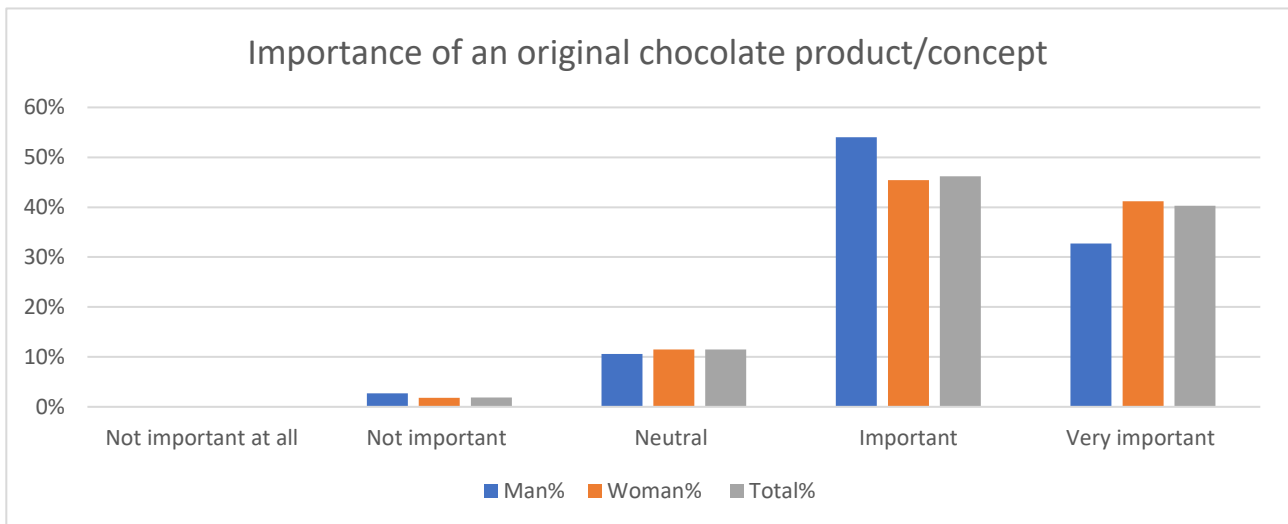| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man	0	3	12	61	37	113
Woman	1	20	126	496	449	1092
Total	1	23	138	557	486	1205

Figure 9: Responses (in %) in relation to original product/concept

The recipients were asked about which organoleptic elements were found to be most important when consuming chocolate. Results showed that by far, the high quality of taste has been selected the most (93%), followed respectively by beautiful exterior (60,7%), good bite/crunch (42%), pleasant structure (29,6%), and pleasant smell (24,4%). These results are also reflected below in Table 11. These results give an indication which factors a chocolate product must fulfil to become enjoyable for a consumer and to reach the indulgence moments a consumer seeks when consuming chocolates.

Table 11: Responses in numbers and percentages in relation to sensory characteristics.

Sensory characteristic	Number of recipients	Percentage of recipients
High quality of taste	1134	93%
Beautiful exterior	741	60,7%
Good bite/crunch	513	42%
Pleasant structure	361	29,6%
Pleasant smell	298	24,4%

3.2 What do consumers expect in terms of service for online purchasing of chocolate?

To evaluate the expectations of consumers in relation to online service, the recipients were asked to give its opinion on the level of importance about user-friendly website, easy and safe transaction, customer support, web-design, and safe and secure privacy protection. In Table 12, the average answers and the standard deviations are illustrated in one overview. Table 12 gives a first impression on the scattering of the opinions of the different factors. Next, the data will be further illustrated and explained separately for every aspect.

Table 12: overview of the average answers the standard deviation in relation to service for online purchasing

Factor	Average answer	Standard deviation
User-friendly website	4,81	0,42
Easy and safe transaction	4,92	0,26
Customer support	4,27	0,83
Web-design	4,2	0,72
Safe and secure privacy protection	4,62	0,73

For the factor of user-friendly website, results show that in total 98,8% of the recipients found this aspect 'important or very important, resulting in an average rank of 4,8 and standard deviation of 0,42. In Figure 4, the recipients obtained are shown, including the responses for male and female recipients. the tables and the figures showed no significant difference between men and women. Table 13 and Figure 10 give a clear illustration on how the opinions of the recipients are scattered in relation to this subject.

Table 13: Responses in numbers in relation to the user-friendly website

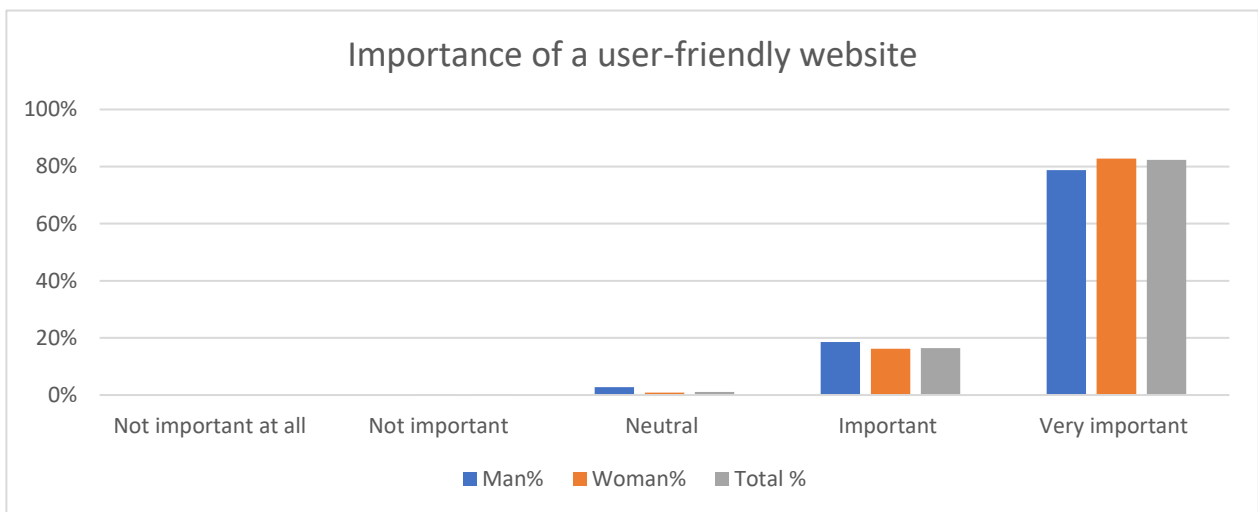| Labels	2	3	4	5	Total
Man		3	21	89	113
Woman	1	10	177	904	1092
Total	1	13	198	993	1205

Figure 10: Responses (in%) in relation to original product/concept

For the factor of the easy and safe transaction, results show that the opinions of the recipients were uniform. The results from the data retrieved showed an average answer of 4,92 and a standard deviation of 0,26. 99% of males and females found that an easy and safe transaction either 'important' or 'very important'. In this case, there were no significant differences between males and females. Table 14 and Figure 11, illustrates these results.

Table 14: Responses in numbers in relation to the importance of an easy and safe payment process.

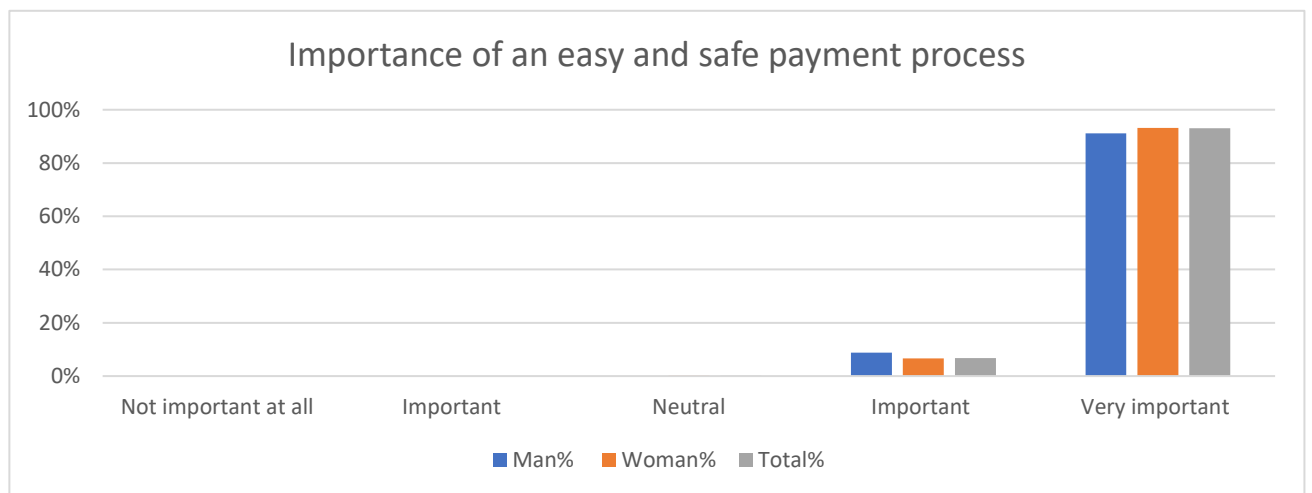| Labels	3	4	5	Total
Man	0	10	103	113
Woman	2	72	1018	1092
Total	2	82	1116	1205

Figure 11: Responses (in%) in relation to the importance of a safe and easy payment process

In respect to the importance for a high quality (online) customer service, results show that in total 82,3% found this factor either 'important' or 'very important'. Furthermore, the average answer of 4,27 and a standard deviation of 0,83 indicate that the customer service is highly important amongst the recipients. The results that are illustrated in Table 15 and Figure 12 show no significant differences between male and female recipients.

Table 15: Responses in numbers in relation to (online) customer service

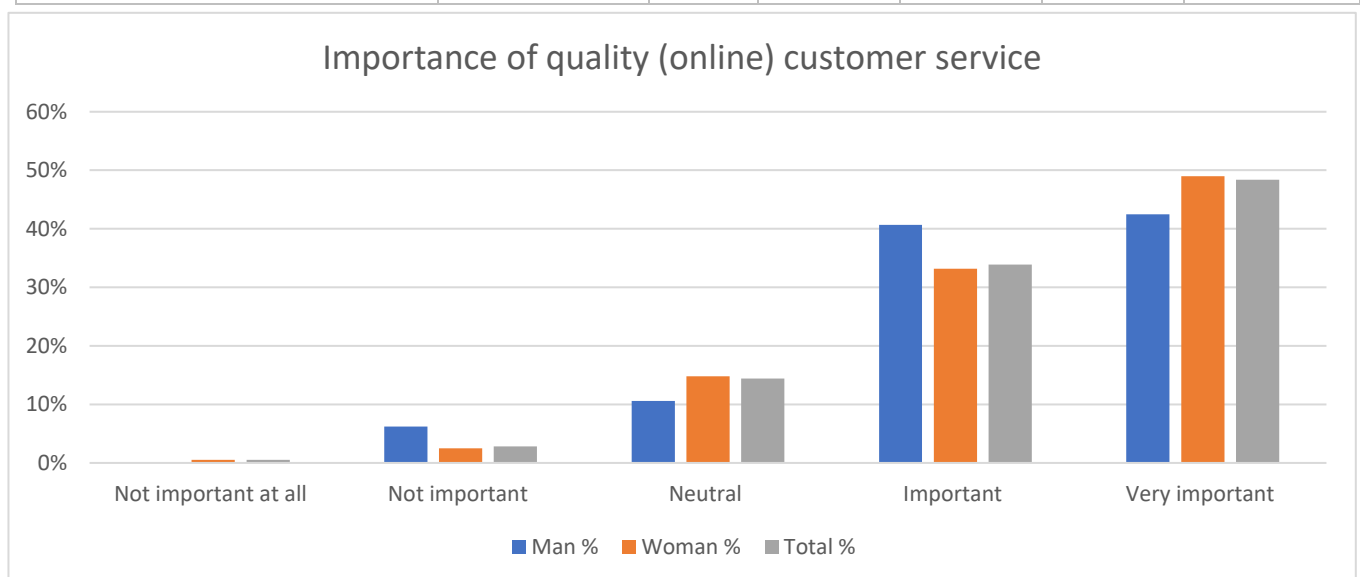| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man		7	12	46	48	113
Woman	5	27	162	363	535	1092
Total	5	34	174	409	583	1205

Figure 12: Responses (in%) in relation to the importance of (online) customer service

After this question, a follow-up question was formulated to further substantiate this topic. The following question was asked to the recipients: ''Which form of customer service would you like to use to contact an (online) customer service?''. The three most desired methods of using an (online) customer service is by telephone, e-mail, and a chat service. The results are presented in Figure 13.

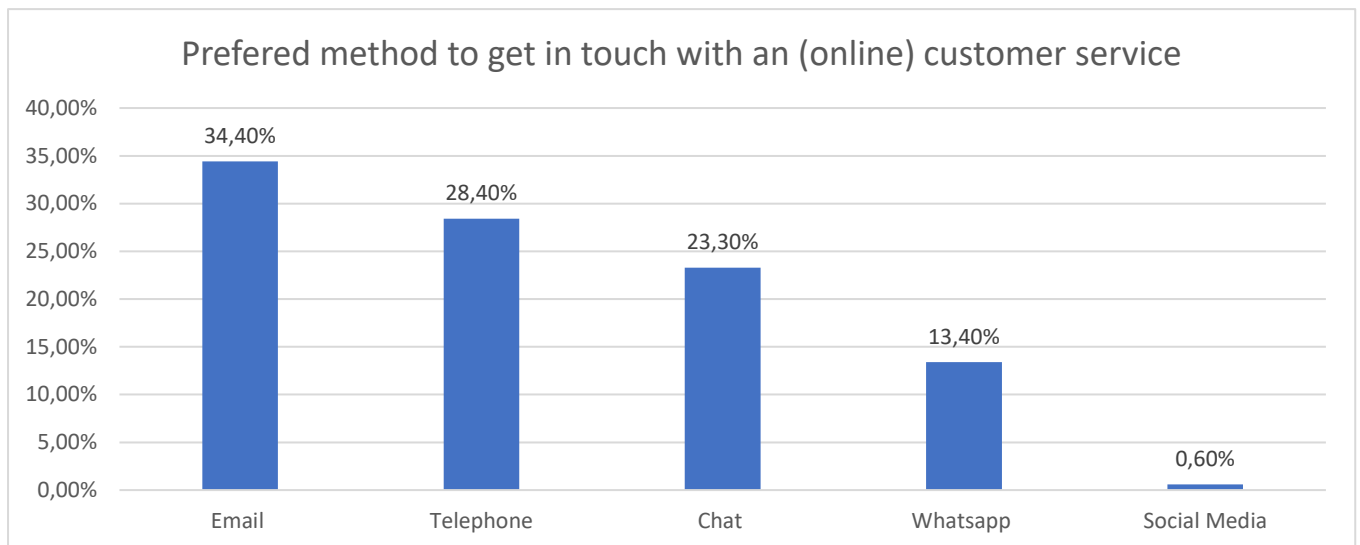Prefered method to get in touch with an (online) customer service

Figure 13: Responses (in% in relation to preferred methods to communicate with an online customer service

Regarding the importance of an attractive web design when ordering chocolate, it was discovered that in total 85,6% of the recipients found that an attractive web-design is either "important'' or ''very important''. For male recipients, this number accumulated to 82,3% and for female recipients this percentage totalled to 86%. The average answer for this factor resulted in 4,2 and the standard deviation for this factor is 0,72. These results indicate that an attractive web-design is a highly important factor when ordering chocolates online. The results are further illustrated in Table 16 and Figure 14.

Table 16: Responses in numbers in relation to web design

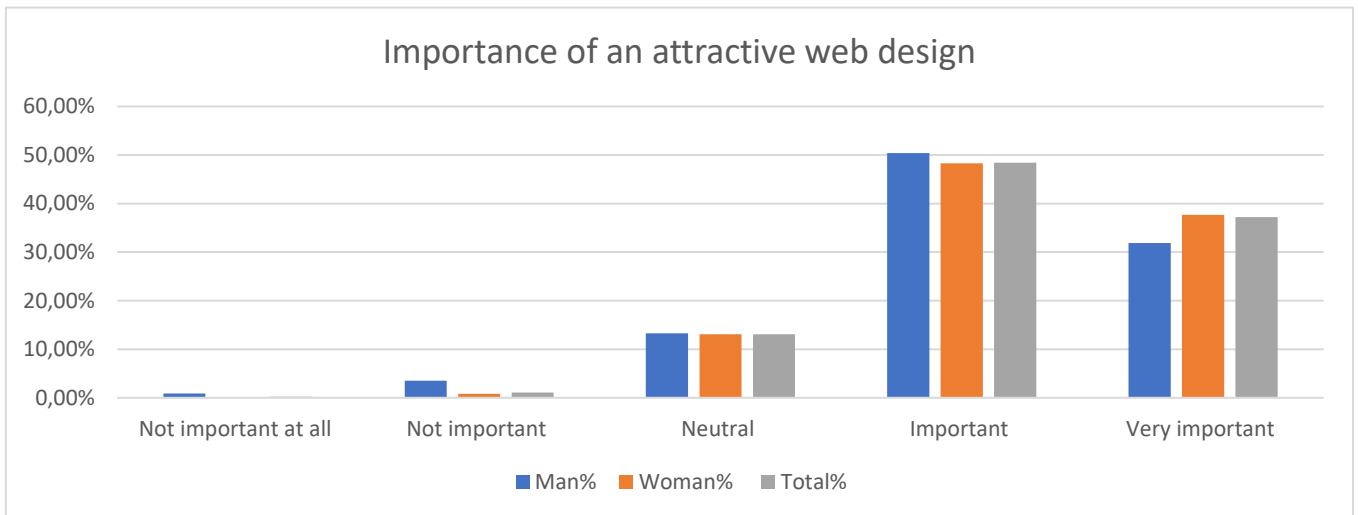| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man	1	4	15	57	36	113
Woman	1	9	143	527	412	1092
Total	2	13	158	584	448	1205

Figure 14: Responses (in%) In relation to the web design

Results derived in relation to safe and secure privacy protection indicate that a safe and secure privacy protection is highly important when chocolates are ordered online. Numbers show that in total 90,8% of the recipients marked this aspect to be ''important'' to '' very important''. 90,6% of females found that a safe and secure privacy protection is "important'' or ''very important''. This number was ranked ''important'' or ''very important'' by 92.9% of male recipients. The numbers also indicate that there are no significant differences between female and male recipients. In Table 17 and Figure 15, the results are illustrated.

Table 17: Responses in numbers in relation to safe and secure privacy protection

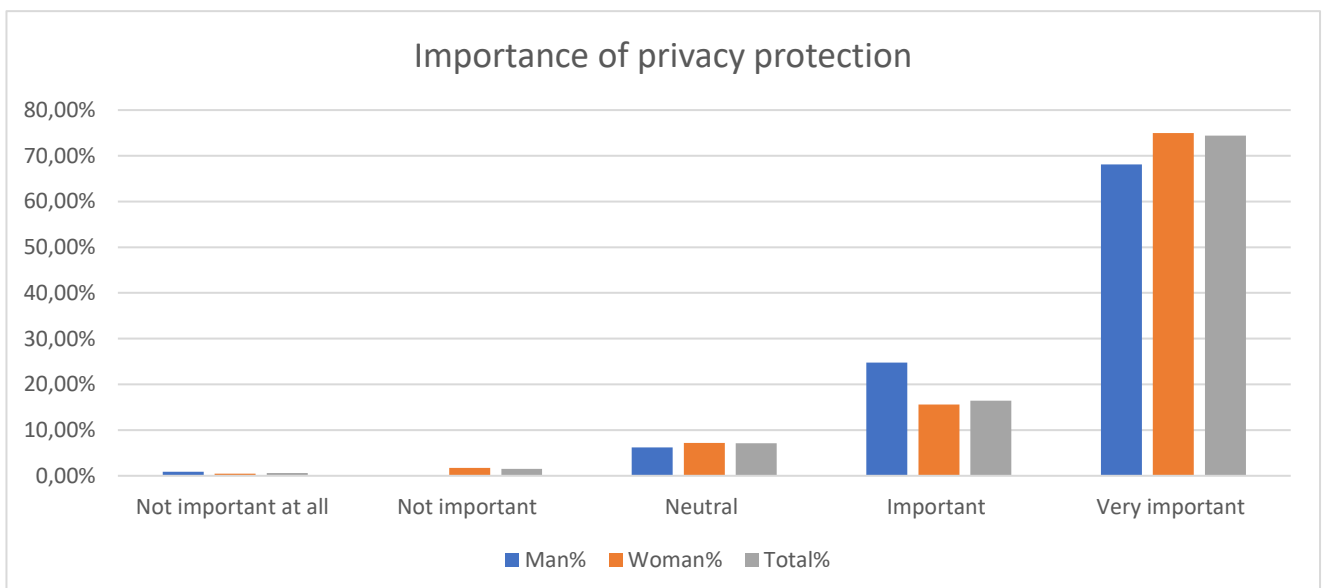| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man	1		7	28	77	113
Woman	6	19	78	170	819	1092
Total	7	19	85	198	896	1205

Figure 15: Responses (in%) in relation to safe and secure privacy protection

3.3 How can a company motivate customers to buy chocolate online multiple times?

To evaluate the results on how a company can motivate consumers to come back, the recipients were asked to give response on two factors. The first question asked, was how likely it would be to come back for a consumer to come back to the business and thus to stay loyal to the business. In the second question, the recipients were asked to name three aspects from the filled in survey that were found most important, to potentially come back in the future to order chocolate again.

The aspect of the importance for loyalty to the business when the chocolate has exceeded expectations, show an importance for the recipients of the survey. For this aspect, the average answered totalled to 4,32 and the standard deviation totalled to 0,75. In total, 88,7% of the recipients found this aspect either '' important'' or '' very important''. The results show that the choice of ''important'' and ''very important'' among women recipients was 89%. For males, this percentage totalled to 86,7%.

Table 18: responses in numbers in relation to loyalty for a chocolate business

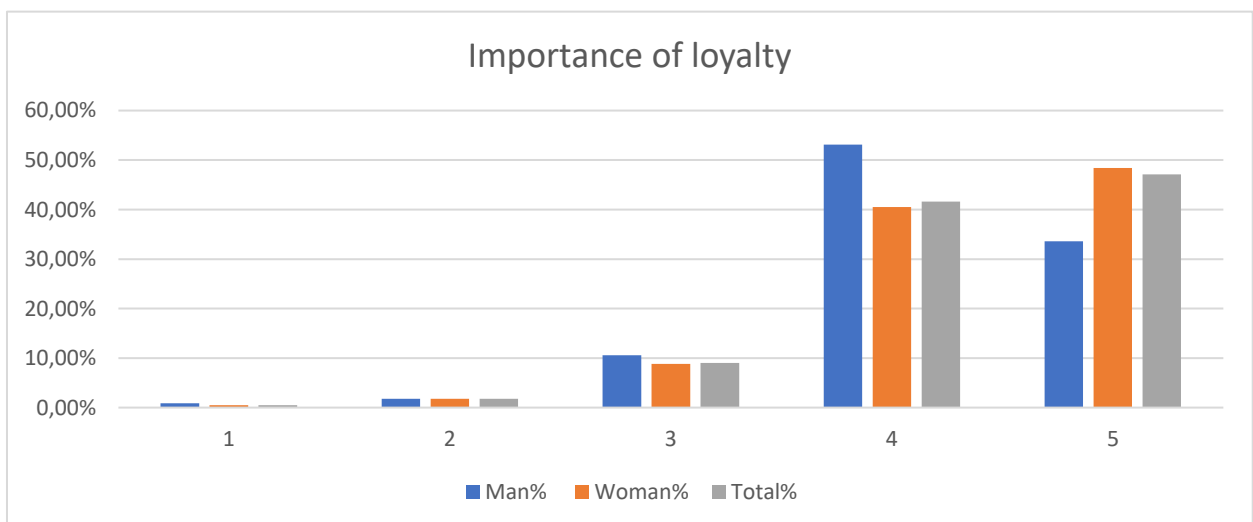| Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Man	1	2	12	60	38	113
Woman	5	20	96	443	529	1092
Total	6	22	108	502	567	1205

Figure 16: responses(in%) in relation to loyalty to the online chocolate business.

The final question in the survey asked recipients to select three aspects present in the survey that were most important to come back for a next order in the future. The results are showing that for the recipients the three most important aspects were the assortment (79%), high quality of taste (71%) and the original chocolate product/concept (51,6). The online aspects scored a relative lower importance by the recipients. The results are illustrated in Table 19.

Table 19: overview of the three most important aspect (% and numbers) from the survey

Aspect	Amount	Percentage
Assortment	968	79,4%
High quality of taste	865	71%
Original chocolate product/concept	629	51,6%
User-friendly website	284	23,3%
Attractive packaging	283	23,2%
Safe and easy payment process	266	21,8%
Fair Trade chocolate	148	12,1%
Good available customer service	47	3,9%
Loyalty to product/business	29	2,4%
Availability of vegan chocolate	28	2,3%
Attractive web design	23	1,9%
Origin of the chocolate	8	0,7%

4. Discussion

4.1 Reflection methodology

Several limitations were found in this research. It was expected to have around 373 recipients and that the male/female ratio of recipients would become similar. However, it turned out that 90% of the recipients turned out to be female. 1205 recipients out of the 12402-target group filled in the survey, exceeding the expected number of results dramatically. It was still believed that even though the ration man to woman was 1-9, that sufficient data from male participants was gathered to be able to answer the main research question. Because the expected sample size was merely of around 373 recipients, it is considered that enough data has been retrieved from male recipients. The results of all the data show little to no differences in answers between male and female recipients. This indicates that males and females show little to no difference in preferences to the investigated aspects from this research.

In terms of age, by far the highest age groups were 41-56. For males, this age group represented 39% of male recipients. For females, this age group consisted of 48%. The second highest age group for men consist of 25-40 (35,4%) and for females this group consists of 29,7%. Therefore, for males the data retrieved from both age groups (25-56) are 74% and for females (25-56) 77%. For females, also 5 people with an age higher than 76 took part in the survey. Therefore, it is believed that for this age group not enough data is retrieved to reflect this topic to. This age group was not filled in by men from this age.

The use of the 5-point Likert scale did also have a limitation. As the method does have the advantage in this research of having a midpoint because of the recipients' experience and knowledge of the subject, it does not mean that a recipient could have filled in the survey without giving thought of the questions. It was of course possible for a recipient to misuse the method by for example primarily using the midpoint. The questions did not have a 'I don't know' option or a '' not applicable'' option if having trouble with answering the question. Another limitation from this method of asking questions is that recipients are easier to experience a phenomenon called acquiescence bias (Llaurado, 2015). Meaning that recipients tend to mostly agree to the questions asked (Llaurado, 2015). In this survey, this would mean that the recipients would tend to fill in ''important' or ''very important''.

Another point of discussion for this research were the recipients: the advantage of these recipients was considered the knowledge of the subject. This target group was already experienced with online chocolate ordering and therefore, aware of the aspects that mattered for this research for itself. Also, the recipients would not have the issue of not knowing what to fill into the questions, making the results reliable for data analyzation. The only downside is that because the recipients had knowledge about the subject, it is not known what consumers find of this subject that have not previously ordered chocolate online. Another limitation by doing the survey on this manner, is that the recipients are only known for ordering chocolate from one company. It is not known whether the recipients have also ordered chocolate from other businesses. Despite this, it is confident to say that enough reliable data has been gathered as the expected number of recipients turned out dramatically higher than expected.

4.2 What do consumers expect in terms of product offering?

In this section, the results that answered for the first sub-questions are interpreted and discussed. The results are going to be discussed per aspect.

The importance of the online assortment

In total, 96% of the recipients found that the available online chocolate assortment for this aspect to be either important or very important. In Table 3, the standard deviation and the average answer were also the highest compared to the other aspect. These data show that this aspect is highly important for the recipients. The following question about the preference for a high or a low assortment resulted that 86% of males, and females preferred a high available assortment.

Because of this data it can be stated that the available assortment for an online chocolate business is highly important. Looking at the priorly mentioned literature study done by (Rousseau, 2014), showed as well that the aspect mattered the most to the recipients was the type of chocolate (dark/milk/brown). The outcome for this research is comparable with this research as the available assortment was proven to be highly important there as well.

The importance of Fair Trade

The results for this aspect from the survey showed a lower importance for Fair Trade compared to some of the other aspect and therefore indicates a lower importance for an online chocolate business. Comparable results from the study amongst Flemish students priorly mentioned in the introduction of this study showed similar research (Rousseau, 2014). Therefore, it can be mentioned that Fair Trade is not as important as priorly anticipated. The results from the survey also state no significant difference in importance between male and female recipients

The importance of the origin of chocolate

The results for this aspect indicate that the notifying of the consumer about the origin of the chocolate is not as important compared to other aspects such as the importance for the online assortment. When comparing the average answers and the standard deviations for the other factors this also showed that this would be amongst the lower important aspects in terms of product offering. This outcome was the same with the study amongst Flemish students (Rousseau, 2014). On the contrary a previously mentioned study (Perez, Lopez-Yerena, & Vallverdu-Queralt, 2020) state a contradictive outcome on how important country of origin matters. Based on the results found, it may argue ague amongst existing findings as this may reflect the nature of the area where the research was conducted.

The importance for vegan chocolate

The outcome for this aspect shows little interest in terms of online ordering of chocolate. Preliminary research executed by (Rousseau, 2014) supports the findings in the current study by also showing less interest in vegan chocolate compared to other aspects. Therefore, it can be mentioned that this aspect also does not have a high importance. The study from Barry Callebaut (Barry Callebaut, 2021) showed that 'chocolate has to be good for me' amongst European consumers. Also, another research claimed that in a Polish study that more consumers seek more ecological-friendly chocolate such as vegan (Yusuf & Perez-Jimenez, 2021). However, on the contrary, results indicate that for most consumers this aspect does not matter as much yet and may develop further over time.

The importance for attractive packaging.

The results show that attractive packaging is important for an online chocolate business to offer this aspect. Also, the standard deviation and the average answer for this aspect is amongst the highest in terms of product offering. This indicates that attractive packaging is placed among the critical factors in the decision-making process in relation to ordering chocolate online. The study executed (Rousseau, 2014), showed that attractiveness of packaging was not as important in terms of product offering compared to other aspects. In this research the attractiveness for packaging was amongst highest scoring aspects in relation to product offering. It may therefore be stated that for online ordering of chocolate, attractive packaging is more important as when chocolate is bought from for example a retail store. Another research also stated a high importance for attractive sensory packaging (Krishna, Cian, & Aydinoglu, 2017).

The importance of an original product/concept

In relation to an original product/ concept, the average answer of 4,24 and the standard deviation of 0,74 show a uniform result that originality in either the product or concept of the online chocolate business is important for the recipients. If the chocolate product would be ordinary or normal, this will give no enticing feeling for a consumer to order chocolate online. Hence, if the chocolate product is normal, the consumer will have no feeling and would just as well purchase chocolate in a regular brick-and-mortar store.

To summarize the importance in relation to product offering, the highest scoring aspects were, the assortments, attractive packaging, and an original product/concept.

4.3 What do consumers expect in terms of service for online purchasing of chocolate?

In this section, the aspects in terms of service for online purchasing of chocolate are interpreted per aspect. It was discovered that in relation to product offering aspects, online service aspects in terms of online chocolate business scored higher. As mentioned in the introduction, an executed study in terms of successful E-commerce, concluded that a high-quality online service is key to become a successful online business (Paolo, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019). The study suggests that several factors positively change/affect the quality E-commerce. The most important factors are website design, customer service, security/privacy, and fulfilment (Paolo, Oliveira, & Farisa, 2019). The combination of these lead to a high-quality E-service. Therefore, these aspects have been tested on the directory for Chocoladebezorgd, to test if these aspects really are as important as the study proclaims. As all the aspects had an average score of over 4 on a 5 points scale, it can be interpreted that for at least, these aspects matter a lot for the recipients of the directory. The various aspects are explained separately below.

User-friendly website

Results indicate that a user-friendly website is highly important for an online business to be successful. It can therefore be interpreted that when a website is not pleasant for a consumer to order chocolate, a successful online business is not apt to be successful. The average answer and the reflected result for this aspect also indicates that this aspect is one of the most important aspects in terms of online service.

Easy and safe transaction

This aspect was ranked as the highest compared to all the different and separated aspects from this survey. It indicates that an unreliable or a bad payment experience can result in negative customer experiences that are critical for a business to avoid. It can be interpreted that an easy and safe transaction is s critical aspect to gain and hold a customer's trust in the business. In the introduction it was stated that the perceived risk to buy online is higher compared to buying at a brick-and-mortar store (Liao, Hu, Chung, & Huang, 2021). It is therefore indicated that because consumers find the risk higher to buy online an easy and safe transaction is of high importance when ordering online.

Customer support

The results in terms of customer support show that it has not been regarded as the key aspect in terms of online service, but it can still be seen as a highly important aspect for successful E-commerce. It can be interpreted that without a proper working customer service to answer questions and solve complaints/problems, that customer develop bad experiences with a business and would therefore not return for a next order.

The importance for an attractive web design

The results for this factor, indicate that importance for a web-design is highly importance for successful online service for online chocolate sales. it shows that an unattractive/old-looking website will push customers away and will not actually go through with a potential order.

The importance of safe and secure privacy protection

The results for this aspect, also indicate that this is also a key factor for successful E-Commerce, as this aspect was also among the top-three aspects that scored the highest om online service aspects. It indicates that customers also need to receive the trust from the online business to make and order.

4.4 How can a company motivate customers to buy chocolate online?

The importance of loyalty to the online chocolate business once the order of the chocolate exceeds the expectations

The three elements that were considered the highest from the question ''Pick three aspects from this survey that you find the most important to come back for a future order'' produced a big contradiction in relation to the previous questions. All the results from these questions show that consumers found the online aspects more important in relation to product offering aspects. However, the online aspects in the last question proved that for consumers to come back, the product offering were discovered to be much more important. As the top three aspects were the assortment, taste and originality of the product or concept. However, Table 19 shows that the most important aspects that would make a consumer come back for future orders were all chocolate product offering aspects. The recipients found that the assortment (79,4%), a high quality of taste (71%) and an original chocolate product/concept (51,6%). The most important online aspect that was chosen are: user-friendly website (23,3%), safe and easy payment process (21,8%).

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The sub-questions will first be answered separately and will build up to answer the main research question: **What are the critical success factors to further develop the online sales of chocolate?** It is believed that based on the literature studies and the outcomes of the survey, that these conclusions and recommendation give clear and helpful instructions for an online chocolate business (to be).

The two aspects that were most important in relation to product offering were the available online assortment, and the originality of the chocolate product/concept. These are the key factors in terms of product offering to be(come) successful for the online chocolate businesses. Other important aspects are having Fair Trade chocolate and having an attractive packaging. The other aspects that were taking into consideration were less important but can still be used to expand a business' target group and level of satisfactions of its (future) customers (for instance selling vegan chocolate for a specific target group).

The three most-important aspects in relation to online purchasing service of chocolate were: 1, an easy and safe transaction process; 2, a user-friendly website; and 3, a safe and secure privacy protection on the website. Despite that these three aspects are the ''key'' factors to be(come) a successful online chocolate business, it can also be concluded that all the other aspects that were mentioned throughout the survey are also highly important for an online chocolate business as all the scores for these questions all scored high.

It was discovered that loyalty for customers would be rather high when an online chocolate business can manage to exceed a customer's expectations. These results show that on a scale from 1-5, the average answer was 4,62. It proves that customers are willing to come back when the ordering and consuming of the chocolate exceeds the expectations. Furthermore, the three most important aspects to buy chocolate multiple times at a company were the assortment, the quality of the taste and the originality of the chocolate.

To conclude the following aspects are the critical success factors for an online chocolate business to be(come) successful. In terms of product offering, the business would need an extensive assortment with a high quality of taste. If there is nothing special or different about the product or the concept, the customer would have no or a lack of an experience and will not buy at the company again.

In terms of online service, the critical success factors are that the business would need a user-friendly website, with an easy and safe transaction and a safe and secured privacy protection policy for the customer. However, these are the critical online service aspects, they are not the most important factors for a customer to come back in the future.

Therefore, the most critical key factors, remain the available assortment, the high quality of taste and the originality of the product and the concept.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the results of the research, there are multiple recommendations which will help the online chocolate business to become and remain successful. As mentioned in the conclusion the key factors are the high quality of taste, the originality of the product/concept and the available online assortment. Therefore, the following recommendations are going to be made.

The first recommendations are that the available online assortment needs to be of a high quality. It was also found from the survey that most of the recipients were comfortable with a high variety in the assortment and that the flavours must be a combination of new exciting/unknown flavours and traditional popular flavours.

The second recommendation is to make sure that all the online aspects that were discussed and analysed during this research are perfectly set-up. Based on the results from the survey, it shows that all the online factors were uniformly branded as ''important'' or ''very important. Although three key aspects were identified as key factors in relation to online purchasing for online chocolate, it can be stated that all these factors are highly important to implement in a business's online strategy.

The third recommendation is to do an extensive market research on the existing competition in the online chocolate market. This can be used to see whether a chocolate product/concept in fact is unique and different to the competition. On this way an online chocolate entrepreneur to-be can check where the business can become more unique or to find out a concept or product is not as unique as at first anticipated. This information can also thus be used if a concept or a product needs a different approach to become different from the competition.

The fourth recommendation is to also use all the other aspects that were analysed and used in the survey to become successful as an online chocolate business. As mentioned, the critical factors are explained, but this does not mean that all the other aspects are not appreciated by the potential target group. Some results that have indicated to have little importance in relation to online purchasing of chocolate are somewhat contradicted by literary research to have significance. For example, country of origin was considered not important among the recipients, but studies show somewhat contradictive evidence. Studies showed that willingness to pay for increases when this is illustrated on a product (Silva, Bioto, Efraim, & Castilho, 2017), (Lucie, 2008).

These recommendations will help a starting online chocolate business to become successful and to give a clear insight to know which factors are key to become successful. This can also be helpful for already existing online chocolate businesses to give a clear consumers insight to find out what really matters to the consumer of today and tomorrow.

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Key factors for the online sales of chocolate

This survey will be about which aspects you find important when you purchase chocolate online. The survey will consist out of four sections: personal questions, questions about which aspects you find important when you order chocolate, questions about which aspects of the product/business you find important and at last which three subjects from the survey you find the most important

Filling in this survey will take 5-10 minutes of your time.

What is your gender?

◯ Male

◯ Female

◯ Prefer not to say

1. What is your age?

◯ <25

◯ 25-40

◯ 41-56

◯ 57-75

◯ >76

2. How important do you find the available assortment when you purchase chocolate online?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

3. Do you prefer a high or a low assortment when you purchase chocolate online?

◯ High assortment

◯ Low assortment

◯ I have no preferation

4.   How important do you find Fair Trade chocolate?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

5.   How important do you find it to know where chocolate comes from?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

6.   How important do you find that the online assortment contains of vegan chocolate?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

7.   Which organoleptic aspects do you find the most important when you consume chocolate?

☐ Good taste
☐ A beautiful appearance
☐ A pleasant smell
☐ A nice bite/crunch
☐ A pleasant structure

8.   How important do you find the attractiveness of the packaging when you purchase chocolate online?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

9. How important do you find originality in the product/ concept of the business when you purchase chocolate online?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

10. How important do you find a user-friendly website?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

11. How important do you find an easy and safe transaction process when you order chocolate?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

12. How important do you find a good (online) customer service when you purchase chocolate online?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very important

13. What is your favourite method of communication with a customer service?

14. How important do you find an attractive web design if you were to order chocolate online?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Very important

15. How important do you find privacy protection when you order chocolate online?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Very important

16. How important do you find it to stay loyal to an online chocolate business once the chocolate has exceeded your expectations?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not important at all	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Very important

17. Which three aspects that were mentioned in this survey, do you find the most important to return to a business to order chocolate online again?

- [ ] Assortment
- [ ] High quality of taste
- [ ] Chocolate must be Fair Trade
- [ ] Country of origin
- [ ] Availability of vegan chocolate
- [ ] Attractiveness of packaging
- [ ] Original chocolate product/concept
- [ ] User-friendly website
- [ ] Safe and secure transaction
- [ ] Good available customer service
- [ ] Attractive web design
- [ ] Loyalty to the product/concept of the online business

Sleutelfactoren voor de online verkoop van chocolade

Deze enquête gaat over welke aspecten jij belangrijk vindt bij het online bestellen van chocolade. De vragenlijst bestaat uit vier delen: persoonlijke vragen, vragen over welke aspecten jij belangrijk vindt bij het online bestellen van chocolade, vragen over welke aspecten van het product/bedrijf jij belangrijk vindt, en tot slot welke drie onderwerpen uit de vragenlijst jij het meest belangrijk vindt

Deze enquête zal ongeveer 5-10 minuten van je tijd in beslag gaan nemen.

1. Wat is jouw geslacht?

   Vink alle toepasselijke opties aan.

   ☐ Man
   ☐ Vrouw
   ☐ Dat zeg ik liever niet

2. Wat is jouw leeftijd?

   Markeer slechts één ovaal.

   ◯ <25
   ◯ 25-40
   ◯ 41-56
   ◯ 57-75
   ◯ >76

3. Hoe belangrijk vind jij het beschikbare assortiment als je chocolade online koopt?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Heel belangrijk

4. Heb je graag veel of weinig keuze wanneer je chocolade online koopt.

   ◯ Veel
   ◯ Weinig
   ◯ Maakt niet uit

5.   Hoe belangrijk vind jij dat chocolade fair trade is?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Heel belangrijk

6.   Hoe belangrijk vind jij het om te weten waar chocolade vandaan komt?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

7.   Hoe belangrijk vind jij dat het online assortiment vegan chocolade bevat?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

8.   Welke zintuigelijke kenmerken van chocolade vind jij het meest belangrijk?

☐ Lekkere smaak
☐ Mooi uiterlijk
☐ Lekkere geur
☐ Lekker bite/crunch
☐ Fijne structuur

9.   Hoe belangrijk vind jij de aantrekkelijkheid van de verpakking als je chocolade koopt?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

10. Hoe belangrijk vind jij originaliteit in het product/ concept van het bedrijf als je online chocolade koopt?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

11. Hoe belangrijk vind jij het dat de website gebruikersvriendelijk is?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belanrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

12. Hoe belangrijk vind jij het dat het betalingsproces makkelijk en veilig verloopt?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

13. Hoe belangrijk vind jij een goede (online) klantenservice als je online chocolade koopt?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

14. Op welke manier heb jij het liefst contact met een klantenservice?

◯ Telefonisch

◯ E-Mail

◯ Chat

◯ WhatsApp

◯ Social Media

15. Hoe belangrijk vind jij een aantrekkelijk webdesign als je online chocolade zou kopen?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

16. Hoe belangrijk vind jij privacybescherming als je online chocolade bestelt?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

17. Hoe belangrijk vind jij het om trouw te blijven aan het online chocoladebedrijf als de chocolade jouw verwachtingen overtreft?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Helemaal niet belangrijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Erg belangrijk

18. Welke drie aspecten vind jij het belangrijkst om bij een bedrijf terug te keren om nogmaals chocolade online aan te schaffen?

- ☐ Assortiment
- ☐ Chocolade moet Fair trade zijn
- ☐ Land van herkomst
- ☐ Beschikbaarheid van vegan chocolade
- ☐ Aantrekkelijkheid verpakking
- ☐ Origineel chocolade product/concept
- ☐ Gebruikersvriendelijke website
- ☐ Veilig en makkelijk betalingsproces
- ☐ Goede beschikbare klantenservice
- ☐ Aantrekkelijk webdesign
- ☐ Loyaliteit aan product
- ☐ Hoge smaakkwaliteit