Confectionery trends 2026: Why sweets are getting a better for you rebrand

By Alice Leader and Rob Brown | 9 July 2026

How are confectioners responding to HFSS rules? And which trends are driving change in sweets?

Plant power, fibre, wellness... These are just some of the terms candy brands are adding to packs to lure health-conscious consumers.

The strategy appears to be working: sugar confectionery's take-home value is up 1.7% year on year to £1.2bn on volumes up 2.8% [Worldpanel by Numerator 52 w/e 19 April 2026] — a strong result given regular sweets can no longer be advertised online or on TV pre-watershed under the new junk food ad ban.

HFSS laws have forced confectionery brands to find "new ways to remain visible and relevant", notes Rebecca Jamison, consumer insight director at Worldpanel.

One strategy involves leaning into taste while leveraging nutrition as a secondary purchase driver, explains Amy Stobie, commercial director and co-founder at marketing agency AgencyUK.

Increasingly, brands are using "cues like reduced sugar, real fruit juice and natural flavours as reassurance signals rather than the core proposition", she adds. "That distinction matters because consumers may want permission to indulge differently, but they don't necessarily want sweets to behave like health food."

So, how are confectioners responding to HFSS rules? How are challengers leveraging wellness cues to win share? And which other trends are driving change in sweets?

Sector	Value Sales (£m)	Value Sales Chg (£m)	Value Sales Chg (%)	Volume Sales (million packs)	Volume Sales Chg (m packs)	Volume Sales Chg (%)

Total market	1223.6	20.9	1.7%	1011.1	28.0	2.8%
Fruit flavours	770.9	19.1	2.5%	615.1	28.4	4.8%
Candy	187.9	-6.4	-3.3%	187.4	-6.2	-3.2%
Mints	174.1	8.2	5.0%	140.9	6.0	4.4%
Toffees	63.5	2.5	4.0%	48.5	0.6	1.3%
Liquorice Assorts	27.1	-2.4	-8.2%	19.1	-0.8	-4.0%

Source: Worldpanel by Numerator, 52 w/e 19 April 2026

HFSS ad ban reshapes brands' marketing efforts

Confectionery brands entered a new world on 5 January, when the government's long-awaited junk food advertising ban finally came into force.

The clampdown stops so-called less healthy foods – a subset of 13 HFSS product categories – from being advertised on TV before 9pm or online at any time. Non-compliant companies face fines of up to 5% of annual turnover for their combined HFSS brands, or £250,000, whichever is highest.

Linear TV ads for confectionery and snacks crashed 61% year on year between the start of voluntary compliance in October 2025 and the ban becoming law in January 2026, according to Ebiquity. Many brands have reallocated budgets elsewhere; those still airing pre-9pm ads have leaned on non product-focused creative or HFSS-compliant ranges, such as Haribo's lower-sugar Fruitilicious.

Did You Know...

5%

That's the percentage of annual turnover candy brands could be fined if they break the online ad ban.

Source: Department of Health & Social Care, June 2025.

"Brands with portfolio flexibility and strong brand assets are finding ways to protect reach and efficiency..." says Shane O'Neill, UK director at Ebiquity.

Restrictions have also "completely changed" how challenger brands approach digital marketing, says Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida & Bebeto UK.

Prior to the ban, paid digital advertising was "one of the most effective channels" available to brands, offering "very precise targeting and clear measurement of return on investment," he explains.

Under the new law, Bebeto can't pay influencers to promote its HFSS sweets. "Rather than relying on paid digital activity, we've shifted more investment into PR, earned media and retailer-led activity," Hulme says — pointing to its Easter 'Eggflation' campaign, which offered shoppers a free 'Eggflation Relief' sweet pack top-up at its flagship Wimbledon store.

"It gave us an opportunity to position sugar confectionery as an affordable alternative to Easter eggs," he adds, noting the campaign drove "a much wider national reach and emotional connection" with consumers.

Share of sweets sales on deal

- **Not on deal: 77.0%**
- **On deal: 23.0%**

Source: Worldpanel by Numerator, 52 w/e 19 April 2026

Promotional deal mechanics

- **Temporary price reduction: 99.1%**
- **Volume deals: 0.9%**

Source: Worldpanel by Numerator, 52 w/e 19 April 2026

Amid this new ad **environment**, Amy Stobie, commercial director and co-founder at **marketing agency AgencyUK**, highlights the growing importance of retail media. "The restrictions do not remove consumer demand for treats, but they do change how brands stay culturally and commercially visible," she says. "In a category driven heavily by impulse, sponsored listings, retailer platforms and in-store media all become more valuable."

Other channels including OOH, audio, **CRM**, websites and **organic** social are benefiting from increased focus. Owned channels, in particular, are becoming "more strategically valuable" as brands seek to "maintain direct consumer relationships", Stobie adds.

Retailer over/undertrade

- **M&S** (-0.6%) *(125.0)*
- **Co-op** (+13.4%) *(118.4)*
- **Aldi** (-5.3%) *(98.9)*
- **Lidl** (+3.7%) *(94.1)*
- **Morrisons** (+3.2%) *(87.3)*
- **Asda** (-7.8%) *(83.2)*
- **Tesco** (+4.3%) *(76.9)*
- **Sainsbury's** (+6.5%) *(75.0)*
- **Waitrose** (+10.2%) *(47.5)*

Source: Worldpanel by Numerator, 52 w/e 19 April 2026

Cracking the HFSS code on taste

HFSS legislation is still hitting visibility and in-store execution for sweets, according to Worldpanel, forcing brands to find new ways to "remain visible and relevant to shoppers".

Take Naturally: alongside its April rebrand to Super Naturally, it launched Fruit & Fibre Gummies, which took years to develop while still delivering the "fun, taste and convenience consumers expect from confectionery", says founder Dean Dempsey.

Skittles Flavour Flip

Launch date: June 2026

Manufacturer: Mars Wrigley

Skittles has jumped on the multi-sensory bandwagon with Flavour Flip. The candies offer two-in-one flavours, including **lemon & raspberry** and **pomegranate & apple**.

It aims to attract younger adults by "flipping ordinary moments into a share-worthy experience with twice the flavour in every chew", says Emily Owen, Mars Wrigley senior brand manager, and comes in pouch (RSP: £1.10/136g) and treat bag (RSP: £1/109g) formats.

"One of the biggest learnings has been that health-conscious shoppers aren't looking for products that feel like a compromise," he adds. "We are focusing our marketing on the idea of better-for-you sweets rather than positioning the products as solely functional nutrition."

On-pack claims of 'no added sugar', 'made with fruit juice' and 'high in fibre' are resonating with shoppers, Dempsey says – but not at the cost of taste. "Parents in particular are looking for products that offer a more permissible treat occasion without sacrificing taste."

The test for any HFSS-compliant confectionery product is whether it can convince shoppers they're not giving something up, says Bebeto owner Kervan Gida UK, which last month launched Blue Bursts and Mega Cubes – billed as the category's first centre-filled non-HFSS gummies.

"One of the biggest misconceptions in confectionery is that the majority of consumers are actively looking for reduced sugar," says Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida & Bebeto UK. "If the experience is there, the nutritional credentials become an added benefit rather than the main selling point."

Capri Sun Soft Chews

Launch date: July 2026

Manufacturer: Bip Candy & Toys

These official Capri Sun candies (rsp: £2.50/147g) come in packs resembling the juice brand's familiar pouches, stocked in Spar, So Sweet and JW Filshill, and rolling into Asda Express next month.

It comprises Fruit Mix (Cherry, Orange and Multifruit) and Monster Alarm (Sour Apple, Sour Cherry and Sour Berry) – a "great example of nostalgia meeting innovation", says Bip.

Amy Stobie, commercial director and co-founder at marketing agency AgencyUK, agrees. "Most brands avoid leaning too heavily on restriction or sacrifice because confectionery is still fundamentally an emotional category," she says.

"That distinction matters because consumers may increasingly want permission to indulge differently, but they do not necessarily want sweets to behave like health food."

To that end, Perfetti Van Melle highlights its HFSS-compliant Smint ranges. "It's driving that on-the-go moment where you can reset your day through a nice, punchy moment that's guilt-free and great quality," says Derek Baker, trade marketing controller.

Top 10 sweets brands

Brand	Value Sales £m	Value Sales chg (£m)	Value Sales chg (%)	Volume Sales kgs (million)	Volume Sales chg (million kgs)	Volume Sales chg (%)
Haribo Gums & Jellies	292.3	-2.3	-0.8%	37.9	1.0	2.8%
Maynards Bassetts	107.4	-3.6	-3.3%	11.6	0.1	0.9%
Rowntrees	100.6	4.9	5.1%	10.3	1.1	11.6%
Drumstick	65.6	-4.1	-5.9%	8.1	-0.1	-0.8%
Skittles	63.4	-4.0	-5.9%	7.4	0.8	11.4%
Maoam	54.4	1.3	2.5%	6.7	0.6	9.8%
Sour Patch Kids	49.5	8.5	20.7%	4.5	1.0	27.9%
Mentos	39.3	2.5	6.7%	2.9	0.2	7.2%
Trebor	37.0	-2.9	-7.2%	2.4	-0.3	-10.9%
Nerds	29.0	6.7	30.3%	1.4	0.4	39.5%

Source: NIQ 52 w/e 18 April 2026 — The Grocer

Top 5 gum brands

Brand	Value Sales £m	Value Sales chg (£m)	Value Sales chg (%)	Volume Sales kgs (million)	Volume Sales chg (million kgs)	Volume Sales chg (%)
Extra	290.1	1.0	0.4%	6.5	-0.1	-0.8%
Airwaves	37.9	1.6	4.5%	0.8	0.0	0.5%
Mentos	12.0	-0.2	-1.9%	0.4	0.0	1.3%
Milliways	1.3	0.3	27.3%	0.0	0.0	15.5%
Pur	0.8	0.0	2.4%	0.0	0.0	7.2%

Chewing gum steps into wellness

Chewing gum is for more than fresh breath – it's also part of the wellness trend. "Today's self-treating consumer wants the sensory satisfaction and mood-lifting benefits confectionery can provide, but they're unwilling to compromise their health ambitions to get it," says Matt Boulter, UK&I sales director at Mars Wrigley.

"Chewing gum is particularly well positioned within this trend because, unlike many confectionery products, the category is predominantly sugar-free."

To tap demand, Mars Wrigley added Extra Plus in April, positioned as "a premium gum range with new ingredients, designed to support modern lifestyles and everyday intentions". It comes in three variants: Chill (watermelon with vitamin B3), Hydro (peppermint with a mouth-refreshing "quadro blend") and Deep Clean (spearmint with a stain-reducing "mint scrub").

Amy Stobie, commercial director and co-founder at marketing agency AgencyUK, believes chewing gum "has greater permission to move into wellbeing territory because it already carries associations with freshness, oral care and routine behaviour".

"Brands like Extra are repositioning gum as part of everyday self-care routines," she adds. "This positioning is particularly relevant to younger millennials and Gen Z consumers."

Challengers offer functional benefits

Other brands also offer functional benefits. Take Life Loop, which secured listings in Tesco in May for its blister pack range.

The challenger's caffeinated, vitamin-enhanced gums are positioned as sugar-free alternatives to energy drinks and supplements, with variants including Wellness (magnesium and B vitamins) and Beauty (biotin, zinc, vitamin C and hyaluronic acid).

Another example is Blockhead, revived in summer 2024 after Patchwork Brands Group acquired the assets and IP of Blockhead HQ Ltd, and now selling sugar-free Energy Gum Extra Strength with 100mg caffeine per piece.

Such innovations make sense, Stobie suggests. "Claims linked to energy, focus, calm and oral health align strongly with Gen Z and millennial interests in functional food and preventative wellness," she says. "Functional positioning feels more credible in gum than confectionery because the category already occupies a practical role in consumers' lives."

Why former gum bosses are betting big bucks on plastic-free innovation

Most chewing gum brands avoid discussing the plastic polyvinyl acetate in their products – but it's clearly a concern for former bosses of some leading gum brands.

In January, an investment group including Mehmet Yuksek, former North American CEO of Perfetti Van Melle, and Leon Amran, former owner of Intergum, stumped up $3m (£2.2m) to fund the US expansion of UK plastic-free gum brand Milliways.

"Consumer demands are changing faster than ever," said Tom Raviv, founder of Milliways, at the time. "The desire to live healthier lives is now at the top of everyone's agenda."

Momentum is growing in the UK, where Milliways is now the fourth-biggest chewing gum brand behind Mars Wrigley's Extra and Airwaves and PVM's Mentos, with value sales up 27.3% to £1.3m on volumes up 15.5% [NIQ 52 w/e 18 April 2026].

Its success comes after a Queen's University Belfast study published in April 2025 in the Journal of Hazardous Materials found more than a quarter of a million microplastics were in the saliva of a test subject after just one hour of chewing gum.

"Shockingly, the traces of micro and nanoplastics were found in all the samples, which gives the indication that there might not be any safe chewing duration," said Udit Pant, a PhD fellow at Queen's.

Halal reshapes the candy aisle

As shoppers seek confectionery that reflects their lifestyle, halal signposting is coming under the spotlight – which is why marking products clearly as halal is critical for Surya Foods. “It takes away the guesswork,” says group CEO Harry Dulai, of its new halal gummies range, Candy Crescent.

“For many Muslim families, buying gummy sweets isn't as simple as picking a pack off the shelf. They often have to spend time scouring ingredients lists, because a lot of popular brands contain pork-derived gelatine,” Dulai explains.

“Halal-certified products give parents confidence and mean Muslim children can enjoy the same treats as their friends, helping to foster a sense of inclusion.”

For others, the halal claim is more subtle. Shades, for example, “leads with vegan”, says brand chief Kirstin Barney. “We don't really market it as overtly halal on pack. Our halal certification sits on back of pack as a guarantee rather than a headline.”

The certification is key to avoiding confusion between vegan and halal, she adds. “People assume vegan automatically means halal, but it doesn't. Plenty of products use colours or flavourings carried in alcohol, so vegan alone isn't enough. Getting certified means a halal consumer can pick up any pack of Shades and know it's safe to eat without having to check.”

Did You Know...

£40bn

That's the annual value of the halal food market in the UK

Source: Al-Arab in UK, April 2026

That includes the fast-growing Gen Z audience – meaning a major opportunity for halal confectionery. “These are confident young consumers who are vocal about their halal lifestyle and want brands that include them by default rather than treating them as a side range,” Barney says.

“The UK halal food market is now worth around £40bn a year, but mainstream confectionery has barely served it. A halal and vegan sweet that sits on the main fixture rather than in a specialist aisle gets to reach that shopper and everyone else at the same time.”

Increasingly, suppliers are formulating their sweets without gelatine to cater to vegetarian and Muslim shoppers.

Take Wild Thingz, which launched in 2024. Its fruity gummies are plant-based

Confectioner Fini is also focused on making sweets more inclusive. It offers more than 20 halal-certified products, and believes they should be part of the retailers' core ranges, rather than kept in a separate aisle.

"Shoppers are looking for products they can buy with confidence without compromising on taste, quality or enjoyment," says Steven Greaves, UK&I MD at Fini.

"This means retailers can cater to halal-conscious shoppers without needing to create a separate or overly complex range, instead building inclusivity into the core confectionery fixture."

On-pack halal messaging is tapping a growth opportunity that goes beyond the Muslim community. The Bebeto brand, for instance, has seen halal products attract a broader audience, particularly as consumers become more interested in transparency around ingredients and production standards.

"For many years, halal confectionery was treated as a niche. That's no longer the case," says Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida & Bebeto UK. "It's becoming a mainstream consideration for retailers because the consumer demand is there and continues to grow."

'Shades was built for everyone. Being halal-certified was a choice'

When YouTuber Niko Omilana launched candy brand Shades in May 2025, he set his sights high, with a video on his channel telling the story of 12-year-old Niko being denied sweets by a mean bear named Harry Bowe (geddit?) who mocked his trademark sunglasses.

"It was at this moment I knew my life's mission: to take down this bear named Harry Bowe," Omilana told his 5.4 million subscribers. "It was to beat him at his own game and make a sweet of my own."

Enter Shades, a brand of vegan and halal-certified gummies. Straight Up Strawberry, Tropical Blast and The Originals rolled into Sainsbury's, Co-op, WH Smith Travel and Booker a week after Omilana's challenge to Haribo went live.

Shades is backed by Tuckshop London, an investment fund founded by Jamie Laing and Ed Williams, co-founders of Candy Kittens, along with Bastian Fassin, managing shareholder at Katjes.

Nine months in, Shades had hit value sales of £15.8m, putting it at the top of the NIQ Million Club, an annual ranking of brands that have passed the £1m mark for the first time [52 w/e 21 February 2026].

Haribo isn't looking over its shoulder just yet. The market leader's value is more or less flat at £292.3m while volumes are up 2.8% [NIQ 52 w/e 18 April 2026].

Nevertheless, Shades is still growing fast – and has the advantage of catering to British Muslims, unlike Haribo's gummies, which contain pork gelatine.

"Shades was built as a brand for everyone, and being fully certified by Halal Europe was a deliberate choice so that no one gets left out at the sweet aisle," says Kirstin Barney, Shades brand chief. The UK halal food market is worth around £40bn annually, yet is "barely served" by mainstream confectionery, she adds.

Omilana's huge following is further cause for optimism. "The community Shades is built for is young and growing fast. Almost half of British Muslims are under 24, and that's exactly the Gen Z audience Shades speaks to," Barney says.

"These are confident young consumers who are vocal about their halal lifestyle and want brands that include them by default, rather than treating them as a side range."

In April, Shades won a listing with Tesco. Watch out, Harry Bowe!

Nostalgia gets a modern makeover

Shoppers' love for nostalgia is driving confectionery innovation. Take Candy Kittens, which last year put a "modern spin on traditional British sweet flavours" via an exclusive M&S tie-up, adding Rhubarb & Custard, Strawberries & Cream and Lemon Sherbet to its posh gummies.

More recently, Rowntree's unveiled a range of sweets inspired by its ice lollies (see below). "It was a natural extension," says Rachel Beaufoy, Nestlé Confectionery marketing manager. "Consumers have a deep emotional connection to both our iconic sweets and our fruity market-leading Rowntree's ice lollies, particularly around summer."

Did You Know…

1976

That's the year Swizzels launched Double Dip, containing orange and cherry sherbets and a candy stick

Source: Swizzels

For Swizzels, nostalgia has also shaped NPD as it sought to "reimagine our heritage flavours and products to provide consumers with a new twist on our classic creations". With 2026 marking 50 years of its "iconic" Double Dip sherbert, it this month launched Triple Dip Sour, tapping demand for sour flavours; core lines such as Drumstick Chews, Love Hearts and Refreshers also remain "strongly sought after".

"Nostalgic products are set to continue performing strongly, as these familiar flavours evoke fond and comforting childhood memories," says Clare Newton, Swizzels trade & shopper marketing manager.

"By creating new products that offer a fresh twist on well-loved favourites, we can not only meet shopper demand but also keep suppliers front of mind for customers."

Maynards & Sour Patch Kids

Launch date: July 2026

Manufacturer: Mondelez

Maynards Bassetts and Sour Patch Kids have gone exotic. The former brand's **Tropical Fruit Mix (rsp: £1.25/110g)** is an assortment of pineapple, mango, peach and passion fruit flavours in shapes such as turtle, parrot, seashell and starfish.

Sour Patch Kids Paradise Twist (rsp: £1.40/120g) comprises mango, watermelon, pineapple and 'tropical mix-up', while **Sour Patch Kids Peach (rsp: £1.40/120g)** is vegan and halal.

Bebeto agrees it's about balancing familiarity with novelty. "Nostalgia is one of the biggest trends in confectionery right now, but consumers don't just want products copied and pasted from the past," says Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida & Bebeto UK. "People want the emotional connection of something they recognise, but they still want to be surprised."

That's the approach Bebeto took with its centre-filled Soda Cans, launched in June last year. "Moving to a soda-can shape and adding a soft, juicy centre completely changes the eating experience," says Hulme. "It's familiar enough to feel nostalgic, but different enough to feel new."

For Perfetti Van Melle, nostalgia in confectionery isn't new. “It's always been there,” says trade marketing controller Derek Baker, pointing to PVM brands Fruittella and Chupa Chups, established in 1931 and 1958. “We've built this amazing heritage that drives an element of nostalgia and memory. But people still expect innovation and excitement.”

With that in mind, Chupa Chups teamed up with Stranger Things in September to launch two bags of lollies ahead of Halloween and the show's final series – one flipping the Chupa Chups logo on its head in a nod to The Upside Down.

“It was such a brilliant example of how you can take a well-established brand with a massive TV franchise and then amplify that through product innovation to reach new audiences and new consumers,” Baker says.

Is health a consideration when buying sweets?

- **Yes:** 27.7%
- **No:** 59.3%
- **I don't buy sweets:** 13.0%

Source: Vypr survey of 1,853-1,857 adults, June 2026 | The Grocer

Would you be more or less likely to buy sweets that are labelled as 'natural'?

- **More likely:** 43.5%
- **Less likely:** 12.0%
- **About the same:** 44.5%

Source: Vypr survey of 1,853-1,857 adults, June 2026 | The Grocer

Main purchase drivers for buying traditional sweets

- **Taste:** 35.6%
- **Nostalgia:** 14.1%
- **Comfort:** 12.6%

Source: Vypr survey of 1,853-1,857 adults, June 2026 | The Grocer

Global flavours cross borders

Social media is reshaping the confectionery market, propelling brands and flavours across borders. “Consumers are now discovering products and flavours from around the world in real time and want to try them for themselves," says Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida & Bebeto UK.

That's why retailers are increasingly mainstreaming international flavours – especially Korean and Japanese-style confectionery. "Korean culture has had a huge influence on Gen Z consumers, creating demand for products inspired by Korean and Japanese food trends," adds Hulme.

Did You Know...

51%

That's the year-on-year percentage increase of searches for "Korean style" products on Tesco.com

Source: Tesco, May 2026

Take Tesco. In partnership with World of Sweets, it recently entered Asian-inspired snacking with a Korean and Japanese range spanning crisps, confectionery, pouch drinks and mochi-style treats. It is designed to drive "newness, discovery and excitement in store", says Kathryn Hague, World of Sweets marketing director.

"Korean and Japanese-style snacks are rising quickly in the UK, driven by K-pop, J-pop, anime, K-dramas, social media and demand for bold, umami-rich flavours," she adds.

"Retailers are responding by giving Far Eastern treats more visibility, clearer range structure and dedicated space in store."

The wholesale channel is also tapping demand for Asian-inspired candies. Parfetts, which operates the Go Local symbol group, recently partnered with Fini to bring the brand's Mini Mochis Fruits and Mini Mochis Berries to independent retailers.

"Retailers are responding by making space for products that feel more adventurous, visually distinctive and texture-led, while still being easy for shoppers to understand and purchase," says Steven Greaves, UK&I MD at Fini.

Indian sweet treats supplier Haldiram's last month added Pistachio Modak Marzipan to its UK range for summer

Indian snack brand Haldiram's has also witnessed a growing appetite for "more complex, aromatic and culturally rooted flavours". "South Asian confectionery, such as mithai, chikki and ladoo, has used ingredients such as cardamom, rose, saffron and cashew for generations," says Rhea Agarwal, Haldiram's commercial director UK & EU.

"These aren't new flavour discoveries, they're established foundations. What's changed is that mainstream consumers are increasingly ready to engage with them."

As consumers broaden their palates, brands are looking for the next big thing. Bip Candy & Toy, the licensed sweets maker, expects that will involve a combination of "taste, play and global inspiration".

"Products like Gummi King Fries, Tacos, Sushi and Noodles show how familiar foods can be reimagined into fun, shareable sweets that stand out on shelf and social media," says Lee Fretwell, head of Bip Candy & Toy UK.

Tesco Asian snack range

Launch date: May 2026

Manufacturer: World of Sweets

Tesco is cashing in on demand for Asian-style snacks with a 12-strong Korean and Japanese range that includes confectionery.

With searches for Korean and Japanese products up 51% and 16% respectively across Tesco.com, the lineup includes Naemam Molang Heart Gummy (rsp: £1.30/50g), Yum'z Bites Super Sour Roll (rsp: £1.50/9g) and Sugarolly Cotton Candy Roll (rsp: £1.50/10g) in watermelon and strawberry flavours.

World of Sweets agrees novelty formats will continue to grow. "Products such as Chicken Legs, peelables and Italian Brain Rot-style confectionery show how the category is being influenced by viral culture, humour and social media," says Hague.

Film and entertainment will also influence format innovation, Hague adds. Pez, for instance, continues to use major licences from Minions, Toy Story, Spider-Man and Star Wars to keep "an iconic format relevant", she adds.

The wholesaler will launch a sweets range inspired by The Traitors TV show in September, aiming to "create theatre through game mechanics, surprise flavours and watch-party relevance" – including The Traitors Chews: Sweet or Sour?, mixing fruity 'faithful' chews with 'deceitfully sour' 'traitor' chews filled with sour sherbet.

"For retailers, the strongest opportunities will be products that bring together flavour, texture, visual impact and a clear shopper occasion," says Hague.

From September to February, promotional packs of Werther's will offer shoppers two-for-one entry to English Heritage sites, including Stonehenge

Werther's Original plays nostalgia card with English Heritage

Werther's Original has entered a "new era" – or so says owner Storck UK. The brand underwent a pack refresh in May 2025, seeking to inject "new energy" and make it relevant to a broader range of shoppers.

Grandpa, the kindly old character who flogged Werther's in its saccharine 1990s ads, is long gone – but the brand is still selling nostalgia, this time via an on-pack promotion with English Heritage.

From September 2025 to February 2026, promotional packs of Werther's will offer two-for-one entry to English Heritage sites, as well as the chance to win English Heritage memberships and cottage holidays by scanning on-pack QR codes.

"Werther's Original and English Heritage are two iconic heritage brands with connection at their core, making this a natural partnership for us," says Rebecca Robert, marketing director at Storck UK.

"Shoppers are increasingly looking for opportunities to spend more time outdoors connecting with family and friends."

The activity will be backed by ads via digital, billboard and AV channels, Robert adds.

"We're excited to offer shoppers added value by encouraging more people to connect with the past by exploring some of the UK's most loved heritage sites."

English Heritage maintains more than 400 historical sites across England, including Stonehenge, Hadrian's Wall and Dover Castle, and has more than 1.2 million members.

"Our values really chime together with Werther's Original, and by teaming up we know that together we can delight shoppers with the opportunity to enjoy fantastic days out, sharing experiences and making memories," says Ruth Blayze, income, growth & marketing director at English Heritage.

Grandpa would be proud.

Seasonal candy steps into the spotlight

Seasonal events always pose an opportunity for sugar confectionery – and Halloween remains the “standout occasion”, according to Phil Hulme, commercial director at Kervan Gida & Bebeto UK.

As such, the confectionery supplier, which owns Bebeto, is poised to expand its Foamies range with Boo Crew, dual coloured foam-textured sweets in Halloween shapes. “The opportunity is particularly strong because confectionery sits at the heart of the occasion rather than acting as an alternative gifting option,” Hulme adds.

At Haribo, Halloween is an important occasion in the “confectionery calendar”, but the brand has seen an increase in sales around Easter and Christmas, driven by seasonal exclusives such as Eggs Galore and Elf Surprises.

“Seasonal occasions continue to be important moments for the category, creating opportunities for consumers to come together and share treats with family and friends,” says Phil Murphy, chief marketing officer at Haribo UK&I.

Rowntree’s Lollies

Launch date: February 2026

Manufacturer: Nestlé

Rowntree’s is giving shoppers “a burst of summer all year round” with these ice lolly-inspired gummies.

The range (rsp: £1.50/130g) comprises Fruit Pastilles, Sour Watermelon and Mango Flavour Lollies, letting fans enjoy Rowntree’s ice lollies in a handy, ambient on-the-go format. “It’s all about giving people more of what they enjoy, vibrant flavours and real fruit juice,” says the brand.

Of course, Easter is a chocolate-heavy season. But as shoppers are being forced to bear the brunt of soaring cocoa prices, a growth opportunity for sweets has presented itself.

“Rising cocoa prices have undoubtedly created an opportunity for sugar confectionery,” says Hulme. “Consumers are noticing both price increases and shrinking pack sizes within chocolate.”

He points to research commissioned by Bebeto in March, which found 47% of consumers see candy as just as suitable an Easter treat as chocolate, and almost a third would consider replacing Easter eggs with alternative sweet treats altogether.

“This creates an opportunity for confectionery brands to offer shoppers something fun, shareable and affordable without losing the sense of occasion,” Hulme adds.

A gifting opportunity

There's also the gifting element – another area dominated by chocolate but where confectionery brands are building further opportunity, particularly in posh products.

> **While Halloween remains an important occasion on the confectionery calendar, brands are building further opportunities around the likes of Easter and Christmas**

"While chocolate remains a seasonal staple, premium sugar confectionery brands are successfully capturing shopper attention by positioning themselves as distinct, premium gifting alternatives," Isobella Rae, Walker's Nonsuch brand marketing manager, says.

"For Valentine's Day and Easter, our premium gift packs and unique formats offer a genuine sense of luxury, allowing retailers to capture incremental spend."

Beyond the major calendar occasions, there's a growing opportunity in everyday social moments – for Fini, most notably the big night in. "As shoppers look for affordable, accessible treats to enjoy at home, this shift is increasing demand for products that are easy to share and feel engaging," says Steven Greaves, UK&I MD at Fini.

"These more planned occasions create a clear opportunity for trade-up. By offering a mix of single-serve and larger, resealable packs, retailers can cater to both individual and group consumption."

Mondelez echoes Greaves' sentiment. "Shoppers are increasingly looking to enjoy evenings at home as a more cost-effective way to spend time with family and loved ones," says Susan Nash, the supplier's trade communications manager.