



GUSHERS PRODUCT PLAN

Sefakor Esiape, Devin Driskill, Emilee Anselmo, Jamie Lewis & Carson Bond

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this project was to develop a differentiation strategy using product and brand innovation to position Fruit Gushers as a competitive gummy candy . For decades, Gushers have been a staple of childhood foods and have provided consumers of all ages with an immersive fruit snack experience.

Today, the snack food market is changing and the gummy candy is booming as a product,, becoming a key part of many people's daily routine. This is an opportunity for Gushers to introduce its product to bigger market. The purpose was to decide what Gushers can make to put themselves in the best position to thrive in a booming, yet competitive market

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPACT

In response to the finding of our research, we propose 5 recommendations that should put Gushers in a better position to thrive in a new market:

- Collaborate with social media influencers
- Reach Gen Z through TikTok and Instagram Ads
- Adjust packaging for flavor clarity and a more appealing logo
- Draw attention to the brand by introducing seasonal flavors
- Advertise and place Gushers on College campuses

While these changes may not be drastic or directly related to the product itself, they help put the brand at the forefront of the consumer's mind. Gushers will be able to stand tall in the candy aisle moving forward.

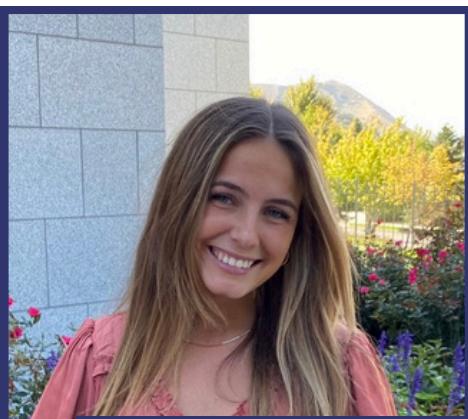
CONCLUSIONS FROM RESEARCH

Extensive research was conducted on a variety of different product ideas, including flavor and texture changes. Responses indicated that Gushers are a beloved candy that doesn't need any of these changes to the product itself. Instead of the product being different, the goal should be to provoke engagement of young adults with the brand

NOTABLE DATA

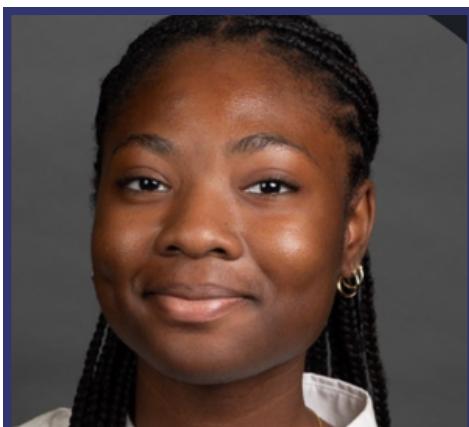
- In interviews comparing Super Sour Gushers with regular Gushers, **61% of respondents preferred Sour**. However, **almost no respondents had heard of Super Sour Gushers**. This indicates an issue with exposure to the brand and it's various products.
- Three different product changes were pitched to consumers, yet **no new product made even half of consumers more likely to purchase**. This shifted our focus from product to promotion.

TEAM MEMBERS



JAMIE LEWIS

Team Leader



SEFAKOR ESIAPE

Deliverables Manager



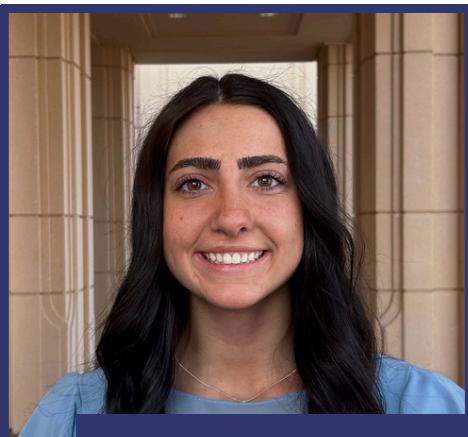
CARSON BOND

Project Manager



DEVIN DRISKILL

Report Manager



EMILEE ANSELMO

Sponsor Liaison



KEVIN WRIGHT

Sponsor

SITUATION & PROBLEM

Background

General Mills is a global food company known for popular brands like Cheerios and Häagen-Dazs. They focus on producing convenient, high-quality foods while emphasizing innovation and sustainability. Gushers, a fruit-flavored candy with a juicy, liquid-filled center, was introduced by Betty Crocker under General Mills in 1991.

Brand Goals

- **Fun & Playfulness:** Gushers positions itself as bold, exciting snack that encourages creativity and quirkiness.
- **Nostalgia and Brand Loyalty:** By tapping into nostalgia, Gushers stays relevant among Gen Z and Millennials who grew up enjoying the iconic snack in the '90s and 2000s, turning fond childhood memories into renewed brand loyalty.
- **Convenience and Snackability:** As a grab-and-go snack, Gushers promotes itself as an easy treat that fits into an active lifestyle.

Primary Audience:

Gen Z and Millennials (Teens & Young Adults, 13-25)



Secondary Audience:

Parents :

- As grocery decision-makers, parents may purchase Gushers for their children, associating the snack with their own childhood memories. It is a snack that is beloved by kids who are not doing their own grocery shopping yet.

Snack Enthusiasts & Gamers :

- Gushers also resonates with niche audiences like gaming communities, who often gravitate toward fun, unconventional snacks.

SITUATION

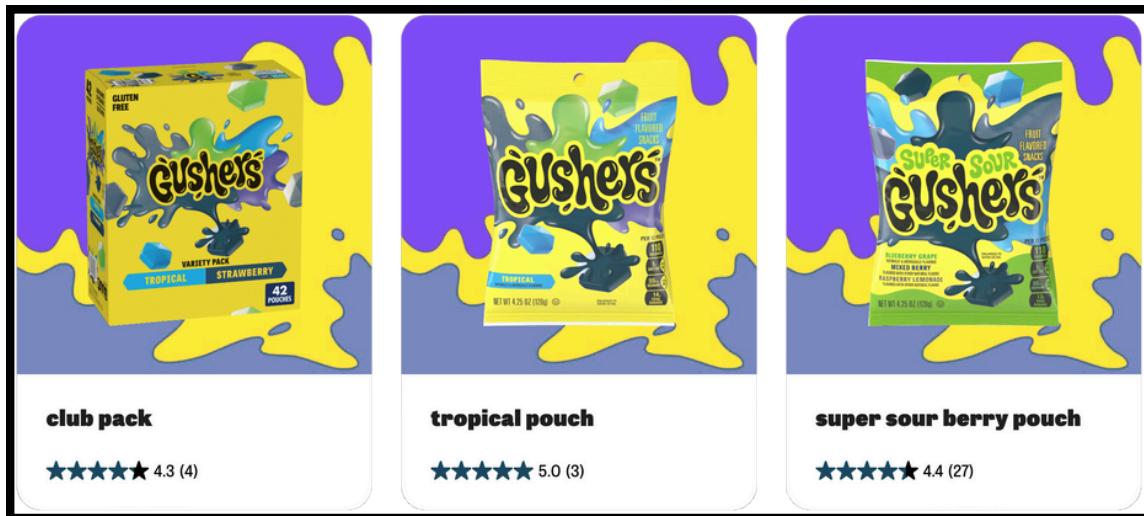
PRODUCTS

The image displays three Gushers product boxes against a background of colorful liquid splatters (purple, yellow, pink).
1. **tropical**: A yellow box containing 6 pouches. It features the word "TROPICAL" in blue on the front. The rating is 3.5 (37) stars.
2. **variety pack**: A yellow box containing 6 pouches. It features "VARIETY PACK" and "TROPICAL STRAWBERRY" on the front. The rating is 4.6 (459) stars.
3. **watermelon & sour apple**: A yellow box containing 6 pouches. It features "WATERMELON & SOUR APPLE" on the front. A small "NEW" badge is in the top right corner. The rating is 3.3 (10) stars.

The image displays three larger Gushers product boxes against a background of colorful liquid splatters (purple, yellow, pink).
1. **value pack**: A purple box containing 12 pouches. It features "VARIETY PACK" and "TROPICAL STRAWBERRY" on the front. The rating is 4.6 (445) stars.
2. **family pack**: A red box containing 20 pouches. It features "FAMILY PACK" and "VARIETY PACK" on the front. The rating is 4.6 (448) stars.
3. **watermelon & sour apple family pack**: A purple box containing 20 pouches. It features "FAMILY PACK" and "WATERMELON & SOUR APPLE" on the front. A small "NEW" badge is in the top right corner. The rating is 3.0 (2) stars.

SITUATION

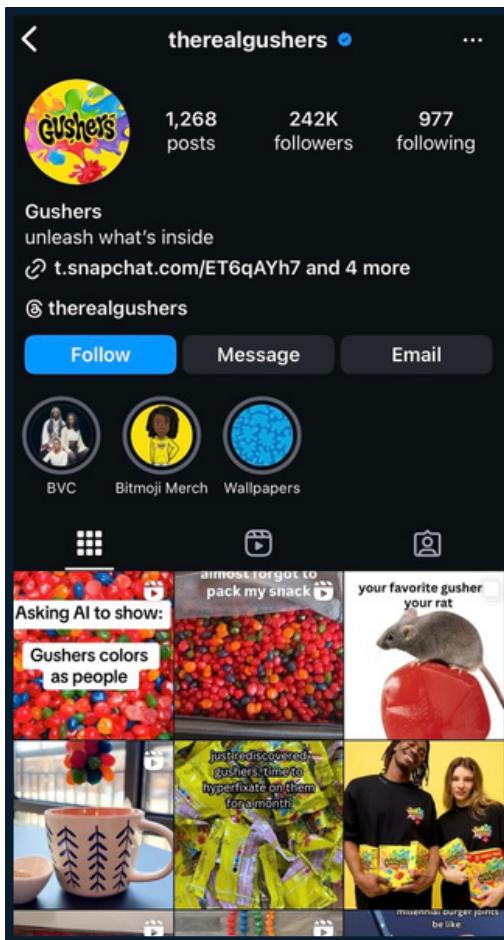
PRODUCTS



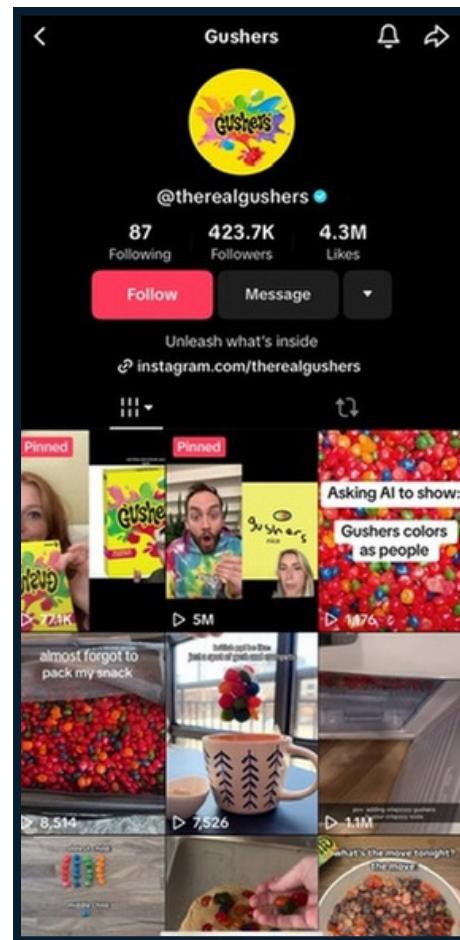
SITUATION

SOCIAL MEDIA

INSTAGRAM



TIKTOK



Gushers has a solid social media presence with lots of room to grow. The brand has leaned into TikTok and meme culture, using absurd and offbeat campaigns to engage Gen Z and encourage organic sharing. Compared to other candy brands, their social media following, engagement, and views are lacking.

SITUATION

COMPLICATIONS

PAIN POINTS?

UNCLEAR BRAND IDENTITY IN THE CANDY CATEGORY

Since their release, Gushers have been categorized as fruit snacks, rather than candy. However, their transition to the candy aisle has left them struggling to establish credibility as an actual gummy candy.

LOST RELEVANCE WITH GEN Z CONSUMERS

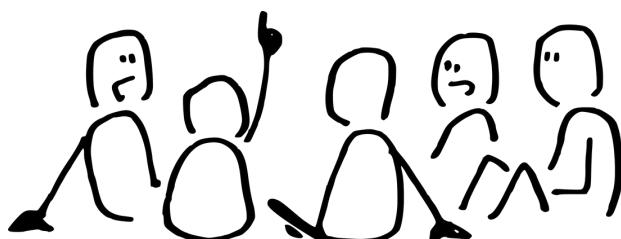
Children of the 1990s and 2000s grew up with Gushers as a beloved treat, but they now see them as a relic of the past rather than a go-to snack today. As a result, these generations are no longer driving sales for the brand.

SUCCESSFUL COMPETITORS

Gummy candy competitors like Nerds Gummy Clusters and Sour Patch Kids have become fan favorites, often outshining Gushers as the preferred choice among consumers. Gushers are not standing out to consumers.

LIMITED PRODUCT INNOVATION

While competitors frequently release new flavors and textures, Gushers has fewer innovations, making it harder to capture attention in a crowded snack industry.



THE PROBLEM: WHY DID GUSHERS RECRUIT US?



Gushers has yet to establish a significant presence in the candy market and amongst the Gen Z market. This project aims to propose a research-based strategy to not only help Gushers break into the candy market but also capture the Gen Z age group. This strategy will explore product innovations, marketing tactics, and brand positioning to identify new opportunities for growth. By leveraging these insights, Gushers can drive engagement, increase brand relevance, and ultimately boost sales within this key audience.

METHODS & PROCESSES



FOCUS GROUPS

To explore the candy preferences of Gen Z consumers, we conducted two focus groups with participants aged 20-23. Each focus group consisted of approximately six participants, with approximately three team members facilitating the discussion—one leading the discussion and two taking notes and observing participants.

Our approach was centered around the six thinking hats framework. The discussion was guided using the following steps:

- White Hat (Facts): We presented the candy options without bias. Answering any questions participants had.
- Red Hat (Emotions): Participants provided their initial gut reactions to the candy on a scale of 1-10, helping to gauge the consumer perceptions for each product.
- Yellow Hat (Positive Judgment): We explored what participants liked about each candy, highlighting strengths and appeal.
- Black Hat (Critical Judgment): Participants identified aspects they disliked or found lacking in the products.
- Green Hat (Creativity): We encouraged discussion on potential improvements, alternative uses, and ways to optimize the candy assortment.
- Blue Hat (Summary): Findings were summarized at the end of each group by watching recordings and consolidating key insights.

We also focused on understanding why participants selected or rejected specific candies, particularly investigating why Gushers was or wasn't chosen. Additionally, we examined initial reactions to the candy.

Through this qualitative research, we aimed to uncover underlying motivations and preferences among Gen Z consumers, providing actionable insights for product innovations and marketing strategies.

METHODS



PRIMARY & SECONDARY RESEARCH

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the market, we utilized an approach based on key aspects of the Harvard Business Framework. This focused on analyzing consumers, competition, company, and channel. Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning were also large factors in our analysis

This involved analyzing primary data from General Mills and gathering secondary research from industry sources such as Statista and market reports. Our analysis focused on the 4Cs framework—Company, Consumer, Competitor, and Channel;—while also integrating Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) principles to refine strategic insights.

Primary Research: Internal Company Data (Company & Consumer Analysis)
We leveraged General Mills' sales data to assess market performance and consumer purchasing trends. This helped us understand:

- Best-selling products and revenue drivers in the Candy Category
- Product performance to identify high-growth markets in Candy Category
- Brand loyalty and product retention rates

This data provided key insights into how General Mills' current offerings align with consumer needs and how we can improve current product offerings to capture the Gen Z market whilst breaking into the candy category.

METHODS



PRIMARY & SECONDARY RESEARCH

Secondary Research: Market & Competitive Landscape (Competitor & Channel Analysis) To support our findings, we conducted secondary research using industry reports, Statista data, and published articles. This helped us understand:

- Broader Gen Z consumer needs and values
- Competitive benchmarking, comparing General Mills' performance to competitors and consumer perceptions surrounding Gushers
- Market forces affecting Gushers, such as visibility in channels and advertising

This research helped us understand General Mills' market positioning as well as giving us a basis for which we can provide recommendations

Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP)

Using insights from both primary and secondary research, we applied STP strategies to refine market focus:

- Segmentation: We identified key consumer groups based on the Gen Z demographics, psychographics, and behavioral patterns. This included factors such as age, lifestyle preferences, and shopping habits.
- Targeting: Based on market data, we determined segments that align with General Mills' strengths and market trends that we could target.
- Positioning: We examined how General Mills can differentiate its products through messaging, branding, and innovation to better align with consumer preferences and competitive gaps.

METHODS



SURVEYS

We conducted a survey with a sample size of about 100 people aged 18-25 to explore their preferences around candy, soda, and a new concept: Gushers filled with soda instead of fruit flavored Gushers. The goal was to see if people would be interested in this new candy and what soda flavors they would prefer inside.

Survey Questions:

- Candy Preferences: Respondents were asked which types of candy they like (chocolate, gummies, sour candy, etc.).
- Soda Preferences: We also asked if they like soda and what their favorite sodas are.
- Interest in Soda-Filled Gushers: We wanted to know if they would try a candy like Gushers but filled with soda.
- Flavor Suggestions: For those interested, we asked what soda flavor they'd want inside.

Target Audience:

The survey focused on people aged 18-25. This is primarily our target group for our product innovations.

Analysis:

- Interest in the Concept: We assessed whether people would be excited to try a soda-filled Gushers and if they liked the idea of mixing candy and soda.
- Soda Flavor Preferences: The survey helped us understand which soda flavors the target audience enjoys, as well as what they would be willing to try.

METHODS



SHOP ALONGS

We conducted shop-along observations in Walmart and gas stations like Maverik, following individuals as they shopped for candy. Our goal was to understand real-time decision-making processes when purchasing candy and whether consumers naturally gravitate toward products like Gushers and if they don't, what candy is currently top of mind amongst young-adults.

Shop-Along Questions:

- Candy Selection: Why did they choose that specific candy? Was it a habitual purchase, a craving, or an impulse buy?
- Purchase Frequency: Do they often buy this type of candy, or is this an occasional treat?
- Gushers Familiarity & Interest: Do they buy Gushers? If not, have they considered it? If yes, what do they like about them?

Target Audience:

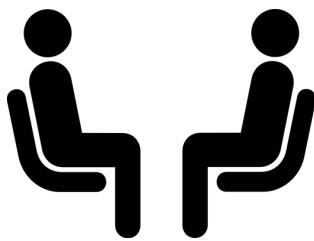
The study focused on shoppers aged 18-25, aligning with our target market for candy products.

Analysis:

- Candy Purchase Behavior: Observing whether consumers make planned or impulse purchases and which factors (brand, price, flavor, nostalgia) drive their choices.
- Gushers Awareness & Interest: Assessing whether Gushers are already in their purchase routine and whether they see the brand as appealing.

This qualitative approach provides deeper insights into real-world purchasing behavior and helps inform our product innovations.

METHODS



IN- DEPTH INTERVIEWS

We conducted one-on-one interviews with a diverse group of individuals to explore their thoughts on Gushers, packaging preferences, buying habits, and reactions to new product concepts. The goal was to understand how our target demographic would react to new innovations regarding the Gushers product.

Interview Topics & Questions:

- Packaging Preferences: Do they prefer the old Gushers packaging or the new design? Why?
- Perception of Gushers: Do they see Gushers as a fruit snack, a candy, or something else? How does this influence their buying decisions?
- Impulse vs. Planned Purchases: Are Gushers something they go to the store intending to buy, or do they grab them on a whim?
- New Product Concept – Mocktail-Inspired Gushers: After explaining the idea of mocktail-flavored Gushers (e.g., piña colada, strawberry daiquiri, mojito), we asked for their reactions. Would they be interested? Which flavors would appeal to them the most?
- Advertising & Brand Perception: How do they currently view Gushers' advertising and brand image? What type of marketing would make them more likely to purchase?

Target Audience:

Interviews were conducted with individuals aged 18-25, ensuring feedback from our primary target demographic.

Analysis:

- Packaging Impact: Understanding whether a change in packaging affects purchasing behavior and brand perception.
- Gushers as a Snack vs. Candy: Identifying if Gushers are seen as a childhood fruit snack or a fun candy.
- Reaction to New Product Ideas: Evaluating product extensions could expand Gushers' appeal and attract new buyers.

METHODS



CONCEPT INTERVIEWS

We conducted over 25 concept interviews with people aged 18-25 at the Wilkinson Student Center at Brigham Young University to gather feedback about Sour Gushers. The goal was to learn about their opinions on the candy and potential changes to make it more appealing.

Questions Asked:

- Have you heard of Sour Gushers?
- Is there anything you would change about Sour Gushers?
- Would you eat them more if they had sour sugar on the outside?
- What if it was a blue raspberry coating instead of regular sugar?
- What do you not like about sour candy or Sour Gushers specifically?
- When was the last time you ate sour candy?

Target Audience:

The survey focused on people aged 18-25 to understand how young adults feel about Sour Gushers and if they'd like any changes.

How We Analyzed the Info:

- Awareness and Experience: We looked at how many people had heard of or tried Sour Gushers to gauge product recognition.
- Suggestions for Improvement: We analyzed common suggestions for changes (like adding sour sugar or a blue raspberry coating) to identify features that could increase appeal.
- Dislikes and Concerns: We identified any patterns in what people didn't like about sour candy or Sour Gushers, helping us pinpoint areas for improvement.

TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

WHAT DID WE USE?

Qualtrics

We used Qualtrics to design the majority of our surveys. The platform allowed us to easily create customised surveys, which we then shared via a link with classmates, friends, and family.

Stats IQ

We used stats IQ which is apart of the qualtrics platform, we used this to gather percentages and counts to gather quantitative data from our surveys.

Google Sheets

We used Google Sheets to record our statistics, quotes, and insights for focus groups and interviews. This helped us efficiently organize our data, which in turn made it easier to structure and develop our ideas.

Chat GPT

ChatGPT was a valuable tool that helped us refine and expand our ideas. We used it to generate AI images, improve grammar, and as a creative sounding board throughout the process.

Microsoft Teams

This platform was where we did all our communication with our team, TA, and sponsor

TOOLS

Canva

We used Canva to design and produce our presentations and reports, allowing us to create visually engaging and professional materials.

Google Search

For our individual research, we primarily used Google Search to gather relevant statistics and real-world examples that supported our recommendations.

Instagram

We used Instagram to share our Qualtrics survey links and quick, one-question polls.

Microsoft Excel

We used Excel to develop our work plan, as it provided an efficient and structured way to organize and manage our tasks.

BYU Campus Resources

A variety of resources were available to us, the group being comprised of BYU students. Industry databases were available for free through the On-Campus Internship program. Other available resources such as study rooms, pop-up booths, and camera equipment made interviews and focus groups manageable.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Flavor Preferences drive purchases inside the candy category:
Sour & Fruity Lovers Dominate:

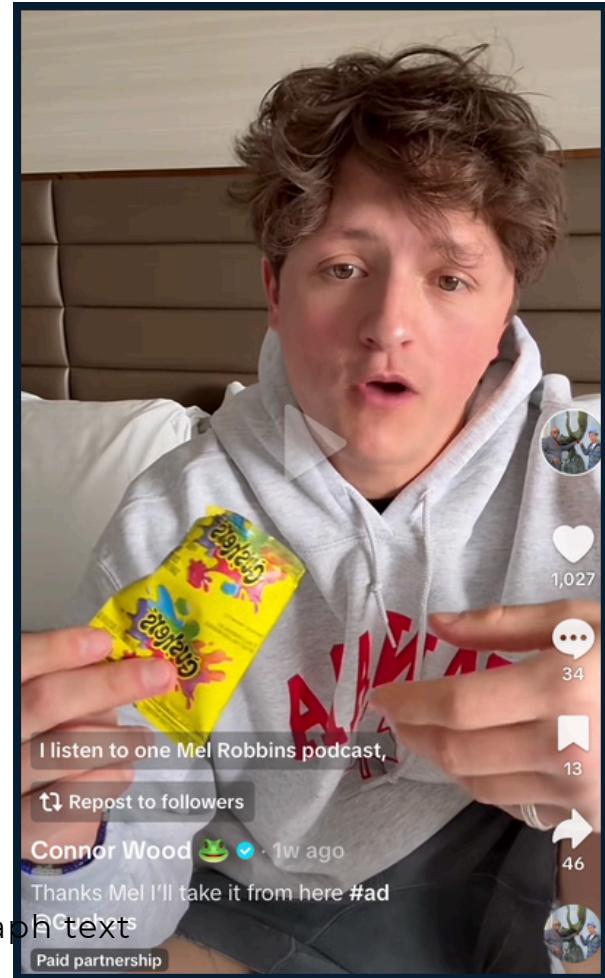
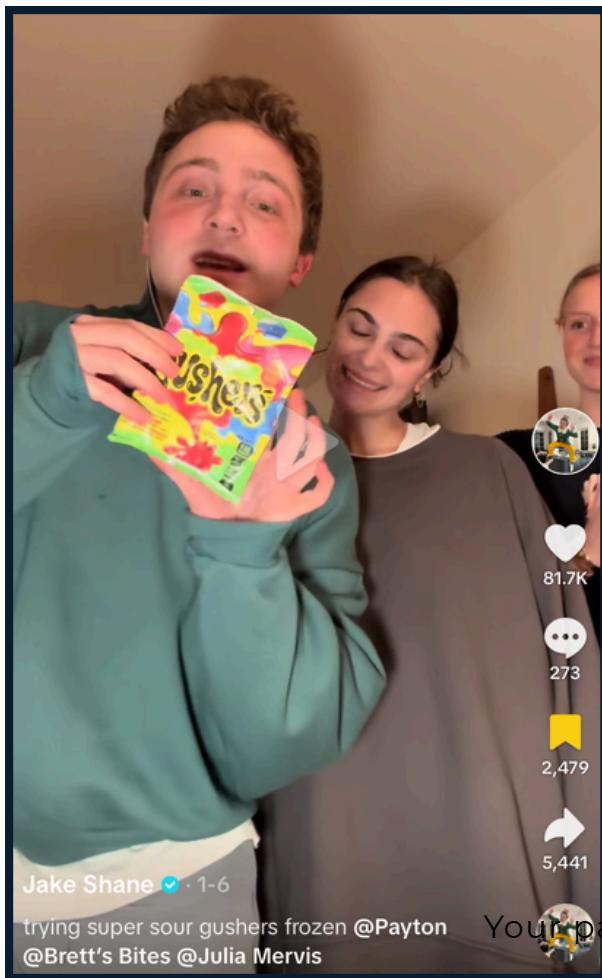
- Several students prioritize sour flavors, actively seeking the tangy experience.
 - “I love sour candies.”
 - “The fruity burst of tart and sour.”
- Multiple students associate chocolate with heaviness and not ideal for snacking or travel hence gummy candy is the main choice.
 - “I feel kinda heavier when I eat chocolate.”
 - “If I’m in the car, I don’t want chocolate.”
- Nostalgic feelings drive the choice of Gushers. Students recall memories from childhood and feel that Gushers are a “real treat” when they get them.
- “I love Gushers.”
- “I haven’t had them in years.”
- “Don’t eat them after you’re 10.”
- “Real treat when you get them.”

RECOMMENDATION #1: ADVERTISING: INFLUENCERS

INFLUENCERS

WHY INFLUENCERS?

Content that features influencers is often seen as more authentic and trustworthy. If it hits the right chord with your audience, they are likely to share it with their networks. This increases the visibility of your content and connects you with an audience that would have remained inaccessible otherwise.
(Grin.com)



As their target audience continues to spread out over various forms of media, it becomes increasingly difficult to reach them. As a result, marketers discovered that influencer marketing could offer a solution to the problem. It allows brands to locate and advertise directly to their target audience.

INFLUENCERS

MACRO INFLUENCERS

@melo (Lamelo Ball)	10.5M (Instagram)	Basketball Player
@octopusslover8 (Jake Shane)	3.5M (Tiktok)	Podcaster/Comedian
@fibula (Connor Wood)	355K (Instagram)	Podcaster/Comedian
@_jazz3 (Jazz Chisholm)	406K (Instagram)	Baseball Player
@jamievanslooten (Jamie Van Slooten)	512.7K (Tiktok)	Lifestyle/Fitness Influencer
@Siamusic (Sia)	8.3M (Instagram)	Musician
@breadbasket303	724K (Instagram)	Podcast/Influencer
@reneee.noe (Renee Noe)	1.2M (Tiktok)	Lifestyle/Fitness Influencer
@shai (Shai Gilgeous-Alexander)	3.8M (Instagram)	Basketball Player
@saquon (Saquon Barkley)	3.5M (Instagram)	Football Player
@nick.digiovanni (Nick Digiovanni)	3.4M (Instagram)	Food Influencer
@theanimemen (The Anime Men)	6.1M (Tiktok)	Comedy Group
@rolemodel (Tucker Pillsbury)	858K (Instagram)	Musician

INFLUENCERS

MICRO INFLUENCERS

"NANO-INFLUENCERS ON TIKTOK HAVE THE LOWEST COST-PER-ENGAGEMENT"(ASPIRE)

@annalisesara (Annalise Sara)	172.9K (TikTok)	Model/Influencer
@Antoni (Antoni Porowski)	134.2k (Tiktok)	Director and Influencer
@1trestewart (Trey Stewart)	12.1K (Instagram)	Basketball Player/ Fashion Creator
@lukejyates (Luke Yates)	134K (Instagram)	Fitness/infulencer
@brettsbites (Brett Chody)	136.6K (Tiktok)	Fitness/Food Influencer
@Ryan_micho (Ryan Micho)	63.4K (Instagram)	Comedian
@kassidi_jensen (Kassidy Jensen)	45k.3K (Instagram)	Modeling/influencer
@jaxonkohler (Jaxon Kohler)	19.6K (Instagram)	Basketball Player
@chase.roberts27 (Chase Roberts)	17.1K (Instagram)	Football Player/Podcaster
@lizzieramey (Lizzie Ramey)	116K (Instagram)	Lifestyle/Fitness Influencer
@iampaulconway (Paul Conway)	252K (Instagram)	Comedian

PRICES FOR INFLUENCER ADS

<u>Influencer Type</u>	<u>Follower Range</u>	<u>Avg. Sales Conversion Rate</u>
Micro Influencer	1,000-100,000	4% - 8%
Macro Influencers	100,000 - 1M+	1% - 3%

Why Micro Influencers?

- Trust factor – Their audiences often feel like friends or peers, so product recommendations feel more genuine.
- Focused niches – Micro influencers often serve tight-knit, specific communities where products are more tailored to shared interests.
- Higher engagement – They tend to get more likes, comments, and interactions per follower than larger influencers.

Why Use Macro Influencers?

- Massive exposure – Even at a lower conversion rate, a 1M+ audience can still drive more total sales.
- Brand positioning – Macro influencers can establish your brand as mainstream or trend-worthy.

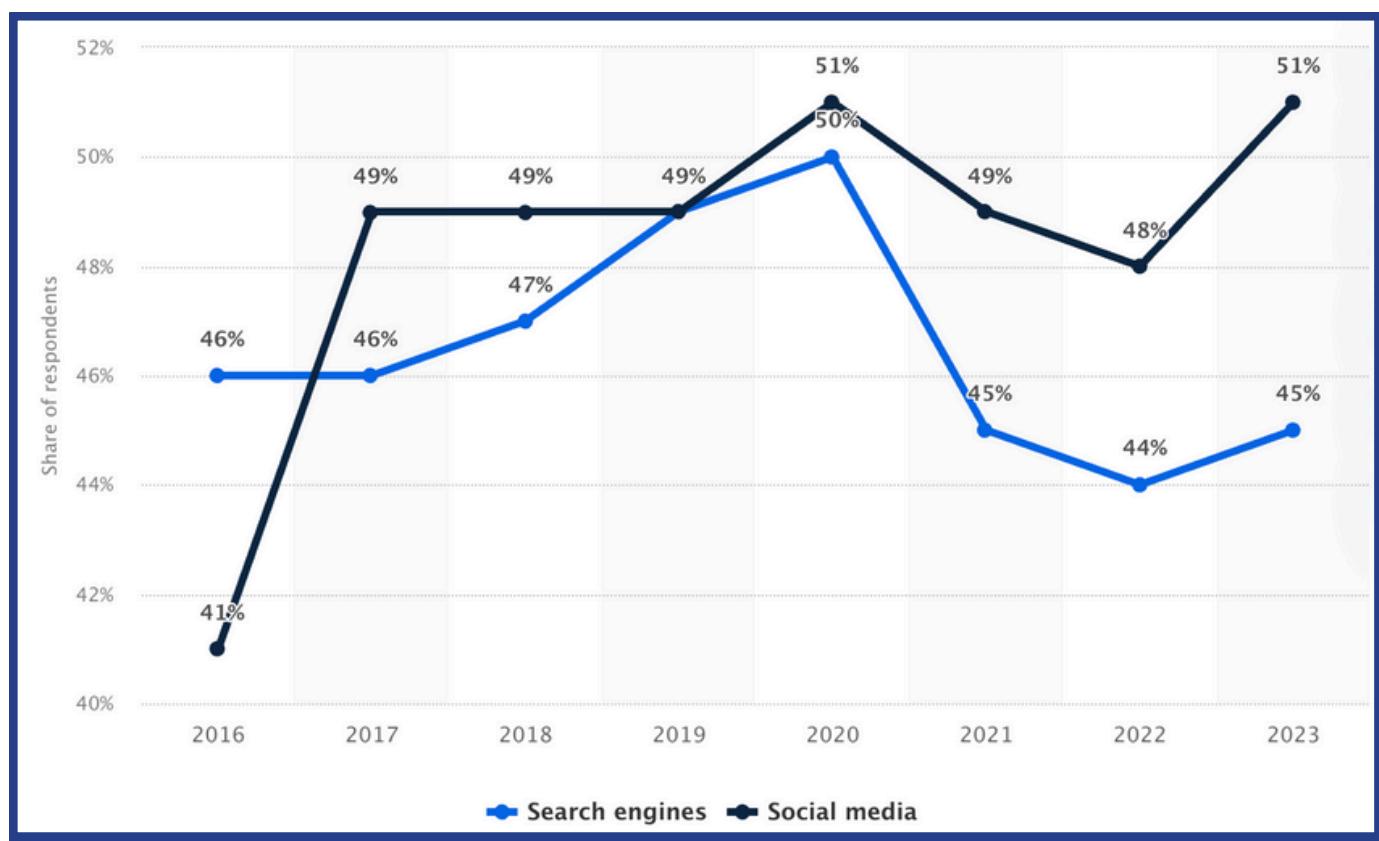
Summary

- Micro Influencers = Best for driving sales/conversions in niche markets.
- Macro Influencers= Best for building awareness and scaling quickly.

RECOMMENDATION #2: ADVERTISING: SOCIAL MEDIA

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA ADS?

Targeting Gen Z with social media advertisements for Gushers is a smart strategy due to Gen Z's shifting digital behaviours. According to global data, the use of search engines to look up brand information has been on a steady decline, currently sitting at 45%, while social media usage for the same purpose has been rising and now stands at 51%. This trend reflects Gen Z's preference and receptivity to social media ads and how they influence buying decisions.



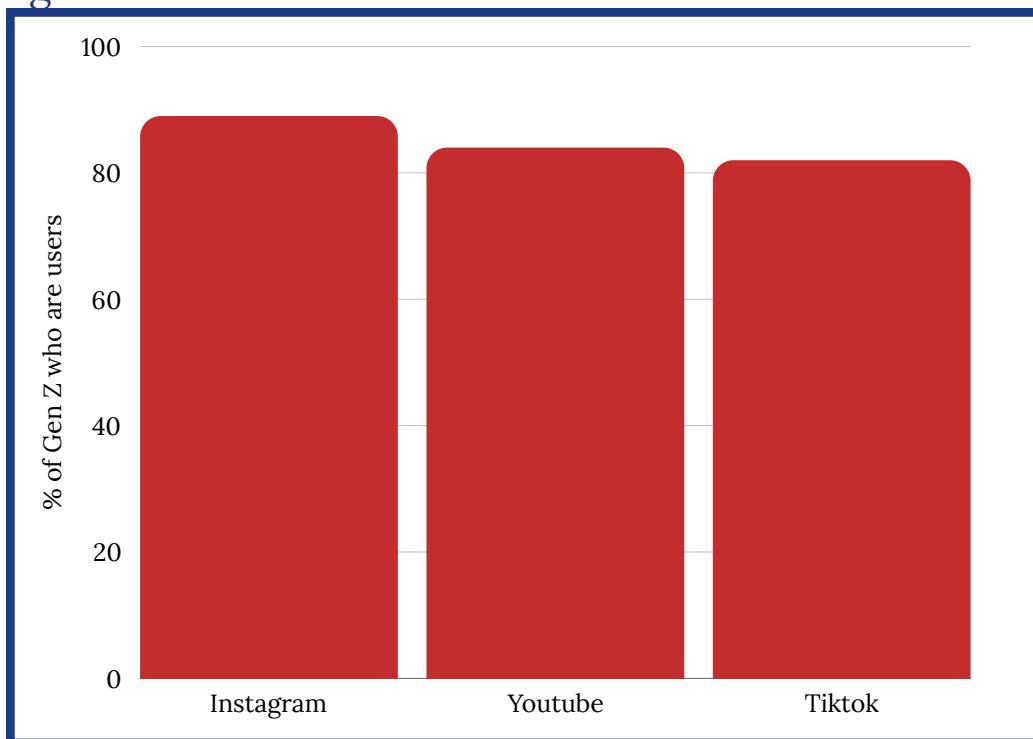
Percentage of Gen Z respondents who use social media to research brands vs using search engines (Statista, 2016-2023)

RECOMMENDED PLATFORMS

Gen Z is most active on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, with 89% of them using Instagram, 84% using YouTube, and 82% using TikTok. They mainly use these platforms for entertainment and to stay connected with friends and family, making them highly engaged with the content they see.

When it comes to discovering new products, Gen Z prefers TikTok, followed closely by Instagram,. This means that Gen Z is more likely to find new brands and products through creative and fun videos promoted on these social media platforms where they are actively looking.

For Gushers, using TikTok and Instagram for ads makes a lot of sense. These platforms are where Gen Z spends most of their time and are the best places to get their attention. By creating fun, catchy content that fits in with Gen Z's interests. Gushers can connect with this audience in a way that feels natural and engaging.



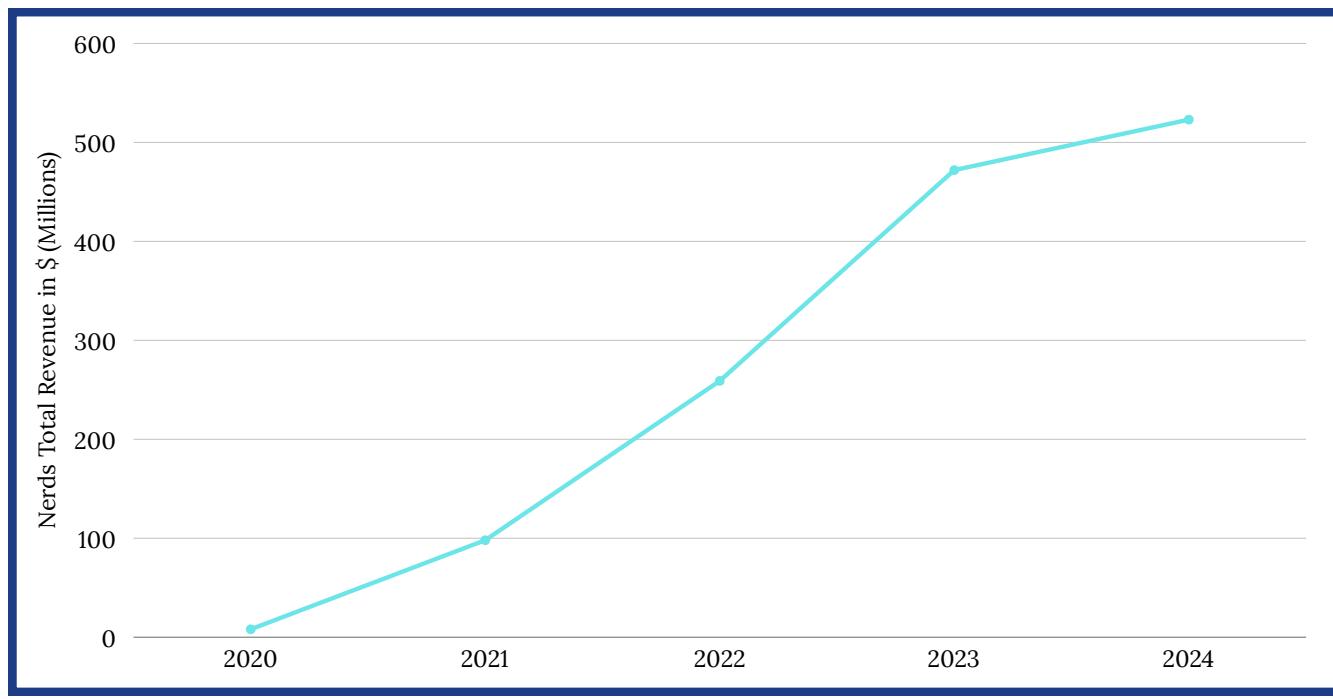
*Social Media platforms measuring what percent of Gen Z respondents use the site
(Sprout Social, 2025)*

SUCCESS RATES

The remarkable success of Nerds Gummy Clusters showcases how effective targeted social media campaigns can be for boosting candy sales. In 2020, these chewy treats, coated with crunchy Nerds, quickly became a favorite among Gen Z consumers. The campaign's success is reflected in the impressive sales growth from \$8 million in 2020 to over \$500 million in 2024, making up nearly 90% of Nerds' total revenue. (See below) This success highlights the power of social media in driving brand awareness, consumer interest, and product sales.

Similarly, SweeTARTS demonstrated the effectiveness of Instagram Reels in its advertising strategy, achieving an 8.5-point lift in ad recall. This shows how using engaging, platform-specific content can capture the attention of audiences and increase brand recall, outperforming traditional advertising methods.

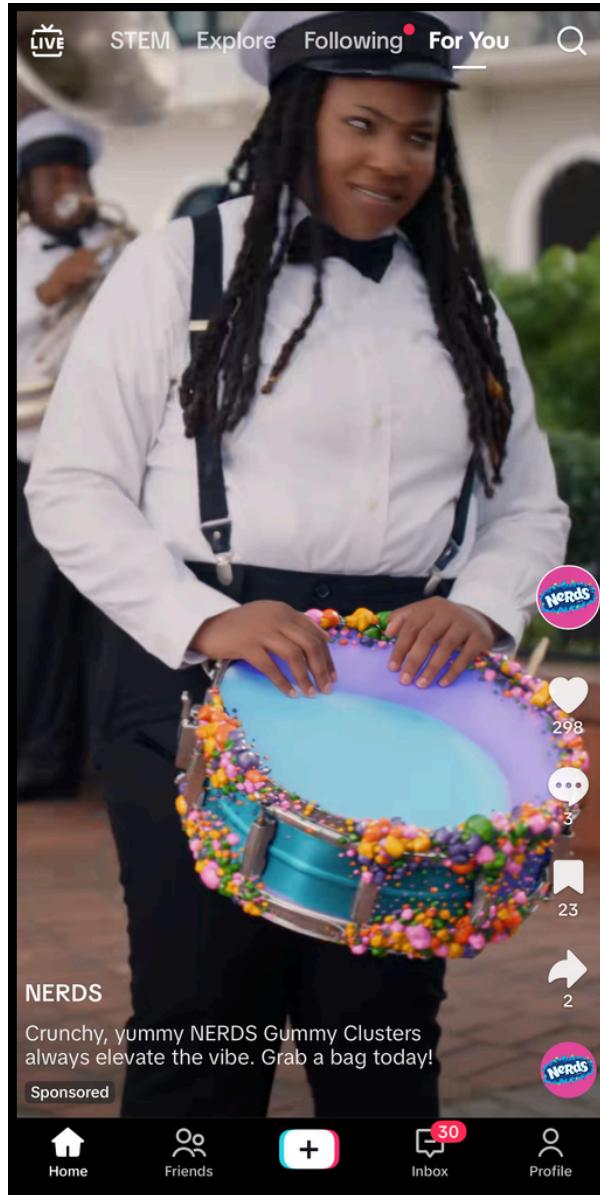
For Gushers, the challenge is clear: it needs to be more present in the minds of Gen Z, a generation that gravitates toward social media for discovering new products. If Gushers can tap into platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where Gen Z is most active, it has a huge opportunity to become top of mind in the Gen Z target audience.



Growth in Nerds total revenue since the introduction of Gummy Clusters in 2019 (Wall Street Journal)

ADVERTISEMENTS

SOCIAL MEDIA ADS IN ACTION



WHY ARE SOCIAL MEDIA ADS SUCCESSFUL?

In a world dominated by social media—especially among college students, with usage rates around 98%—there's no better place to get eyes on a product.

But here's the catch: you only have three seconds to grab their attention. That's all it takes for someone to scroll past your content. Make it count.

Why three seconds? Because that's how long it takes for the average user to decide whether to keep watching or move on. With short attention spans, endless scrolling, and information overload, people have learned to filter content fast. If your post doesn't hook them right away—visually or emotionally—it won't succeed. Plus, social media algorithms reward content that gets quick engagement, so those first few seconds impact not just your viewers, but your reach too.

IS IT COSTLY?

Doing advertisements on Social Media can be surprisingly cheap. General Mills can choose the amount of followers they are wanting to reach.

<u>Platform</u>	<u>Avg. CPM (Cost per 1,000 Impressions)</u>	<u>Avg. CPC (Cost per Click)</u>	<u>Minimum Daily Budget</u>	<u>Notes</u>
TikTok	\$5 – \$12	\$0.20 – \$2.00	\$20 (campaign level)	Best for younger audiences; video- focused ads
Instagram	\$6 – \$12	\$0.40 – \$1.50	\$1 (ad set level)	Great for visual branding and influencer reach
Facebook	\$5 – \$10	\$0.30 – \$1.00	\$1 (ad set level)	Large reach; good for detailed targeting

(Artem Dogtiev, Businessofapps.com)

ADVERTISEMENTS

SOCIAL MEDIA AD MOCKUPS



Above are some mockup ads showing a general idea of what kinds of posts could gain traction on social media should Gushers turn more heavily to social media advertising.

Image 1 is what an ad could look like showcasing a brand collaboration for a limited edition flavor, should Gushers choose to do that at any point. Image 2 is an actual reel posted by an influencer duo called Bread Basket. They post humorous videos where they rank different categories of things. Gushers could easily slide into their content if they were to make a ranking of the best Gushers flavors, for example. Lastly Image 3 is a photo of Basketball Star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. In the same way that he's promoting SLAM magazine in this post, athletes can advertise gushers simply by being seen online in the same post as our product.

RECOMMENDATION #3: SEASONAL/LIMITED EDITION FLAVORS

WHY A LIMITED EDITION FLAVOR?

According to a report by [Datassential](#), 60% of consumers have purchased a limited-edition food and beverage item.

EXAMPLE:

“Take the infamous Unicorn Frappuccino, the viral drink Starbucks introduced in the spring of 2017. While commonly described as a bizarre, syrupy mix of sweet and sour flavors, that didn’t stop the colorful concoction from becoming a social media hit that quickly sold out at various chains nationwide and drove same-store sales up 4% within a month.”

BENEFITS:

- Generate positive press coverage and word-of-mouth marketing, helping to create buzz around the product
- Create opportunities for exclusive partnerships with influencers and other brands
- Allow companies to test new flavors, ingredients, or packaging designs without fully committing to a long-term product
- Help companies tap into seasonal trends and capitalize on special occasions and holidays
- Enhance customer loyalty by rewarding consumers who act quickly and take advantage of limited-edition offerings

Limited-edition products tap into consumers’ psychological desire for exclusivity and urgency. When people know something won’t be around forever, they’re more likely to act fast. Combine that with a nostalgic flavor or an eye-catching design, and you’ve got a formula for instant buzz. To make the most out of a limited-edition campaign, timing is everything. If you’re trying to generate interest in a product over a short period, you need to be urgent and intentional about your messaging. A good rule of thumb is to plan around seasonal events, holidays, and even current events if necessary.

FOURTH OF JULY VARIETY MIX

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY FROM GUSHERS!

This Fourth of July, Gushers is serving up a flavor explosion with a patriotic punch. Picture this: Sour Blue Raspberry bursting with flavor, a mystery flavor that keeps fans guessing, and Sour Cherry for a classic twist. Packaged in vibrant red, white, and blue-themed wrappers, this new sour variety mix will be available for a limited time only, making it the perfect pick for summer snacking. Whether you're celebrating with friends, heading to a backyard BBQ, or just looking for a fun new twist on a classic snack, this seasonal drop delivers big flavor and summer energy—all in one bite.

Flavor Recommendations:

- Sour Blue raspberry
- Sour White Mystery Flavor
- Sour Cherry Gushers



STAR OF THE SHOW: BLUE RASPBERRY



“I WISH THERE WERE MORE BLUE ONES”

“THE BLUE ONES ARE MY FAVORITE”

“BLUE RASPBERRY CANDY IS MY FAVORITE”

“THE BLUE ONES ARE THE PERFECT
AMOUNT OF SOUR”

The Blue Raspberry flavor wasn't just a random idea from our team—it was a direct response to what consumers repeatedly told us. In our conversations about sour Gushers and gummy candy, people consistently went out of their way to mention their love for "blue flavors." The quotes above are just a few examples of how much consumers actively seek out Blue Raspberry candy.

THE GOAL

We want to **reignite excitement** around Gushers and bring the brand back to the forefront of consumers' minds. While Gushers is a beloved snack with nostalgic appeal, it often flies under the radar in today's crowded snack market. By launching a bold, limited-edition Fourth of July pack, we can **create timely buzz** and drive **renewed interest** in the brand. This seasonal drop not only gives people a fresh reason to talk about Gushers but also serves as a strategic gateway to **reintroduce the original product** to lapsed fans and new consumers alike. The campaign will generate excitement, spark conversation, and boost sales across the full Gushers lineup.

RECOMMENDATION #4: PACKAGING

PACKAGING

DON'T CHANGE THE PRODUCT WHEN THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM

According to a focus group of 80 college students we found that most people didn't have problems with gushers themselves. In fact most people love gushers. However, we noticed that many people didn't know gushers carried different flavors. For example can you tell me the difference in flavors between these two bags?



SO, WHAT DO WE CHANGE?

We decided that we would play around with some packaging ideas. At first, we thought college students would have a strong desire for a resealable pouch to be able to share with their friends and to save. Although that sounds like a great idea, we received comments like...

- “It would be a very sticky bag; every time you put your hand in, it would come back sticky.”
- “It would come out as one big ball.”

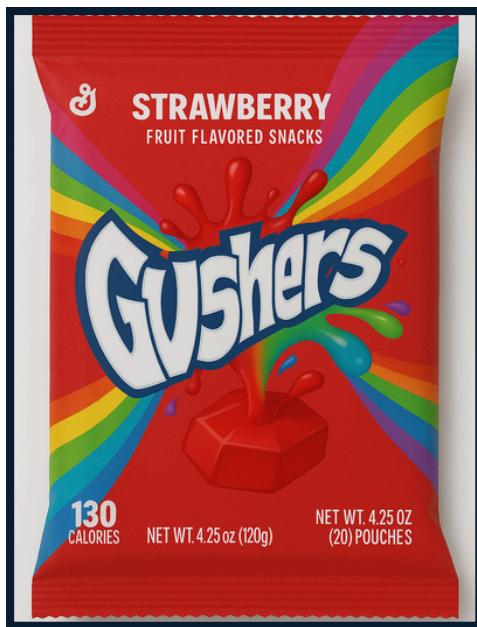
We don’t want our candy to come out as one sticky ball. So, what needs to change? The answer is simple: if the goal is to get into the candy aisle, we have to package like candy.

One great example is Sour Patch Kids and Nerd Clusters. All of them come in bags and are in a variety of colors. If we change Gushers’ packaging, we will gain more customer attention while showcasing new product variations without changing the actual product. No new factories—just a new look at a product we all know and love.

PACKAGING

IDEAS?

New Packaging needs to fit the flavor. Its important that Gushers keeps its logo, but people liked the idea of white lettering to stick out more.



PACKAGING

THE GOAL

We want to make shopping for candy easy. Our consumers shouldn't waste time returning Gushers because they bought the wrong flavor or couldn't figure out which one they were getting.

These AI mockups, convey a general idea of new packaging.

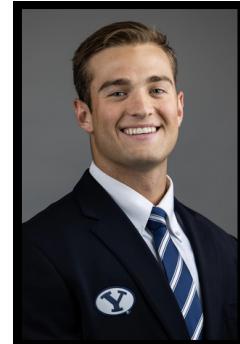
Now can you tell which one is tropical and which one is strawberry?



RECOMMENDATION #5:
CREATING EXPERIENCES
WITH GUSHERS ON
COLLEGE CAMPUSES

REACHING THE TARGET MARKET

Research during this project pointed in general to less of a need for change in the Gusher product itself and more of a need for engagement with the brand. Insights from stories and conversations with consumers suggest that focusing engagement efforts to target college campuses will be highly effective. This conclusion came by exploring the mind and purchasing habits of an average college student



Customer Persona: Chase, the College Student

Chase is 21 and halfway through his university program. He loves college life because he finally feels independent, free, and like his own person. He has control over where he goes, who he hangs out with, and how to spend his money. Now that Chase is managing his finances, he loves to treat himself when he can. When he's on campus studying, he'll often buy a snack from the library vending machine, or some candy from the school bookstore. It's his money, after all.

Chase knows it's important to have fun in addition to working hard. He has a group of friends who like to do spontaneous activities in the evenings or late at night. His friends group also had a lot of school spirit and enjoys going to football games, concerts, and other events together. They are very in tune with the trends and culture of the university. He has a lot of school spirit

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Interviews with consumers throughout the course of this project showed behavior compatible with a strategy to put gushers more aggressively on college campuses.

- Many college student consumers portrayed a busy lifestyle, saying that if they were to buy gushers they would “stick’em in my lunchbox” and take them to school as a snack. **Gushers are a good snack to go, and campuses are filled with people on the go.**
- One consumer who was interviewed expressed that they would not buy gushers on a normal shopping trip, but rather it would be on separate occasion that was not part of a planned shopping trip. Such **unplanned purchases of snacks happen frequently on college campuses** at vending machines or small stores on campus.
- One of the most common answers to the question “When do you eat gummy candy?” was that consumers usually ate them at a party or social gathering with friends. These types of **social gatherings frequently originate on college campuses**. This could mean students getting together for study groups or meeting up on campus before going to someone’s house for a movie night. Having Gushers readily on hand at campuses gives these groups of young adults a chance for an impulse purchase as a group
- The words “treat” and “**treat myself**” came up dozens of times throughout the research when talking about gummy candy. College campuses host a wide range of emotions ranging from stressful to boring. Many consumers view candy as something that can either be a reward for a job well done or as emotional fuel to get through a long task. These perceptions paint the picture of a student going to their campus vending machine to get **a study snack or a post-exam treat for themselves.**

CAMPUSES

Culture and connection

Culture spreads like wildfire on college campuses. Trends and crazes can start very quickly, and many of them originate from brands that partner with the school. If students associate a product or brand with their school, even if they already know of the bad, the brand sticks with them more because now it's part of their transition to adulthood. When brands are present in communities of students, student bodies often pick up on the brand together.

Although it's a simple action, getting Gushers into the campus vending machine is a massive opportunity. It's a combination of two aspects of the experience of college students like Chase. First, it opens the door for college students to consume Gushers as a study snack or personal treat, ideal times for gummy candy. It also taps into their transition to adulthood. They are growing up, but having Gushers there is something familiar to them because they ate it growing up. When these young adults see something familiar amid their newfound adulthood, and they have the independence to buy it whenever they want, brand engagement happens.

CAMPUSES

COLLEGE CAMPUSES IN SUMMARY

Why College Campuses?



Places of
transition/
growing up

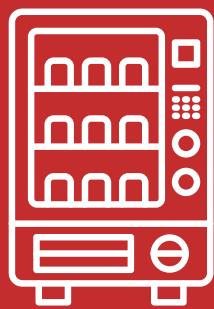


High Concentration
of shared experiences



Frequent impulse
snack purchases

Where to Start



Penetrate **Vending
Machines** and
Mini-shops



Engagement at
**sporting events/
school activities**

ADDITIONAL SOLUTIONS

SODA FILLED GUSHERS



This was one of the first concepts we explored at the start of our project. To gauge interest and gather consumer insights, we conducted surveys and interviews around the idea. The concept involves Gushers with actual soda inside—imagine a Coke-flavored Gusher that bursts with real cola when you bite into it.

One exciting opportunity with this concept is a potential collaboration with the Coca-Cola brand. Both Coca-Cola and Gushers share similar brand values—rooted in nostalgia, family-friendly fun, and generational appeal. This partnership would bring together two iconic names to create a limited-edition variety pack featuring soda-inspired flavors like Sprite, Orange Fanta, Lemonade, Root Beer, and Fruit Punch. Each Gusher would offer a playful twist on classic soft drink favorites, blending the fizzy excitement of soda with the bold, juicy burst Gushers are known for.

THE NEGATIVES

One of the main challenges we encountered was confusion around the product itself. Some respondents thought the concept involved a traditional fruit-flavored Gusher with soda inside, which led to mixed reactions. However, once we clarified the idea—soda-flavored on the outside with soda as the filling—most people expressed interest and said they'd be willing to try it. Because of these responses, this concept might not be strong enough to serve as a long-term flavor. Although, it offers a unique and exciting twist that could generate buzz and attract consumer attention, especially as a limited-edition drop in the spring/summer season.

MOCKTAIL GUSHERS

Another concept we explored was mocktail-flavored Gushers. Through focus groups and interviews, we gathered feedback on this idea and found that, much like the soda-filled Gushers, people were genuinely intrigued. The playful twist on popular mocktail flavors sparked curiosity, and most participants said they'd be interested in trying them. This concept offers a fun, elevated take on the classic Gusher—perfect for consumers looking for something a little more unique and sophisticated, while still keeping the brand's signature burst of flavor. These could be a product exclusive to the spring/summer season.



"It's a really exciting time in the world of nonalcoholic beverages."
- Jack Bishop (NPR, 2023)

THE NEGATIVES

Why is this not one of our main recommendations? There were a few problems we ran into with this mocktail idea. We discovered that awareness of “mocktails” wasn’t as widespread as anticipated. Some participants were unfamiliar with the term, which impacted their understanding and enthusiasm for the concept. Additionally, among individuals who do consume alcohol, there was less interest in the idea of translating these drinks into a non-alcoholic candy form. Many expressed that part of the appeal of those beverages lies in the effects they offer—something a candy version doesn’t provide. So just like the soda idea, this idea may not be strong enough on its own. On the other hand, there was definitely enough intrigue for it to create buzz as a limited edition flavor. On the other hand, there was definitely enough intrigue for it to create buzz as a limited edition flavor. The unique flavor combinations sparked curiosity among consumers, making it a conversation starter. Those who viewed the packaging felt it would stand out on shelves and grab attention, encouraging consumers to try something unexpected and out of the ordinary. Its bold design and unique flavor concept were seen as eye-catching and intriguing—exactly the kind of product that sparks curiosity and drives impulse purchases.

“Between August 2021 and 2022, the total dollar sales of non-alcoholic drinks in the U.S. stood at \$395 million with a growth of 20.6%”
(Proof, 2024)

SOLUTIONS

MOCKTAIL FLAVORS



In 2023, ready-to-drink Virgin Mojitos accounted for 24.3% of the ready-to-drink mocktails market revenue. A study on mocktail popularity indicated that the Virgin Mojito received approximately 2,400 online searches, ranking it fourth among non-alcoholic cocktails. (Grand View Research)



In the summer of 2022, Piña Colada sales in U.S. bars and restaurants surged by 87% during the second quarter, moving from the 17th to the 9th most popular cocktail, (Vine Pair)



The Shirley Temple segment is expected to experience a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.3% from 2024 to 2030. This growth is attributed to the drink's enduring popularity and nostalgic appeal among consumers. (Grand View Research)

IMPACT

Our project's proposed new distribution strategy is designed to make Gushers more successful among college students by addressing their unique preferences and behaviors. Currently, Gushers are primarily available in gas stations and grocery stores, but this availability doesn't always align with the fast-paced and on-the-go lifestyle of students. Through our research, we identified a gap in reaching this demographic and proposed a more targeted approach to bring Gushers closer to their everyday lives.

While the new distribution strategy focuses on maintaining availability in gas stations and grocery stores, we recommend supplementing it with a strong advertising campaign to drive awareness and interest among college students. Social media has emerged as the most effective channel to engage this audience, as platforms like TikTok and Instagram dominate their screen time. Our campaign proposal leverages these platforms to position Gushers as a fun, nostalgic, and shareable snack that complements student life, whether during study sessions, road trips, or late-night candy runs.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE



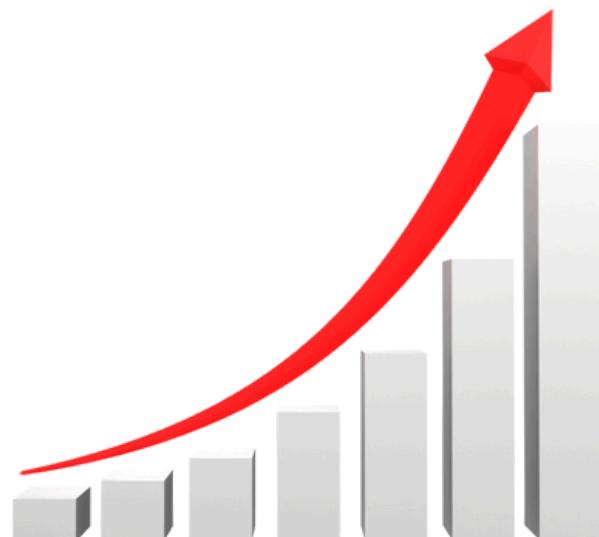
Among students 18-29 years old, 98% use social media
(Experian Simmons)



84.5% of students in a study spent more than four hours daily on social media.
(Walter Sisulu University, Buffalo City)

QUATIFIABLE IMPACT

- Interviewed over 100 individuals to gather qualitative insights on consumer behavior.
- Conducted 3 surveys and facilitated 4 focus groups to capture a wide range of consumer perspectives.
- Visited more than 10 grocery stores and restaurants to collect raw, in-context consumer data.
- Developed 5+ strategic recommendations to enhance the Gushers brand based on comprehensive research and analysis.



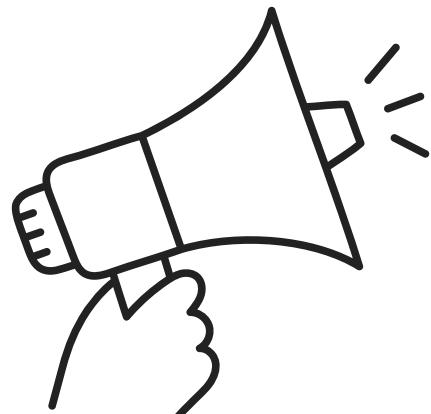
OUTCOME



The anticipated outcome of this combined strategy is a significant increase in brand engagement and sales among college-aged consumers. By meeting students where they are—both physically through existing retail locations and digitally through social media campaigns—Gushers has the potential to carve out a strong foothold in the Gen Z candy market. The impact of this initiative could extend beyond immediate sales growth by building long-term brand loyalty and fostering a vibrant online community around Gushers.

Another anticipated outcome is the incorporation of new flavors into the Gushers product line. We have determined that a change is needed. We have continually explored new flavor systems to capture the taste buds of college students and those looking to try a new kind of “candy.” Our research points toward the potential for a flavor change to attract consumers who haven’t yet fallen in love with Gushers.

Although this strategy has not yet been implemented, its potential lies in its thoughtful integration of distribution and advertising. By ensuring that Gushers is not only accessible but also top of mind for college students, this project represents a promising step forward in strengthening the brand’s connection with this key demographic.



NEXT STEPS

Gushers' Next Steps

Through our research, we have found that users have a very positive connotation with the brand—many users say things like “I love Gushers.” This is a typical response, and it brings joy to our ears. The problem we face is not the product itself, but rather that it is not top of mind. This has led to fewer sales and an overall dormant brand.

These next steps as a brand will help us gain market share, bring Gushers back to the minds of our consumers, and help us gain entry into the candy market:

1) Packaging

Logo:

- Instead of the current all-black version, General Mills should incorporate more white. People like the new logo, but they miss the color of the old one. Mixing the two logos has been shown to boost brand perception.

Boxes to Bags:

- We recommend to get rid of the boxes. Only fruit snacks use large boxes to package their treats. Instead, we should use larger resealable bags that contain smaller individual bags—replacing boxes with bags entirely.

Flavor Visibility:

- We also need to change the color of the packaging to show the difference in flavors. Right now, there's no way to differentiate between Sour Gushers and regular Gushers, which has made it very difficult for consumers. For this reason, we will be launching a variety of different bag colors that help consumers clearly tell the difference between products.

Currently, consumers only see this product as a fruit snack. These critics are not making “Mom’s job easier.” Furthermore, many have reflected that the current packaging looks similar to crayons—not a comparison you want associated with food.

2) Advertising

- In order to get Gushers back in the minds of consumers, they should start by ramping up advertising efforts so the brand becomes top of mind once again.

Partner with Micro and Macro Influencers:

- Influencers are great for bringing products to the top of mind. They also can generate up to a 5% conversion rate through their posts to their audiences. Partnering with a range of influencers allows Gushers to reach both niche and large-scale audiences with authentic content.

USER'S GUIDE

Nostalgia Play:

- Lean into the '90s and early 2000s nostalgia with throwback ads targeting Millennials and Gen Z—while also pulling in modern cultural references. Influencers and celebrities can release their own versions of the snack, making it fun and engaging for their audiences.

University Partnerships:

- We recommend partnering with universities by running promotions at football games and other sporting events. The goal is to create the narrative that Gushers is a lifelong snack—there for them as kids and still with them as they move into this next chapter of life.

3) Product Variation

- After we've updated our packaging and ramped up advertising, this is the perfect time to build on the momentum and introduce new product variations—helping us solidify our place in the market.

Relaunch Sour Gushers:

- Our research shows that over 61% of participants prefer Sour Gushers compared to the traditional version. (Appendix, fig. 1) We've also learned that for a product to be recognized as a candy, it typically needs a sour variation. While Gushers technically has one, many consumers aren't aware of it. By relaunching Sour Gushers with a clear identity and new packaging, Gushers can position itself as a stronger player in the candy category.

New Sour Variants – Blue Raspberry & Red Strawberry:

- Furthermore, we recommend launching a new sour variation featuring Blue Raspberry and Red Strawberry flavors—combining the classic juicy burst with a tangy sour coating. This will tie into updated packaging and expand our sour product line.

Limited-Edition Flavors:

- Lastly, Gushers could also benefit from launching rotating seasonal flavors inspired by mocktail combinations. These limited editions will drive urgency and variety, encouraging repeat purchases and boosting brand excitement.

By following these listed agenda items, Gushers will be able to truly gain a strategic competitive advantage in the market place. Leading to stealing market share from its competitors and growing its brand.

USER'S GUIDE

Best Practices for Young Adult Consumer research

While there is no specific program, database, or software assigned to this projects research, there are a variety of tools, methods, and best practices that future interns can use to be successful in gathering consumer data and gealing value insights from them.

USE OF BYU CAMERAS AND MICROPHONES

When conducting focus groups or one-on-one, it can be useful to have an audio and visual recording of the conversations for easier extraction of quotes from participants' responses, as well as to identify non-spoken patters in behavior that don't show themselves in a quotation.

BYU interns have free access to an equipment room in the Haron B Lee library where they can rent cameras, microphones, tripods, and other materials. BElow are some impotant tips for userss of BYU equipment.

- Equipment must be reserved through the equipment room website at <https://byu.libcal.com/reserve/mmlab>
- All equipment must be returned within 3 days of rental
- All DSLR cameras in the BYU library are sufficient for recording a focus group or one-on-one interview; These include teh Canon SL3, Canon M50, or Nikon D5300
- Before returning cameras to the equipment room, interns should be sure to transfer all videos and images to a personal device, leaving the school's SD card empty

QUALTRICS AND IN-PERSON SURVEYS

LIterns have access to a variety of resources for getting large amounts of consumer responses on a certain topic or research question

When face-to-face interactions are not necessary, data can be easily gathered using the Qualtrics survey software. Below are the things that interns should remember when crafting a survey for consumer insights

USER'S GUIDE

- Make sure that survey questions are clear and understandable.
- Some graphs and charts are created automatically by the Qualtrics software and can be downloaded by the user.

If researchers want to interact with consumers face-to-face when doing surveys or want their surveys to include product testing, one tool that is available to interns is booths in the Wilkinson Student Center (WSC). These tables are conveniently located in the busiest building on campus and allow researchers to speak with many people in a short amount of time. To use a WSC booth for their research, student interns should adhere to the following guidelines

- The usage of a WSC booth must be approved and scheduled through the course instructor
- Interns must send a detailed plan for their research to the instructor before he schedules the booth. This plan should include what day and times the research will be done, what information will be gathered, and how it will be collected
- Students are not allowed to collect any personal data from other BYU students (email address, phone number, name, etc.)

USING SECONDARY RESEARCH TOOLS

All of the primary research done for this project was rooted in secondary research on the past successes and failures of different gummy candy products, as well as research on existing consumer preference studies and current market trends. Seeing as most product innovation internships in the future will include secondary research, this must be a part of this user guide. Below are several tips for using public databases and resources for secondary research.

- BYU grants all students access to a variety of industry research databases, scholarly articles, and industry news archives. As of the time of writing, these sources can be easily accessed through the on-campus internship course webpage
- When using an AI language model to research competitors, interns should always verify claims and statistics by checking the AI's source material.
- Google Docs or Microsoft Word help organize and centralize secondary research findings. Teams should have a shared document where they store these findings for quicker access

GENERAL MILLS RESEARCH ARCHIVES

General Mills has a massive archive of research done by product development and other teams. On-campus interns will generally not be given direct access to company research files. However, interns may request any specific research or analysis from the company for secondary research purposes, which will be provided to them at the discretion of the project sponsor.

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Works Cited

Below are all the customer personas and stories created during this project's research. They come from conversations at grocery stores, friends and classmates of interns, and assumptions gained from rigorous secondary research

Koa

Koa is a gym goer and an outdoorsman. He's a college kid on a budget. He likes gushers and grew up with them but they don't stand out to him these days. He doesn't really feel a need to buy them ever because there are other candies he likes more. The last time he had them was about a month ago because someone gave him them for free. His friend pulls out these new blue raspberry sour-coated gushers. He's like Woah I wanna try those, they sound so good. He emphasizes that if he was on a road trip and saw those at the gas station, he would be excited and intrigued enough to buy them and try them out. His friend gives him a try and he's in love.

Race

Race is a social guy. He likes Gushers a lot and buys them semi-frequently. Growing up, Race's mom gave him the most boring, mundane school lunches. When Race was lucky, his friends would give him a pack of their gushers. Now that he is a college student, Race is always excited to buy Gushers. It feels exciting to him and makes him feel like he's his person. If a new flavor of Gushers came out, he would not want to try them. Race knows what he likes and does not feel the need to try something new. New Gushers would not have the same excitement as the regular Gushers because it's not exactly what he was wishing for as a kid.

Grace

Grace is a college student and loves material things. She loves to buy clothes, home decor, and snacks. Grace is also gluten free, so this limits the amount of snacks she can eat. Grace's favorite snack is Gushers. She buys them all the time and talks about them all the time. Everyone she knows knows that she loves Gushers. A couple years ago, when Grace went to buy Gushers like she always does and she could not find the regular ones she always buys. She could only find these strange off brand Gushers. She bought them a few more times she went to the stores, wondering where the original Gushers were. After a little while, she put two and two together and realized Gushers must have rebranded their packaging.

APPENDIX

Ben Jones

Ben loves Gushers because they're a nostalgic treat for him. However, over time, he stopped buying them in favor of sour candies like Sour Skittles and stopped spending as much money while living the broke college life. One day, while walking with his friend Emily, he noticed she was holding a pack of Sour Gushers. The packaging looked unfamiliar, and Ben was confused. He had always loved Gushers but had never seen this version before. When Emily explained that they were just a sour variety of Gushers, Ben was surprised.

"I've never heard of those before. Are they from a different brand?" he asked.

Emily laughed and assured him they were the same Gushers he loved, just the sour version. She offered him one to try, and Ben was immediately hooked. He couldn't help but feel frustrated. If Gushers had done a better job advertising their sour variety, he would have bought them long ago. Instead, he had no idea they even existed. It made him wonder: how many other people had missed out on Sour Gushers simply because they never heard about them?

Lena and Mia

Lena and Mia were hanging out when Lena spotted a pack of Shirley Temple-inspired Gushers on the counter.

"Shirley Temple Gushers? That sounds fun," she said, grabbing the pack.

Mia shrugged. "I saw them on my favorite influencer's TikTok, and I was influenced. Gushers were our childhood favorite, but now we're supposed to be into protein bars and matcha lattes."

Lena laughed, but she knew what Mia meant. Growing up meant swapping candy for 'healthier, more "grown-up"' choices, but sometimes, she just wanted to enjoy things without overthinking. She tried one, and it had a sweet cherry, citrus, and a fizzy kick. It tasted like being a kid—but cooler.

"Okay, these are actually amazing," Lena said.

Mia grinned. "Right? Feels like a cheat code."

Notes from Initial Focus Group

The following is a report of various insights and quotes from a focus group conducted on 1/28/2025.

A sample of 7 students was recruited on the BYU campus to participate in the group. To start the meeting, we asked each participant to choose any candy from a bowl containing a mix of Gushers, Nerds Gummy Clusters, HARIBO Golden Bears, Sour Patch Kids, Regular Skittles, and Sour Skittles. The bowl was then passed around the group twice more, during which participants were asked to choose their 2nd and 3rd choice of candy. After all the candy choices had been made, participants were asked to eat their candy while answering several questions relating to gummy candy in general. Below is a record of both the candy choices each participant made as well as the things that they said during the discussion questions.

Student A

- **1st candy chosen: Gushers**
 - Reason: “The explosion in your mouth”
- **2nd candy chosen: Nerds Gummy Clusters**
 - Reason: “I haven’t had them in a while”
- **3rd candy chosen: HARIBO Golden Bears**
 - Reason: “I haven’t had them in a while”
- Stated that “Flavor is more important” than most other factors in choosing gummy candy
 - When he ate the candy, he chewed for a long time, probably savoring the flavor
- Recalled that “For my birthday, all my friends got me Sour Patch Kids”
- Prefers gummy candy to come in a small bag, to limit his consumption
- Seasonal packaging stands out to him
- He looks at his candy a lot while he eats it, indicating that gummy candy presentation and form can be an enjoyment factor

Student B

- **1st candy chosen: Sour Patch Kids**
 - Reason: “I really like the sour patch watermelon, and this is the closest equivalent”
- **2nd candy chosen: Skittles Sour:**
 - Reason: “You can’t find these anymore”
- **3rd candy chosen: HARIBO Golden Bears:**
 - Reason: “These are my Dad’s favorite so back to nostalgia”

APPENDIX

- When analyzing the yellow colors on the Gushers packaging, she said, “It’s not the first color I think of when I think of Candy”
- Enjoys gummy candy for “the Fruity burst of tart and sour” and also because “I feel kinda heavier when I eat chocolate”
- He had positive, fun memories associated with gummy candy,s pecifically gummy bears; “My dad loved gummy bears. I would ask for some or steal some”
- Prefers gummy candy to come in a small bag

Student C

- **1st candy chosen: Sour Patch Kids**
 - Reason: “I love sour candies”
- **2nd candy chosen: Skittles (Sour)**
 - Reason: “I just love the sour”
- **3rd candy chosen: Nerd Gummy Clusters**
 - Reason: not stated
- Prefers gummy candy to come in a small bag
- Gummy candy “Reminds me of road trips”
- Never thought about Gushers as a candy, because “I don’t know any other candies that come in a box”

Student D

- **1st candy chosen: Skittles**
 - Reason: “They’re always good – Reliable”
- **2nd candy chosen: Sour Patch Kids**
 - Reason: “I don’t wanna have 2 skittles”
- **3rd candy chosen: Skittles (Berry Mix)**
 - Reason: not stated
- Demonstrated that when a consumer has brand loyalty, they are willing ot experiment with different flavors and iterations of the brand’s products. Some quotes from student D to this point included:
 - “I just really love Skittles... so having two of the same is like why, if you can have 2 different ones”
 - “It’s such an OG logo”
 - “I’m just drawn to the Skittles brand”
- Enjoys chocolate more than gummy candy, but not in all cases. For example, “If I’m in the car I don’t want chocolate”
- Prefers gummy candy to come in a small bag
- Doesn’t consider gushers a candy. He would never go looking for gushers in the candy aisle
- He played with his red Skittles bag for quite a while before eating. Even the package itself of a candy can create a moment of enjoyment

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Student E

- **1st candy chosen: Skittles (Berry Mix)**
- Reason: “The purple is very important”
- **2nd candy chosen: Nerds Gummy Clusters**
- Reason: “I don’t wanna have 2 skittles”
- **3rd candy chosen: Skittles (Berry Mix)**
- Reason: not stated

- Enjoyed berry flavors. “I like the flavors of the purple ones... but these are also my favorite colors so...”
- Prefers gummy candy to come in a big bag
- Sees gushers partially as a candy, because they are too unhealthy to be a core part of a meal. However, she wouldn’t go looking for them in the candy aisle

Student F (Not a gummy candy person)

- **1st candy chosen: HARIBO Gummy Bears**
- Reason: “Cause... I like gummy bears”
- **2nd candy chosen: Nerd Gummy Clusters**
- Reason: “Cause I don’t want 2 of the same thing”
- **3rd candy chosen: Skittles**
- Reason: not stated

- “I just noticed there was no chocolate”
- Prefers gummy candy to come in a small bag
- If there’s not a lot, don’t make the package clear
- On the topic of Gushers, she said, “I have a love-hate relationship... there’s a weird flavor and pop in a car ride”

Student G

- **1st candy chosen: Gushers**
- Reason: “I loved ‘em as a kid”
- **2nd candy chosen: Sour Patch Kids**
- Reason: “I was debating between these two for the first one”
- **3rd candy chosen: Skittles (Sour)**
- Reason: not stated

- Said that we will eat gummy candy “If I’m just wanting like a fun little snack”
- Big bag
- If I saw Gushers in the candy aisle, she said that “I wouldn’t want them. They look like paint”

Public Interviews on Sour Gushers

Public consumer research was conducted on the BYU Campus on 3/26/2025 to gain more insight into consumer perception of Sour Gushers. We sat at a booth in a central building of the campus, handing our sour and regular gushers to people passing by. Participants were invited to try one of each kind of gusher and decide which of the two products they enjoyed more. After each participant completed the taste test and comparison, they were asked one out of five sets of questions (for the sake of respecting the participant's time). The questions were as follows

- How did the sour gushers match your expectations of the Sour Gushers before you ate them?
- Would you buy Sour Gushers for yourself? When would you buy them? Who would you eat them with?
- If they had a sour coating on them, how would it change the product?
- When was the last time you had gummy candy? Where were you and what were you doing?
- What do you hate about Sour Gushers? What do you hate about sour candy in general?

Below are responses received for each of these questions

How did the sour gushers match up to your expectations you had of the Sour Gushers before you ate them? (Direct quotes are in quotation marks)

- Participant expected there to be sugar outside but had no problem with the fact that there wasn't
- Participant expected a bigger gush of juice on the inside
- "I didn't expect the gush to be so sour"
- "They were better than I thought"
- "I was expecting it to be more sour"
- Participant said that the sour gusher was less sour than expected, and that the flavor reminder her of ice pops

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Would you buy Sour Gushers for yourself? When would you buy them? Who would you eat them with?

- Participants said they would buy them for the movie theater or a road trip, or buy them for someone else
- Participant said they would “stick’em in my lunchbox”
- Participants said they would buy them for a road trip or hiking
- Participant could see themselves buying them for a picnic, summer snack, or babysitting. They would not buy them on a normal grocery shopping trip, rather it would be a separate occasion
- Participant imagined himself taking sour gushers to school for a snack, but not to work because they were too “messy”
- Participant decided he wouldn’t buy gushers, but if he did it would probably be after a school exam as a sort of reward for himself.
- Participants said they would be good to buy for Halloween.
- **7 out of 12 respondents who were asked this question said they would buy Sour gushers for themselves**

What do you hate about Sour Gushers? What do you hate about sour candy in general?

- As you get older, sour foods get less appetizing,
- Participant said they get “burnt out” of sour candy faster because the sourness is strong, making it hard to eat too many of them.
- Several participants talked about how these kinds of candy are bothersome if they’re either too sour or not sour enough or if the sour is so strong that it overpowers the flavor
- Texture is another factor that was observed, with more than one participant saying they don’t like it when sour gummy candies are either too chewy or too hard
- **One participant loved the extreme flavor of sour gushers, but didn’t feel like they delivered on the product promise of being “super sour”**
- “Sometimes you don’t wanna feel pain when you’re eating a snack”
- **Another participant thought that sour gushers had a strange aftertaste**
- Several participants complained about the weird feeling on their tongue that sour candy gives them

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Reasons Given for why Sour Gushers were better than normal Gushers

- Sour gushers are “a blast of flavor”, and they have more of a “punch” than the original ones
- Participants wanted something new and they got it. They were tired of the original gushers’ flavors and they were happy to get new tastes
- Participant liked that the sour gushers were so sour that it made them eat the pieces one at a time, which was more enjoyable than eating multiple at once
- Several participants commented that it felt more like candy than normal gushers
- Participant noted that they weren’t a fan of the gooeyness of Gushers in general, but the sourness made up for the bad texture
- “Kinda tastes like a sour patch kid”
- One taster claimed the sour gushers were too candy-like, indicating the perception of gushers as a fruit snack still exists.
- **"I feel like I'm eating color [when I eat regular Gushers] but with the sour, I'm actually eating flavor"**

When was the last time you had gummy candy? Where were you and what were you doing?

Popular responses included:

- Eating gummy candy at a party or activity where it was just given to them
- Watching movies or playing games with friends
- Road Trips and Camping

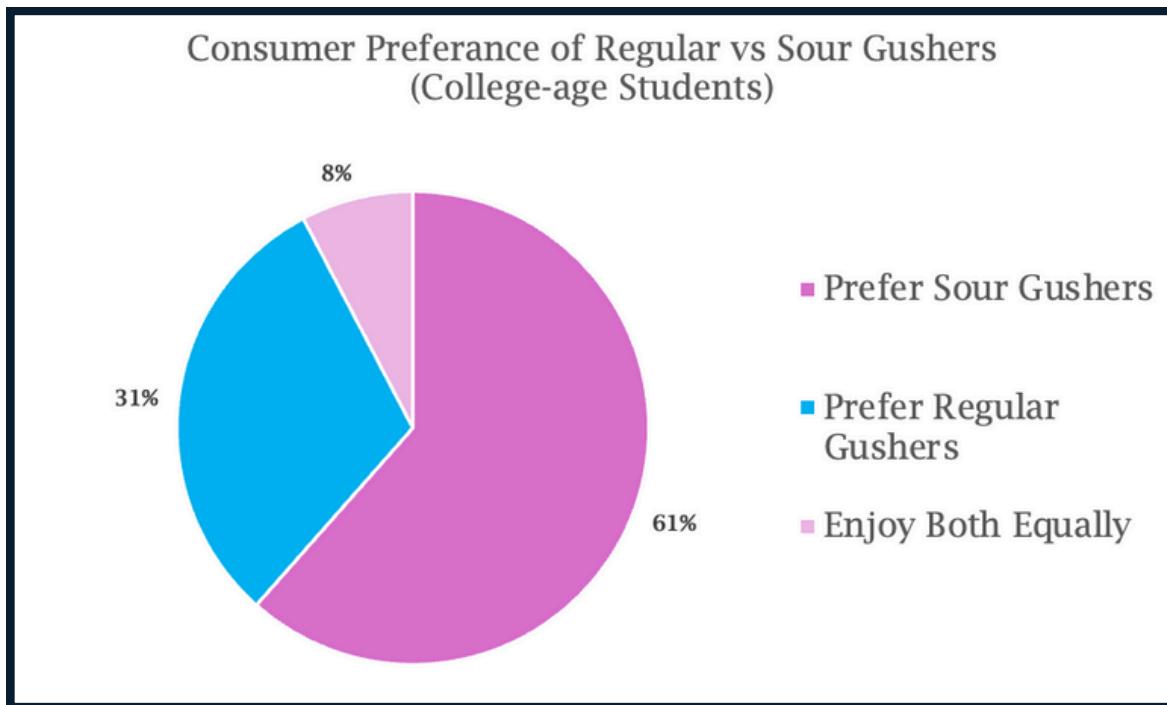


Figure 1. Consumer Preference of Super Sour Gushers compared to Regular Gushers (n = 65)

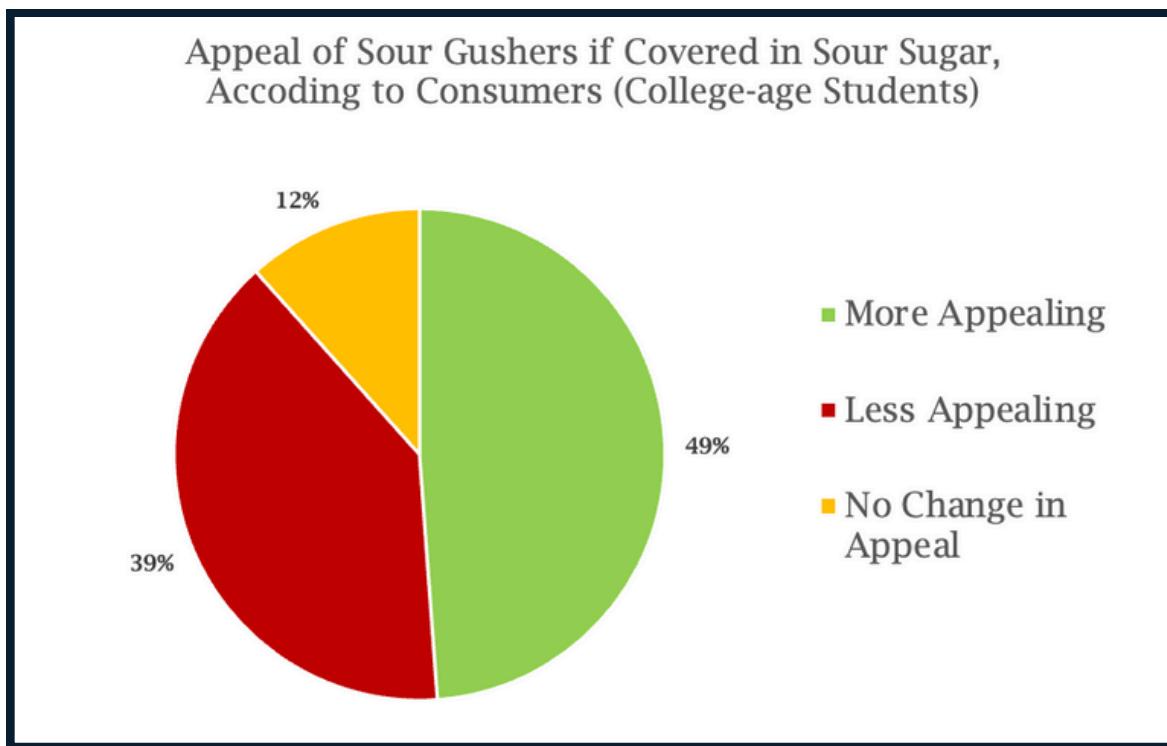


Figure 2. How adding sour sugar to the super sour gushers would effect the appeal of the candy, according to consumers (n = 43)

Research event gathering feedback on Soda/Mocktail Gushers

On 4/2/2025, our team gathered a large group of students in a room on BYU Campus to hold a series of focus groups in which the 3 top suggestions (at the time) were presented to participants for feedback. Over 30 participants were Rotated between 4 stations, each station presenting one of the following 3 recommendations:

1. Introducing new gushers flavors to match consumer preferences, namely Soda-filled gushers and mocktail-inspired gushers flavors
2. Changing packaging design to distinguish flavors of gushers and match the gummy candy landscape
3. Raising awareness of the gushers brand through advertising and social media influencers

Below are key insights and data visuals for first of the stations evaluating our ideas for flavor changes in gushers

Consumer likelihood to buy Soda-Flavored Gushers compared to Regular Gushers (College-age Students)

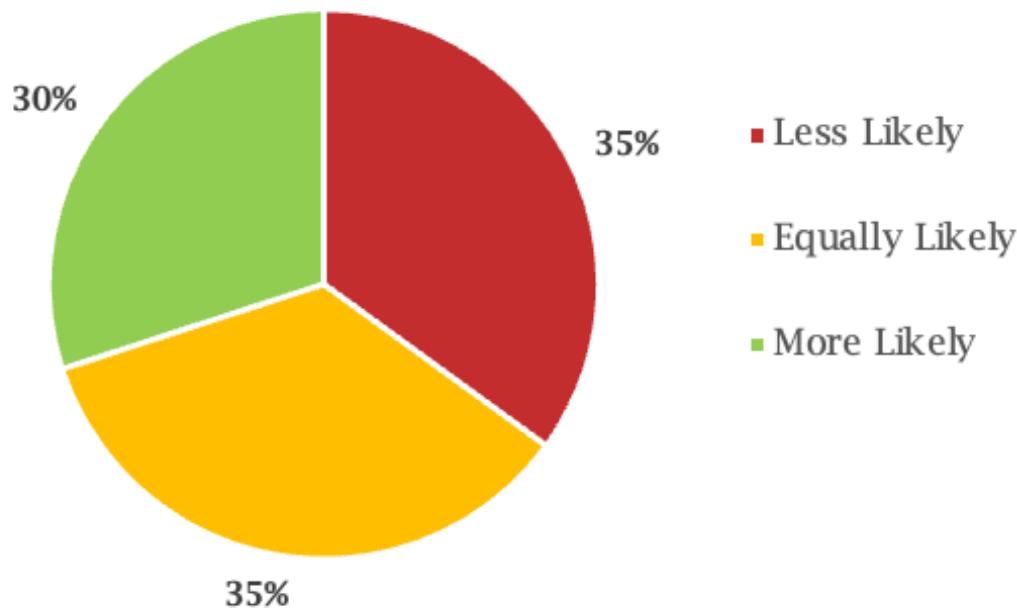


Figure 3. Consumer Preference of Soda-Flavored Gushers compared to Regular Gushers (n = 23)

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Consumer likelihood to buy Mocktail-inspired Gushers flavors compared to Regular Gushers (College-age Students)

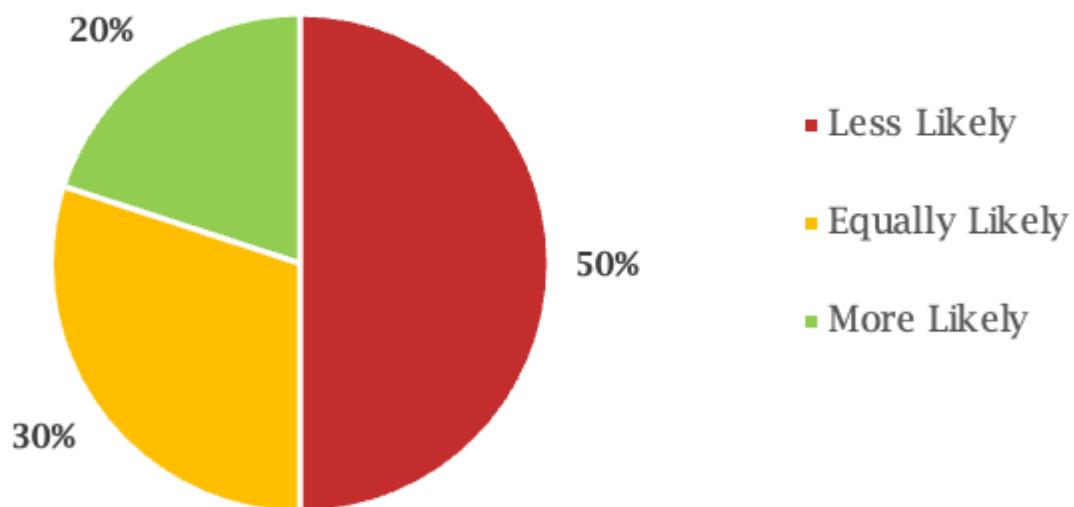


Figure 4. Consumer Preference of Mocktail-Inspired Flavors of Gushers compared to Regular Gushers (n = 23)

APPENDIX

Qualtrics Survey Results

Q11 - What type of influencers do you follow the most? (Select all that apply)	Percentage	Count
Fitness	41%	54
Athletes	33%	43
Lifestyle	50%	66
Music/Artists	48%	64
Fashion	23%	30
Beauty	14%	19
Food	38%	50
Wellness	35%	46
Tech	5%	7
Other	14%	18

Figure 5. Types of influencers followed by Survey Respondents

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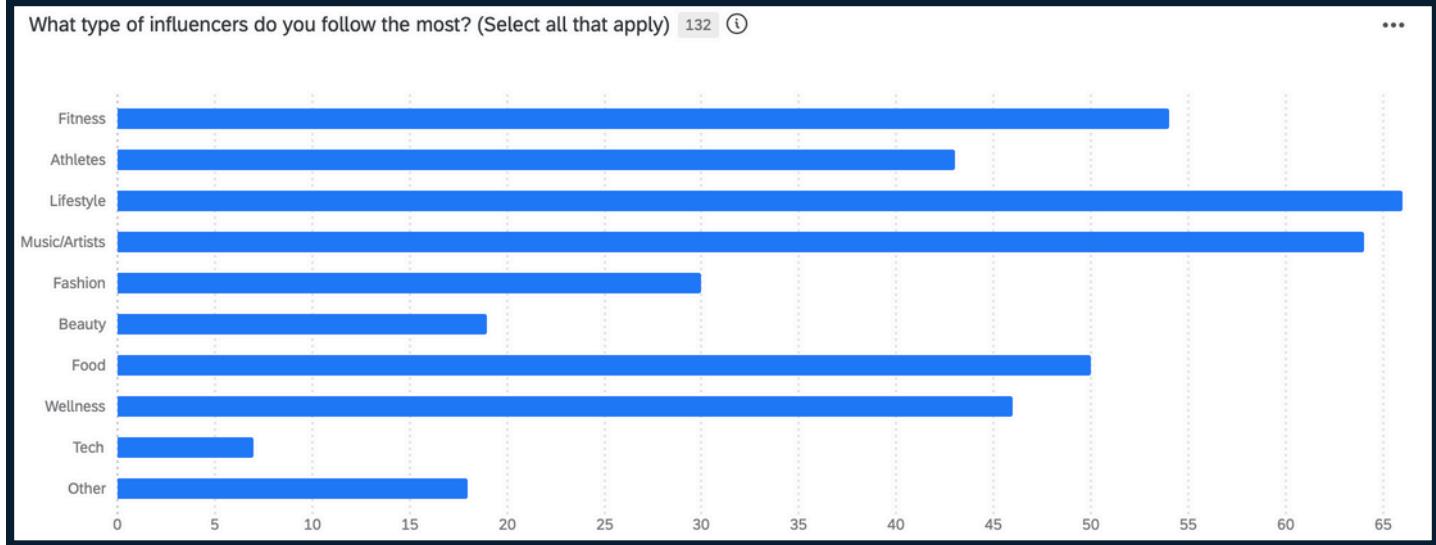


Figure 6. Types of influencers followed by Survey Respondents continued

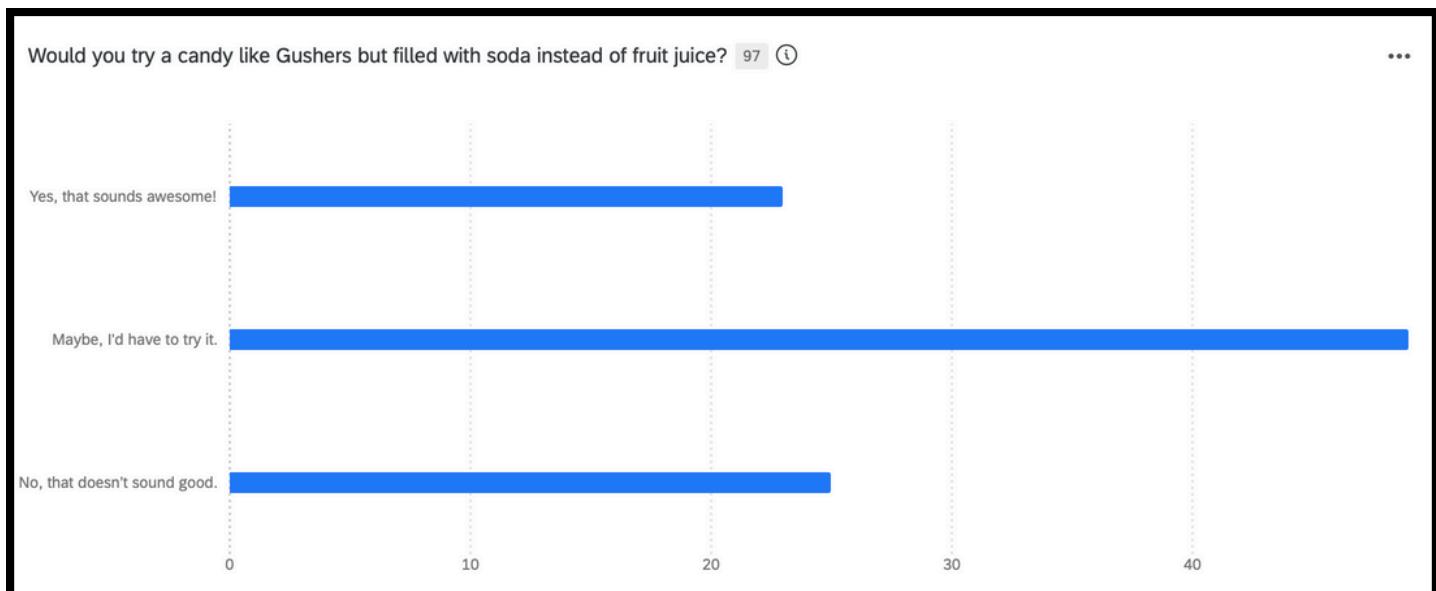


Figure 7. Consumer Response to the idea of soda-filled Gushers (n=97)

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What is your favorite soda? 97 ⓘ

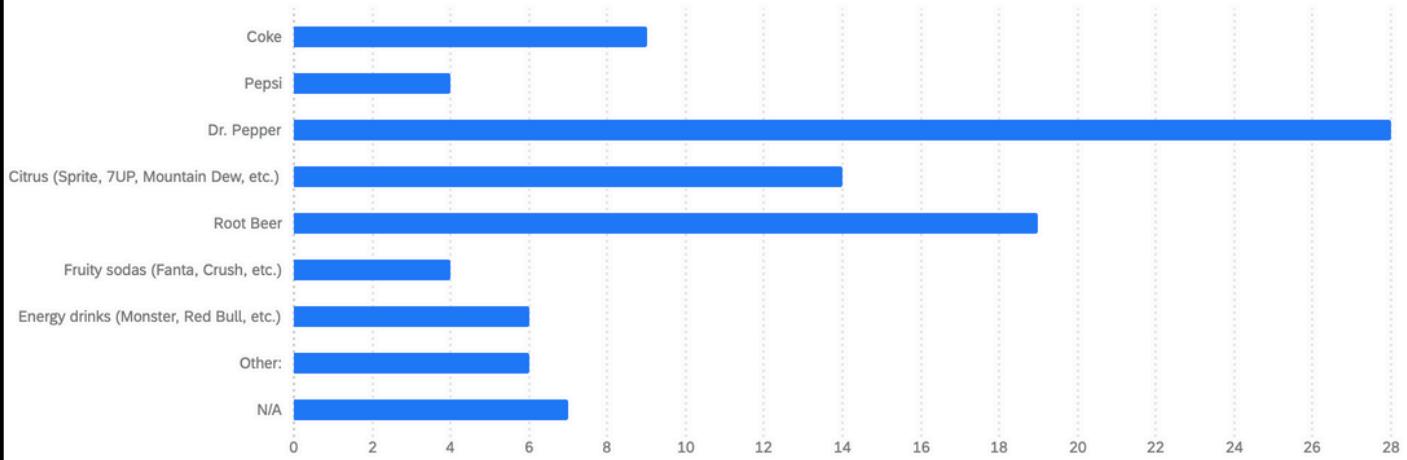


Figure 8. Most popular soda flavors among consumers (n=97)

If you answered "Yes" or "Maybe," what flavor soda would you want inside? 74 ⓘ ⓘ

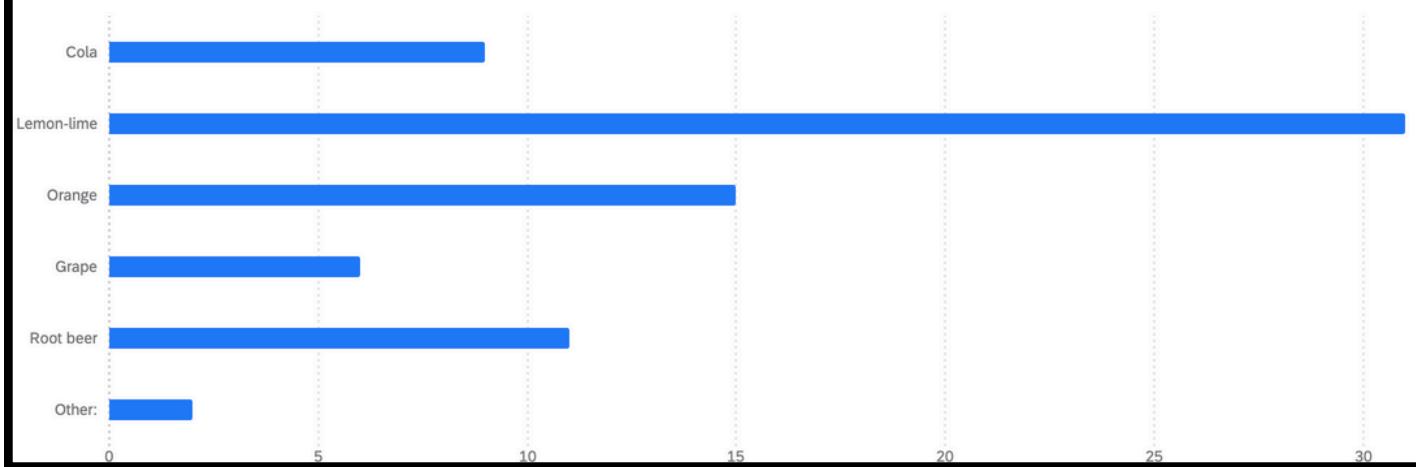


Figure 9. Preferred soda flavors to put in a candy, among respondents who would be willing to try soda filled gushers (n=74)

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