

## **CONSUMER PREFERENCE FOR CREAMY CAKES V/S DRY CAKES: A STUDY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN LUDHIANA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Cakes are favorite indulgence among college students, but their preferences vary when it comes to creamy cakes v/s dry cakes. This study explores what influences these choices among college students in Ludhiana. While previous studies have explored general consumer preferences in bakery industry, limited research focuses specifically on college students choices between creamy cakes v/s dry cakes. This study aims to bridge that gap by considering factors like taste, price, health consciousness, texture and the occasions for which cakes are purchased. These insights can help bakeries, cafes and confectionery brands align their products with student preferences, ensuring better sales and customer satisfaction. Price sensitivity, brand loyalty and personal dietary habits play significant role in influencing purchasing decisions. Using descriptive research design, we selected a sample of 100 respondents aged 18 to 23 from leading colleges in Ludhiana, PCTE Group of Institutes, Arya college, SACCM, GNIMT and many others. The study reveals that college students in ludhiana prefer creamy cakes for special occasions due to their rich taste and visual appeal, while dry cakes are their go to for everyday snacking due to convenience and perceived health benefits.

**Key words:** Consumer preference, creamy cakes, dry cakes, brand loyalty

### **1.INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Consumer preference reflects the decisions people make when choosing a product, considering factors like taste, price, convenience, and personal liking. These choices are shaped by both psychological influences and external conditions. It significantly influences market trends and business strategies, driving companies to adapt and innovate in order to meet customer needs and preferences. The production of bakery products tends to fluctuate because it continuously adapts to evolving consumer preferences. As people's tastes and expectations shift, it becomes challenging for producers to accurately predict and respond to consumer behavior, making the planning process quite complex (Eglite & Kunkulberga, 2017)

1.2 Cakes are an integral part of the bakery industry and have always been a favorite treat especially among college students. Whether it's a celebration, birthday, or just a sweet craving. But when it comes to choosing between creamy cakes (rich in texture and frosting) dry cakes (simpler and less sweet), preferences vary based on factors like taste, health consciousness, price, and texture.

The growth of the baked goods market is primarily fueled by the affordability and accessibility of products, a diverse range of options, rapid urbanization, busy lifestyles, health-conscious choices, and the convenience they offer to consumers (Garba et al., 2023). Studies indicate that young consumers are attracted to foods with high sensory appeal (Smith & Jones, 2020). This explains why creamy cakes, with their rich frosting and decorative

toppings, are popular among students seeking a visually appealing and indulgent treat. With rising disposable incomes, consumers are now more willing to treat themselves to premium and specialty bakery items. In India, the average disposable income rose to ₹2.14 lakh in 2023–24, showing an 8% jump from the previous year, making indulgent purchases like fancy cakes and baked goods more accessible than ever (IndusFood., (2024). Rising dough: India's evolving bakery market)

1.3 Understanding consumer preferences is important for bakeries and cake brands. If they know what young consumers like, they can create better products, introduce new flavors, or even offer healthier alternatives. This study explores what college students in Ludhiana prefer when it comes to cakes and why, helping businesses cater to their tastes and cravings in a way that truly resonates with them.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Chikasada, M. et al. (2024):** baking dates back to 2600 B.C., with the Egyptians being the first known civilization to use yeast for leavening dough and ovens for baking. This historical insight highlights the early advancements in baking technology by the Egyptians, who pioneered the use of yeast for fermentation and ovens for controlled baking. Their innovations laid the foundation for modern baking techniques still used today.

**Kaur, P., & Choudhary, M. (2024):** they conducted a survey among 200 respondents which demonstrates that most people in Ludhiana purchase cakes from bakery whereas they purchase dry cakes from market place emphasizing the role of accessibility and convenience in consumer preference.

**Chikasada, M. et al. (2024):** when buying baked goods, consumers consider factors such as quantity, taste, price, size, and nutritional value. Price tends to be a priority for females, younger individuals, those with education beyond secondary level, and larger families. In contrast, younger consumers, high-income individuals, and those with higher education levels place greater emphasis on nutritional value.

**Nagyová, Ľ et al. (2013):** One of the most significant factors influencing how much people consume bakery products is the price. Consumers are often sensitive to changes in cost, and even small price shifts can impact their purchasing decisions.

**Selvan et al. (2021):** a review of the bakery goods market in Madurai district highlights that bakery items have become a staple part of daily meals in the region which shows shift in dietary habits, where ease of availability and widespread consumption have made bakery products an essential part of local food culture, reflecting evolving preferences and lifestyles.

**Kumar, A., & Raina, A. (2024):** at the core of this exploration lies the understanding that consumer preferences are constantly evolving, shaped by cultural influences, societal shifts, and personal choices. Ghaziabad's bakery industry reflects this dynamic nature, presenting a rich assortment of flavors and textures that celebrate the city's diverse identity.

**Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic. (2014):** The bakery industry in Slovakia is one of the largest food sectors in terms of both number of establishments and number of employees, employing over 7,000 people across more than 500 bakeries. It includes 20 large industrial bakeries producing around 40% of total output, about 40 medium-sized bakeries, and many small craft bakeries. Additionally, 15% of bakery products come from in-store baking, while the rest is produced by small and medium-sized bakeries. Overall, the bakery sector accounts for 7% of the food industry's total revenue and production.

**Kumar, R., & Saini, M. (2019):** People often see creamy cakes as a treat for special occasions, something rich, indulgent, and full of flavor. On the other hand, dry cakes tend to be viewed as more practical, easier to handle, and even a bit healthier, making them a popular choice for everyday snacking.

**Singh & Kaur, (2018):** In metropolitan and tier- 2 cities like Ludhiana, young people are leaning more toward creamy, decorated cakes, partly because of growing exposure to Western food trends. These cakes feel more modern and festive. Still, many students prefer dry cakes for their simplicity, longer shelf life, and easy grab-and-go convenience.

**Patel & Deshmukh,( 2020):** College students today are becoming more mindful of what they eat, paying attention to things like calories and ingredients. Because of this, many see dry cakes as the healthier option as they usually have less cream, fewer preservatives, and feel lighter overall.

**Verma & Nanda, (2021):** Marketing really makes a difference too. Eye-catching packaging, popular brands, and how easily students can grab a cake from a college canteen or nearby bakery often influence their choices, even if it's not what they usually go for.

## RESEARCH GAP

Since this study was limited to college students in Ludhiana, the findings did not fully capture how students in other cities or across India feels about creamy and dry cakes. Preferences can vary widely based on culture, location, and lifestyle. Previous studies have explored general consumer preferences in bakery industry, limited research specifically focus on college students choices between creamy cakes v/s dry cakes. The study didn't explore psychological factors like social media trends or impulse cravings influence students cake choices, factors that often shape the buying habits of today's youth. These could offer valuable insights if explored further.

## OBJECTIVES

- To study the demographics of consumer for the creamy cakes and dry cakes.
- To study recent trends in creamy cakes and dry cakes.

## 3.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1DATA COLLECTION

To conduct quality research, we gathered information from primary data, secondary data and sampling techniques we used for this research paper.

### 3.2PRIMARY DATA

We surveyed 100 students from different colleges in Ludhiana including PCTE Group Of Institutes, Arya college, SACCM, GNIMT, GNDEC, Khalsa College for Women and CT University.The students were given a questionnaire to fill through Google forms to better understand consumer preferences.

### 3.3SECONDARY DATA

We included the data taken from previous research papers, journals,market trends and books on consumer preferences.

### 3.4SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

We used descriptive sampling technique including both primary and secondary sources, allowing students to participate voluntarily to explore wider range of consumer preferences.

### 3.5 SAMPLE SIZE

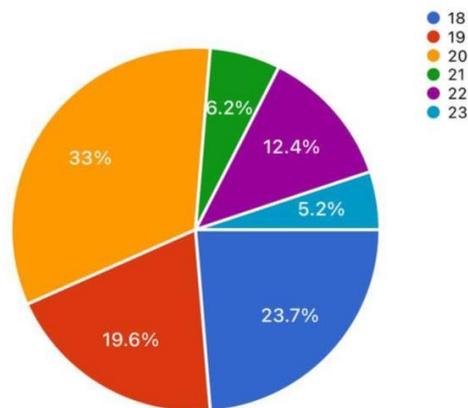
100 Respondents from different college students in Ludhiana were taken.

## 4.ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Age Group

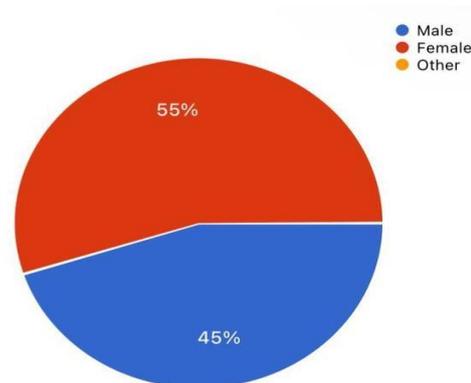
(Graph 4.1.1)



**Interpretation:-**Most cake loving students in this study are just stepping into college life 20 and 18 year olds make up the biggest slice of our respondents, showing that younger students are the most active cake buyers.

#### Gender

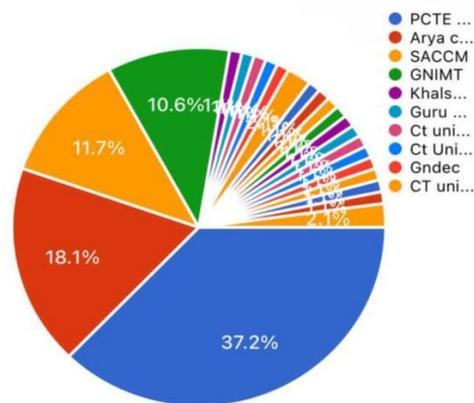
(Graph 4.1.2)



**Interpretation:-**About 55% of respondents were male and 45% were female. It shows both young men and women in Ludhiana are pretty much equally into their cake treats, with just a small edge on the male side who are more willing to respond to surveys.

### College Name

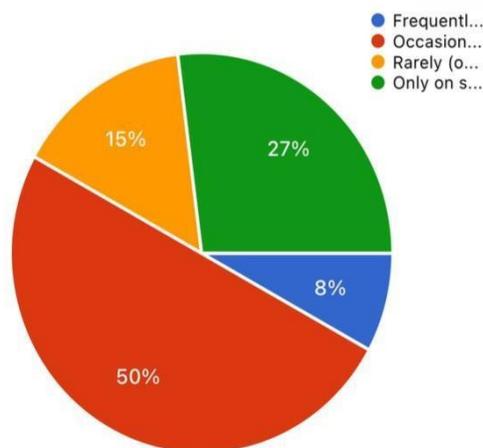
(Graph 4.1.3)



**Interpretation:-**PCTE Group of institutes stole the spotlight, over a third of our responses came from there. Arya College was next, with just under one-fifth of participants, followed by SACCM and GNIMT, with 12% and 11% respectively. The rest of the voices were around 22% which came from a mix of other colleges like Khalsa College for Women, CT University, and GNDEC. It's clear that cake cravings cut across campuses all over Ludhiana.

### How often do you purchase cakes

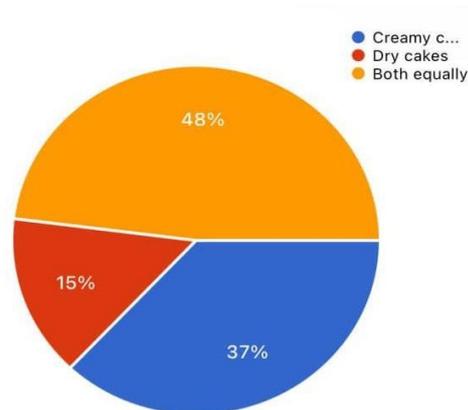
(Graph 4.1.4)



**Interpretation:-**Most students say they buy cakes only occasionally. About a quarter only indulge on special occasions, like birthdays or parties. A smaller group around 8% are the cake enthusiasts who buy them frequently, and the remaining 15% treat cake as a rare purchase.

### Which type of cake do you prefer most

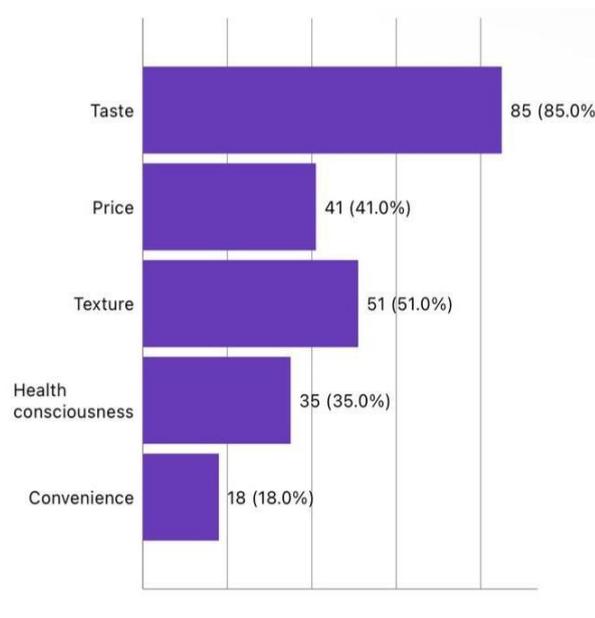
(Graph 4.1.5)



**Interpretation:-**Almost half the students don't play favorites they enjoy both creamy and dry cakes. Still, creamy cakes have a bit more of a fan base.

### Why do you prefer that type of cake

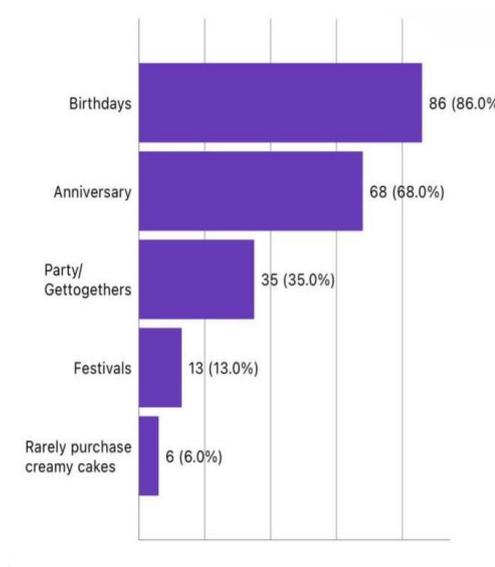
(Graph 4.1.6)



**Interpretation:-**Taste is the clear winner when it comes to cake choices as 85% students simply want something delicious. Texture and price matter too, while health plays a smaller but noticeable role; convenience though, barely moves the needle.

### For What occasion do you usually buy creamy cakes

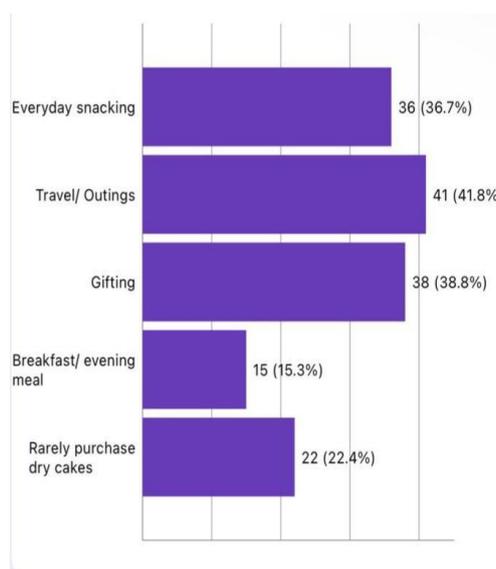
(Graph 4.1.7)



**Interpretation:-**Nearly 9 out of 10 students pick creamy cakes for birthday celebrations. About two-thirds choose them for anniversaries. Over a third grab creamy cakes for social gatherings. Only a small portion buy them for festivals 13% and even fewer 6% rarely purchase creamy cakes.

### For What occasion do you usually buy dry cakes

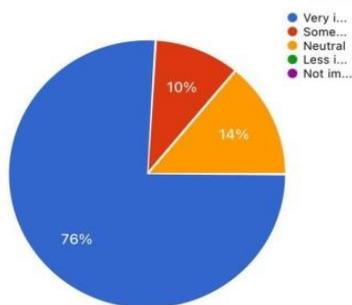
(Graph 4.1.8)



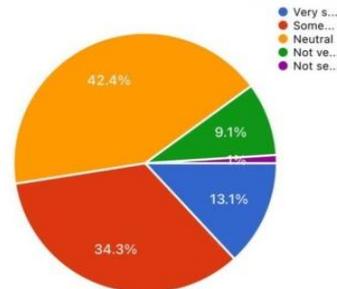
**Interpretation:-**Around 42% see dry cakes as the perfect on-the-go snack. Nearly 39% pick dry cakes when they need a simple gift. About 37% enjoy dry cakes as a regular nibble. Only 15% use them as part of breakfast or an evening tea. Just over one-fifth 22% rarely buy dry cakes.

**How important is taste, price, health consciousness and brand in your cake preferred**

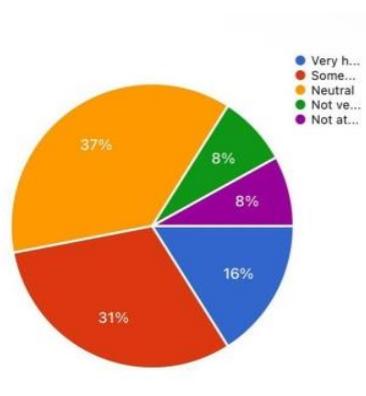
(Graph 4.1.9)



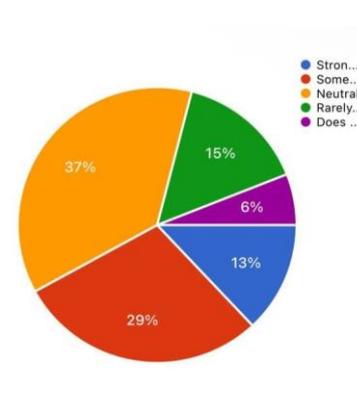
(Graph 4.1.10)



(Graph 4.1.11)



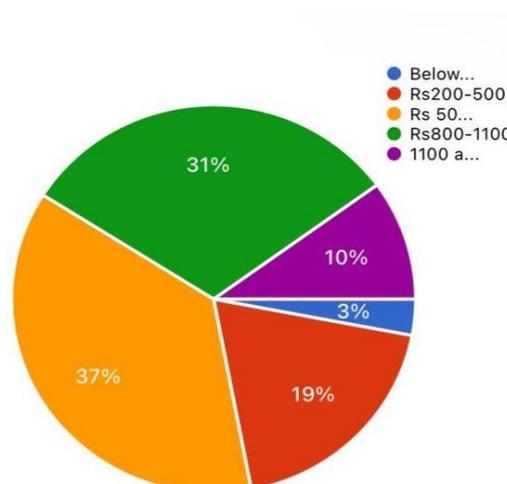
(Graph 4.1.12)



**Interpretation:-**Taste is the top priority for most students 76% while price matters to some mostly at a moderate level. Health consciousness varies, with many feeling neutral or only somewhat influenced by it. Brand loyalty isn't strong overall as most students aren't heavily swayed by labels when picking a cake.

**What is your budget for buying cakes usually**

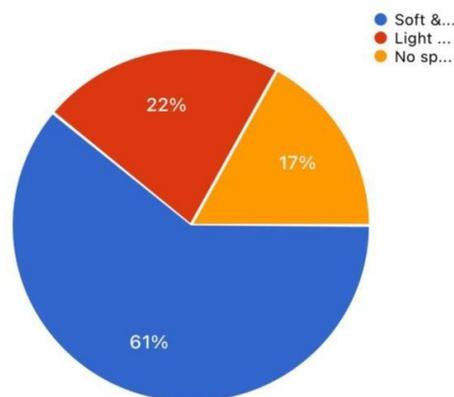
(Graph 4.1.13)



**Interpretation:-**Most students are willing to treat themselves a bit around 37% usually spend between ₹500–800, while 31% stretch it to ₹800–1100. About 19% keep it more budget-friendly at ₹200–500, and only a small group 3% go under ₹200. On the flip side, 10% don't mind spending above ₹1100 for the right cake.

#### Which texture do you prefer more

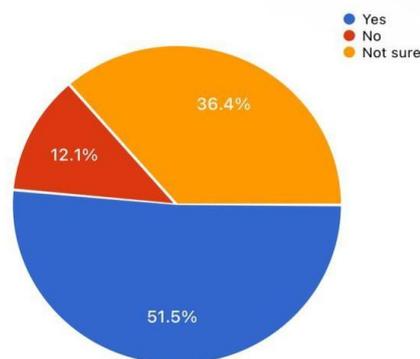
(Graph 4.1.14)



**Interpretation:-**Most students lean toward soft and creamy textures when it comes to cakes, highlighting why creamy cakes are such a hit. Only a smaller group enjoys drier options or doesn't mind either way.

#### Do you believe dry cakes are healthier than creamy cakes

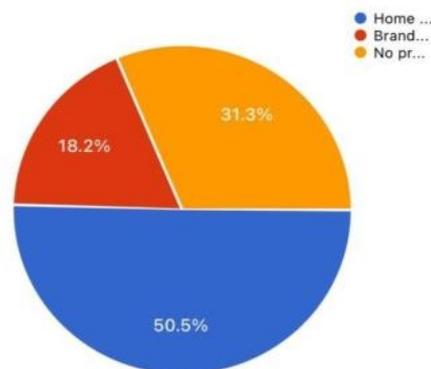
(Graph 4.1.15)



**Interpretation:-**Over half of the students think dry cakes are the healthier pick, while a good chunk isn't quite sure. This shows there is an opportunity to raise awareness or may be even reinvent creamy cakes with a healthier twist.

## Do you prefer home baked cakes or branded cakes

(Graph 4.1.16)



**Interpretation:-**Half of the students prefer home-baked cakes, possibly for their freshness and taste, while a smaller group leans toward branded bakery cakes. The rest don't mind either way, showing a clear preference for homemade cakes.

### 4.2 RECENT TRENDS

There is something about fresh cream cakes that just clicks with today's generation. People, especially college students, are drawn to their soft, rich texture and the way the cream enhances the flavors. Like Many wants chocolate cake with caramel, vanilla, fruits or fresh cream instead of plain ones(The Economic Times)

Visual appeal matters more than ever, with students loving cakes that are beautifully decorated and Instagram worthy. Personalized designs and themed cakes add to their charm, especially for events and parties

(Retail news India & Asia)

Busy college schedules mean students often grab quick snacks between classes. Dry cakes are perfect for this, they are easy to carry, don't need refrigeration, and give a quick energy boost without the mess of cream or frosting. Their longer shelf life and portability make them suitable for busy lifestyles. (MarketResearch.com)

More students are now paying attention to what's in their food, even when it comes to desserts. Cakes made with whole grains, less sugar, or ingredients like oats and nuts are becoming popular for those who want a sweet treat without going overboard. (takeitcool.com)

In urban areas, students are more exposed to trends and international flavors, which is why creamy cakes are more popular there. Meanwhile, in rural areas, dry cakes remain the go-to choice because they are more affordable, easier to store, and suit everyday needs.(The Economic Times)

With food delivery apps and online bakeries booming, students can now explore a wide range of cakes without leaving their rooms. From browsing photos to reading reviews, e-commerce makes it super easy to try new flavors or order customized cakes for any occasion.(Abilogic)

## 5. MAIN FINDINGS

### 5.1 FINDINGS

The study reveals that college students in Ludhiana have a slight preference for creamy cakes, especially when it comes to birthdays and other celebrations, while dry cakes are more popular for casual snacking, travel, and gifting. Taste stands out as the most important factor in choosing a cake, closely followed by texture and price. Interestingly, many students enjoy both types equally, reflecting an openness to variety. Most of them buy cakes only occasionally, with a strong liking for soft, creamy textures. Over half believe dry cakes are the healthier choice, and a significant number prefer home-baked cakes over store-bought brands. When it comes to spending, most students are comfortable with a mid-range budget of ₹500–₹800, showing they seek quality and indulgence without going overboard.

### 5.2 LIMITATIONS

- The research was limited to college students in Ludhiana, so the findings may not represent consumer behavior in other regions or among different age groups.
- Gathering responses from students across different institutions was time-consuming and challenging.
- Changes in cake preferences during festivals, holidays or specific seasons were not addressed in this study.
- Elements such as branding, shelf life, packaging and presentation which are considered important for consumer decisions were not included in the analysis.
- Responses were self-reported, which may lead to biases such as inaccurate recall or the tendency to give socially acceptable answers.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study suggests that bakeries and cake brands should focus on variety since many students enjoy both creamy and dry cakes. Prioritizing taste and texture will go a long way, as these are what students care about most. Promoting healthier cake options, especially in the dry cake category, for those who are more health conscious. Creamy cakes can be promoted for birthdays and special celebrations, while dry cakes work well as everyday snacks or gifts. Highlighting a home-baked feel, keeping prices within the ₹500–₹800 range, and making cakes easy to order or access could really help connect better with the student crowd.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides a deeper understanding of the cake preferences among college students in Ludhiana, highlighting the evolving tastes and buying behavior of a young and diverse consumer group. While creamy cakes continue to be a top choice, especially for celebrations like birthdays and anniversaries and dry cakes are gaining recognition for their perceived health benefits, making them popular for snacking, gifting, and travel. Taste remains the most influential factor, but texture and price also play significant roles in shaping decisions. The preference for soft and creamy cakes and mid range budgets further underscores the importance of balancing indulgence with affordability. Additionally, the mixed opinions on health and branding suggest that there is room for brands to educate and engage audience more effectively. Many students prefer home baked cakes over branded ones, reflecting a desire for freshness, personalization, and possibly a connection to homemade comfort. Overall, the findings suggest that bakeries and cake brands have a valuable opportunity to

diversify their offerings, tailor products to match different occasions, and introduce healthier yet flavorful options to cater to this conscious but experience driven segment

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## **APPENDICES**

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