

WOMEN AND CHOCOLATE: AN INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP

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Women are passionate about some specific objects. Chocolate, though as an object is adored by almost everyone irrespective of gendered preference, is connected to women as their favourite object. Methodology: The present research is mainly based on secondary sources for analytical constructs. A survey is conducted among 150 urban women of Kolkata city, West Bengal in India for identifying the nature of chocolate attraction among women. Among the respondents 75 are working women and 75 are either part time workers or students. The objectives of present research are – 1] to analyse the nature of attraction of women for chocolate and 2] to explain the related socio – cultural aspects of chocolate attraction of women. Chocolate consumption of women will be helpful aid in strengthening of self perception and feminine identity. Some of the thinkers point out that in many situations the ritual of consumption of chocolate by women occurs in secrecy. Consuming chocolate is effective for memorable experiences along with evoking moments of delight in eating chocolate since the childhood. Women love to share chocolate within the close circle of them. So the pleasure of having chocolate is contextualized in female sociality and cordiality. Women share chocolate also in work place. The paper mainly focuses on the relationship of women and chocolate from the point of consumption. From the point of production also women have a close connection with chocolate. Some kind of upper and upper middle class orientation can be linked with chocolate love of the people.

KEY WORDS: CHOCOLATE, WOMEN, CONSUMPTION, MEMORY, RELATION

Women are passionate about some specific objects. They have some special feelings and emotion regarding those selective objects. Chocolate, though as an object is adored by almost everyone irrespective of gendered preference, is connected to women as their favourite object.

‘Chocolate inspires a passion normally reserved for things grander than food’ (Roach, 1989, p. 135). On the basis of analysis of Rozin (1979), it can be said that any discussion regarding chocolate needs a distinction between four terms like use, preference, liking and craving. Following table can be summarized for the conceptual clarifications:

CONCEPT	REFERENCES
USE	objective measurement of amount consumed
Preference	choice between alternatives
Liking	a subjective measure of attitude to a food AS principal account for preference
Craving	a special case of liking, which is particularly intense, motivates behavior aimed at gaining the craved substance, and is periodic --“intense desire to eat a specific food”

A survey of American military personnel can be cited for judging the nature of high degrees of liking for chocolate. Among the 416 food items, Chocolate milk ranked sixth (Meiselman et al., 1972). In a survey involving university students regarding craving, chocolate was mentioned more frequently than any other food by female college students (Weingarten & Elston, 1991). On the other hand, Rodin et al. (1991) through repeated-measures survey of healthy adult women pointed out that the most commonly mentioned craved substances are recognized as chocolate and ice cream. Chocolate can be linked with an intrinsic attraction. This appeal comes in relation to sweetness and texture coupled with other sensory features. All the features in combination attract the positive feeling among the consumers of chocolate. Utility of chocolate can be taken as motivational attribute for several reasons. Human et al., 1987; Smith & Sauder, 1969; but see Cohen et al., 1987 focused on the issue that individuals sometimes use chocolate as self-medication for depression.

To Maleki et al., (2020) the consumption of chocolate is associated with the competence of positive or negative modification of psychological aspects of consumer by impacting their

emotions and cognitive and sensorial responses. Steinsbekk et al., (2018) and Sultson et al., (2017) opined that emotional eating is habitually allied with emotional foodstuffs. Chocolate can be seen as an emotional foodstuff. Wansink et al., (2003) & Spence(2017) opined that women in general have a tendency of "eat light". Simultaneously they prefer comfort food. It was noted that in comparison to men, women consume chocolate not for pleasure only, but even in response to a negative emotional condition. Study showed that women eat chocolate occasionally but interesting fact is that women consume chocolate with skipping regular meals as a reason for craving of special food like chocolate.

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NATURE OF ATTRACTION OF WOMEN FOR CHOCOLATE:

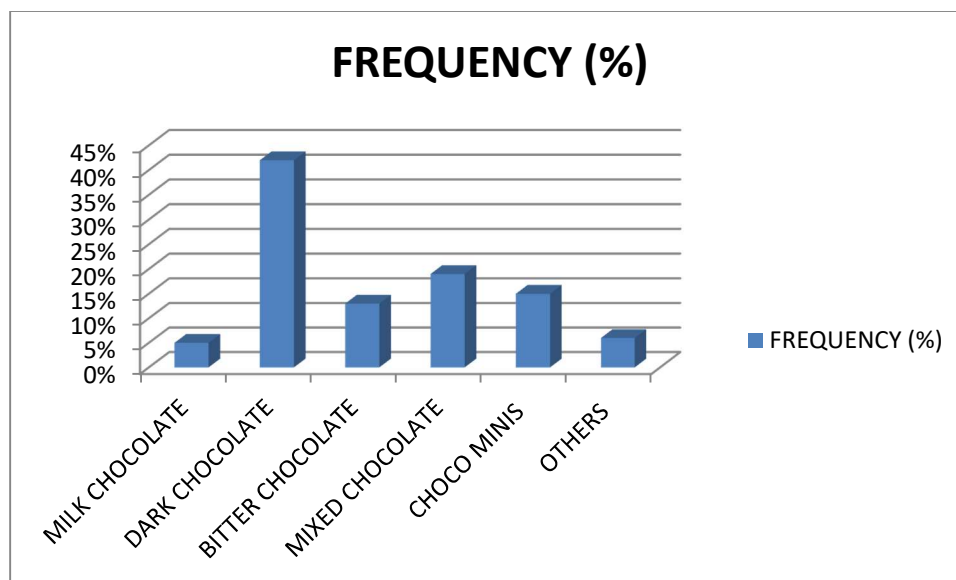
McCabe and Malefyt (2020) selected a group of women who eat chocolate on a daily basis. On the basis of an ethnographic study, it was revealed that the habit of chocolate consumption is directly linked with full sensory enjoyment. The issue is connected with a high degree of transformation. The taste of chocolate is generally tempting for men and women but women have special attraction for chocolate. Women accept that chocolate can be utilized for conversion of moods. They normally consider the propensity of changing mood through chocolate as part of a regime of self-care in their daily lives. Thus with the association of chocolate women can enjoy relatively heightened consciousness of themselves through symbolic associations as expressive connotation. With the joint presence of embodiment and dialectical objectivism, a new theoretical platform emerges for interpreting chocolate practices of women and the relations between the body and materiality through the manifestation of love and attraction of chocolate. Ingold (2015) expressed those chocolate practices of women in relation to their engagement and movement in a gendered world through a continuous process of movement -- perceiving, acting and becoming.

Sensory enjoyment of chocolate can be linked with all the senses. Sensory pleasure of chocolate depends on shapes and colors of pieces. The desire to consume chocolate is related with a sense of warmth as chocolate is “the ultimate comfort food.” Smell of rich and enticing aroma of chocolate is the centre of attention. Artisanal craft of chocolate is additional aspect of excitement incorporating desire for chocolate.

Discourse of chocolate attraction of women is connected with conceptualization of nurturance, sensuality, exoticism and enhancement in taste holistically. These four attributional categories emerge concept, perception, sensation and experience of having chocolates in relation to self and society.

TYPES OF CHOCOLATE

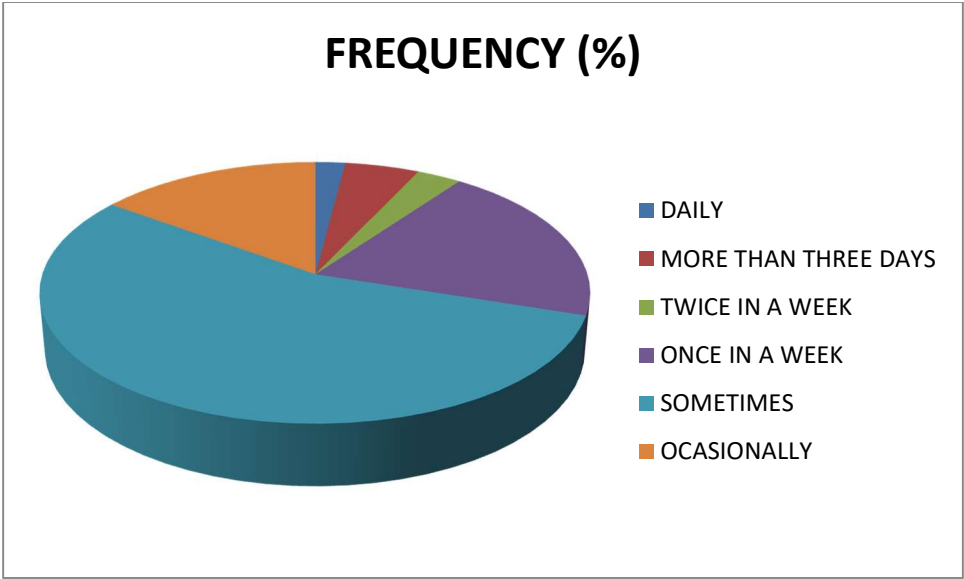
TYPES	FREQUENCY (%)
MILK CHOCOLATE	5%
DARK CHOCOLATE	42%
BITTER CHOCOLATE	13%
MIXED CHOCOLATE [FRUIT & NUT]	19%
CHOCO MINIS	15%
OTHERS	6%
TOTAL	100%



Different kinds of chocolate preferences are marked clearly in this study. Data showed that 42% of the respondents are in favour of dark chocolate. They have the opinion that dark chocolate is an index of good health in terms of Heart, energy and vitality in general. So the image of chocolate as a healthy item is highlighted with the consumption of dark chocolate. The consumption also focuses on health consciousness of the women.

FREQUENCY OF CONSUMPTION:

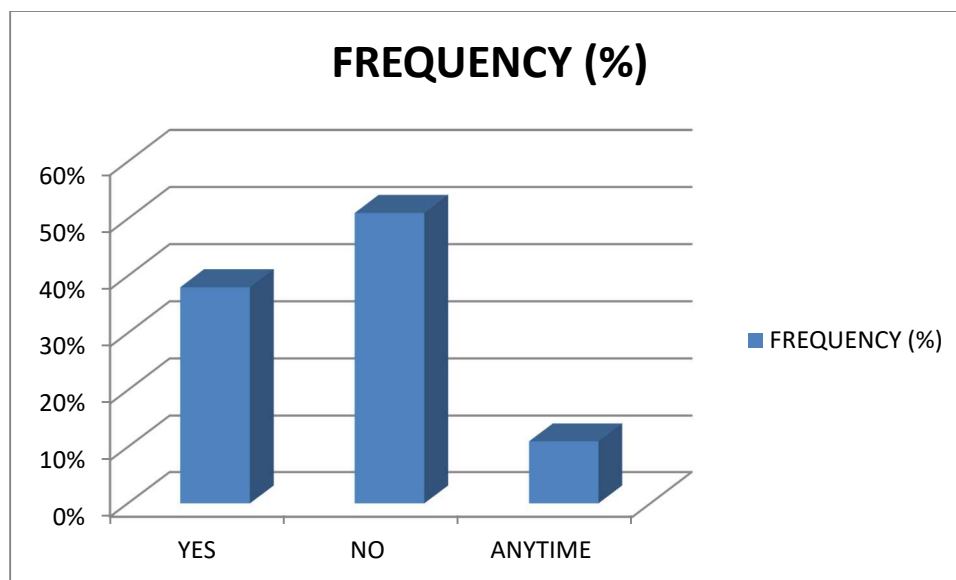
TIME OF CONSUMPTION	FREQUENCY (%)
DAILY	2%
MORE THAN THREE DAYS	5%
TWICE IN A WEEK	3%
ONCE IN A WEEK	20%
SOMETIMES	55%
OCASIONALLY	15%
TOTAL	100%



In terms of chocolate consumption maximum women replied they eat chocolate some time whenever it is available to them. 55% of the respondents reported that they have no specific time of having chocolates. Only 2% of the respondents admit that they consume chocolate daily. The women love to take chocolate at any time. 20% of the respondents say that they consume chocolate occasionally. In sum, it can be said that chocolate consumption of women can't show any specific trend. Chocolate consumption can range from daily to occasional basis.

SPECIFIC TIME OF CHOCOLATE CONSUMPTION:

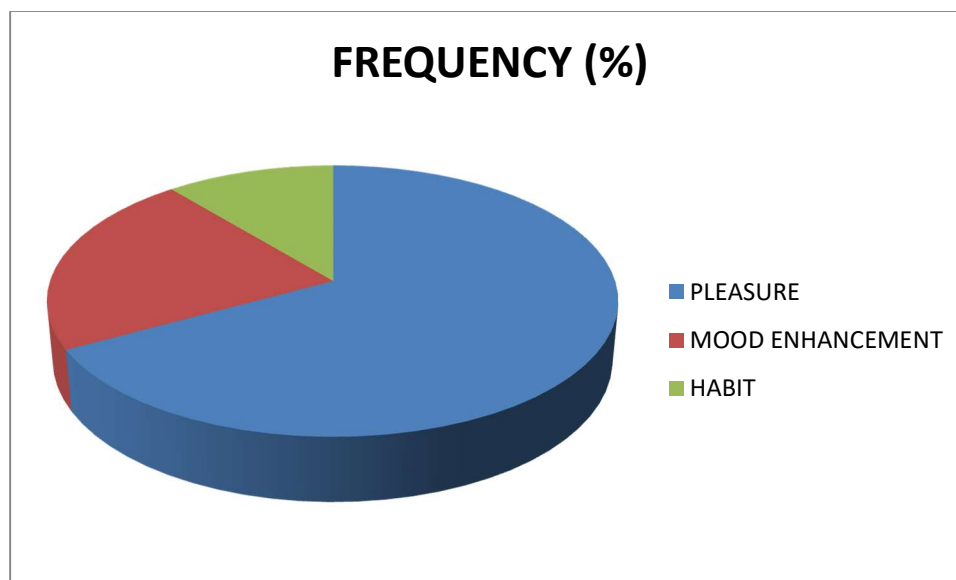
SPECIFIC TIME OF CHOCOLATE CONSUMPTION	FREQUENCY (%)
YES	38%
NO	51%
ANYTIME	11%
TOTAL	100%



Respondents replied that they consume chocolate at home daily. They opined that chocolate is related with several time period of the day – like morning upon waking up, before going to bed, after a meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner), and as a snack anytime of day or evening. 51% of the respondents said that they have no specific time for consuming chocolate. They eat chocolate separately as a food item sometimes, again chocolate is a food itself. Working women say that in the period of heavy work pressure, they sometimes ‘take a break’ with chocolate. The time is known to them as ‘chocolate break’. Studies showed that agency of chocolate have to be relational with respect to differential circumstances. The significant aspects are specificity of context, psychological perspective, mood swing and cultural orientations. From that perspective consuming chocolate equalizes empowering the desire and sensualities of women. Their privacy can be pleasurable with the personalized moments of chocolate delight.

REASONS:

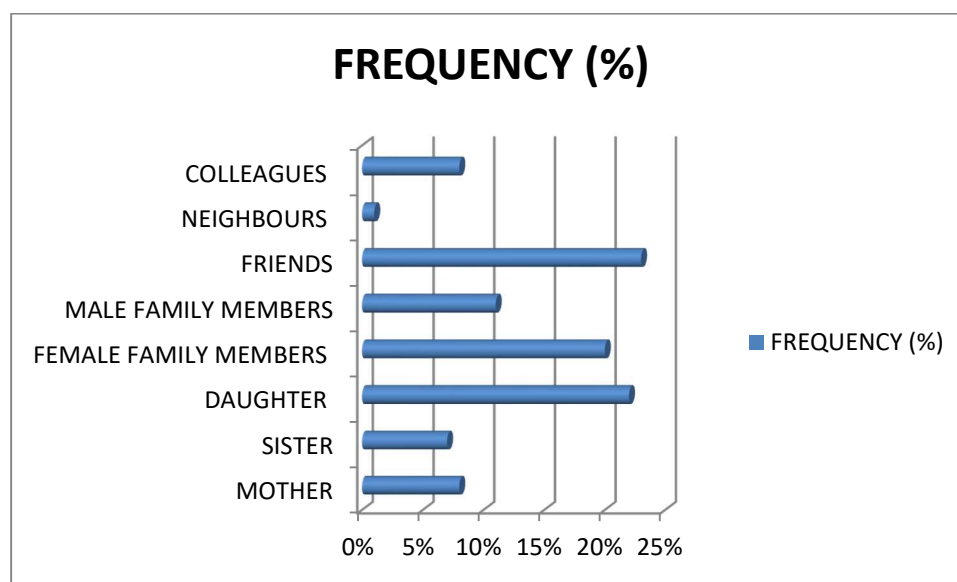
REASONS	FREQUENCY (%)
PLEASURE	67%
MOOD ENHANCEMENT	22%
HABIT	11%
TOTAL	100%



Some significant narratives come with the chocolate consumption. Consumption of chocolate is linked with softness and melting propensity. This taste oriented focus ultimately gives comfort and pleasure to the consumer. Some of the respondents point out that they like to put chocolate in the refrigerator. The frozen form of chocolate gives them passionate flavor which enhances the taste ultimately. Some of the regular chocolate lovers put emphasis on crunchy resonances of chocolate, crusty coverings and inside portions. On the basis of the view points of the respondents, satiation and satisfaction comes with the sensory engagement. Data showed the reason of having chocolate is completely focused on the issue of pleasure. 67% of the respondents admit that they take chocolate regularly for achieving pleasure. Chocolate is directly connected to mood enhancement. 22% of the respondents said that after having chocolate they feel better than before. On the basis of the study it can be said that an intricacy of relationship is shared between chocolate and emerging wish of consumption which in turn influences the mood. In sum, the entire system is related with the lifestyle, thus chocolate influences lifestyles of the individual definitely in positive direction. Chocolate as a specific item is preferred by some, many respondents are enthusiastic about chocolate cake, pastry and ice cream. Enjoying chocolate with intimate people turns out as an ecstasy of living. Chocolate is the item of the real living in true sense.

COMPANION OF CONSUMPTION OF CHOCOLATE:

COMPANION	FREQUENCY (%)
MOTHER	8%
SISTER	7%
DAUGHTER	22%
FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS	20%
MALE FAMILY MEMBERS	11%
FRIENDS	23%
NEIGHBOURS	1%
COLLEAGUES	8%
TOTAL	100%



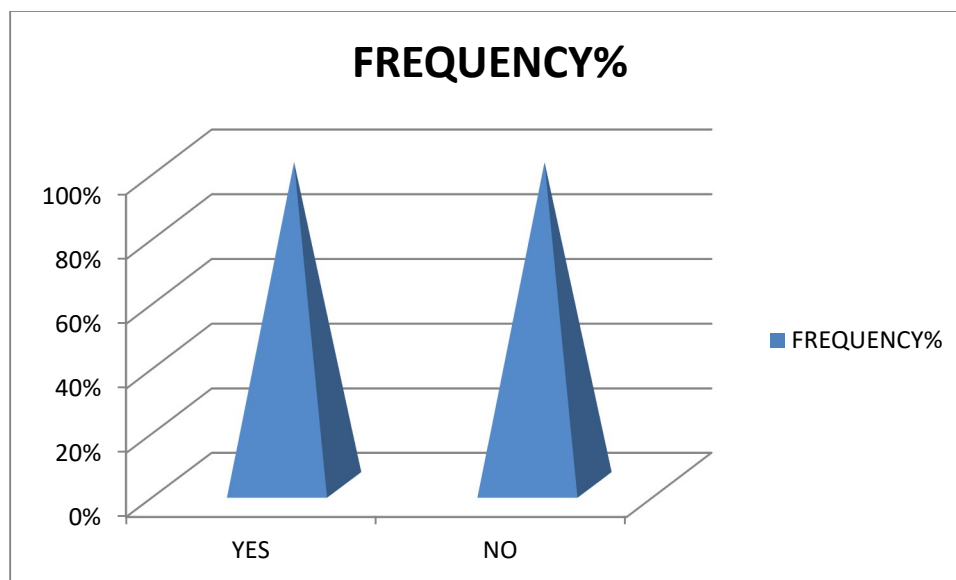
The study showed that women mostly like to have chocolate with the intimate circle. 23% of the respondents point out those women is by and large familiar with friends in having chocolate. 22% of the respondents like to consume chocolate daughters. 20% respondents want to have chocolate with female family members mainly. Henceforth, women are principally concerned about chocolate with relational specificity. The relation specific orientation focuses on friends, daughters and female family members.

SOCIO – CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CHOCOLATE ATTRACTION OF WOMEN

External aspect illustrates that the position of women is commercialized as agents within the extent of market economy. This view is connected with larger networks of social interaction as well as patriarchal views of women. Jointly these two views can be perceived as effective connotation for introducing a new chocolate product in the marketplace. Internally it was visualized that from theoretical standpoint chocolate consumption became analysed as cultural practices. The relevant understanding can be connected to an ethnographic account of chocolate attraction. Some of the thinkers point out that in many situations the ritual of consumption of chocolate by women occurs in secrecy (Simmel 1906). According to Fainzang(2002) women love to consume chocolate alone in the periphery of home and with other women such as one's mother, sister or close friends. The tendency can be taken as an expression of feminine identity. Thus from the theoretical stand point chocolate consumption is linked with the specificity in relation to gender, class and social status. It can be said that the activity of chocolate practices of women is an important marker of feminine identity. Chocolate consumption of women will be helpful aid in strengthening of self perception and feminine identity.

SECRECY AND CHOCOLATE:

MAINTAINING SECRECY	%
YES	78%
NO	22%
TOTAL	100%



The interesting aspect is that women love to eat chocolate in secrecy. In this study 78% of the respondents agree that they enjoy the pleasure of having chocolate in secrecy. Traditional gender centric interpretation highlights the correlation between secrecy and women in general. Chocolate as an item of secrecy is taken as important aspect of discussion undoubtedly.

Chocolate should be treated as a **material object**. The object is undoubtedly connected to rich socio – cultural connotation. Chocolate is consumed on the basis of various kinds of material forms. Therefore the consumption of chocolate comes with manifold links which are ultimately connected with empowerment of human relationships. The role of chocolate as an agency of sensory and sensual enjoyment for women becomes prominent in relation to ideological associations, social discourses, embodied sensations and situated occasions.

The issue of temporality is directly linked with the consumption of chocolate. Consuming chocolate is effective for **memorable experiences** along with evoking moments of delight in eating chocolate since the childhood. Chocolate can be utilized as incentive, reward or treat to self as well as others. It creates expectancy in receiving and giving chocolate to self and others. Chocolate is related not only with special occasions (like festive period from Durga puja to Dewali, Rakkha Bandhan , Vai Fota , Id, Easter, Christmas), general occasion (like birthday, marriage and so on) but a treat of daily reward also. Chocolate is just like an inducement of intimacy in relationships through giving and receiving gifts as a form of communication with a tangible material object. The “romantic gift” implies a multitude of entangled concepts like

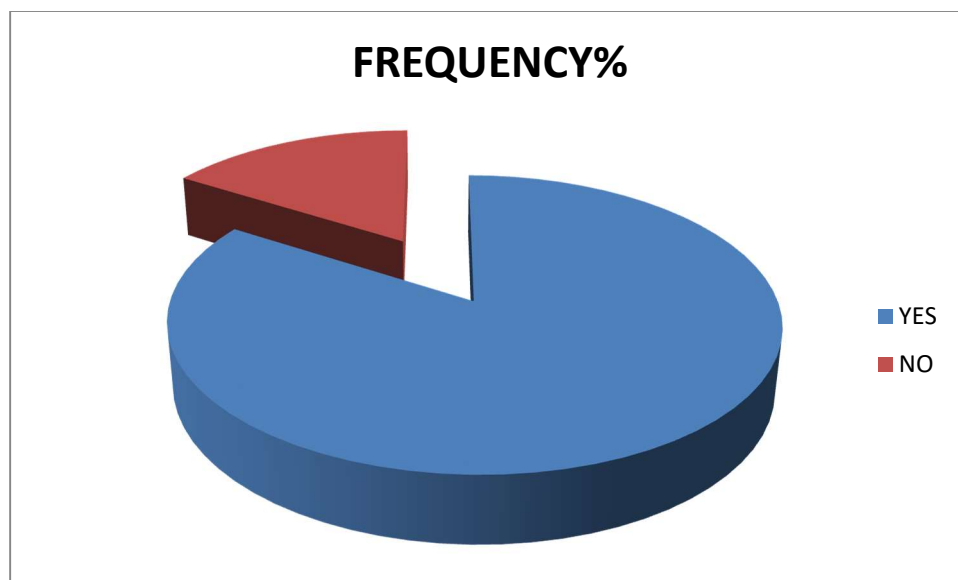
passion, intimacy, affection, persuasion, care, celebration, altruism, and nostalgia (Minowa and Belk 2018). Chocolate is similarly known as a specified gift with all the characteristics of reciprocal exchange. Most of the people have in mind a popularized image of the box of chocolates as correlates of memory. Hence chocolate is remembered as “tournament of memory” (Sutton 2001). Sociological exposition of chocolate attraction highlights the issue of relationships in several categories. The study showed following spheres of relationship ----

- people and objects,
- people and situations, and
- experiences and memories,

Women love to share chocolate within the close circle of them. So the pleasure of having chocolate is contextualized in female sociality and cordiality. Women share chocolate also in work place. It is known that sometimes they try to maintain a hide of chocolate in their desks. In the work place, some women assemble impulsively to have a break for having social interaction with a piece of chocolate. This kind of sharing of chocolate confirms social relations within a female group. Thus chocolate can be an item through which the women can generate social space for themselves. A specific type of group has emerged with the help of chocolate as a gendered group. Working women prefer to eat chocolate privately and sometimes in a private space away from the male gaze. This practice of having chocolate in secrecy is linked with emotionality in psycho –social realm.

CHOCOLATE & MEMORY:

CHOCOLATE WITH MEMORY	FREQUENCY%
YES	84%
NO	16%
TOTAL	100%



84% of the respondents affirm that they feel the association between chocolate and memory. Their association can be either with the specified childhood memory or with some romantic gift. Chocolate may be viewed as a catalyst of memorization not only for the individual but for the group or collectivity as well.

On the basis of the study some narratives come forward regarding the expression of women after eating chocolate:

- Exciting with stimulation of the moment, doing what feels good, vivacious, revitalizing, exhilarating
- Dangerous with not thinking consequences, keeping secrecy
- Romantic with flirtation, feeling a flash, feeling energetic, gorgeous, beautiful, sought after, beloved
- Passionate with powerful encounter,
- Brief with unanticipated, unplanned,
- Memorable –extra ordinary,

Chocolate and women are connected to each other. The paper mainly focuses on the relationship of women and chocolate from the point of consumption. From the point of production also women have a close connection with chocolate. The area of cocoa production is dominated by women not only in India, but in other parts of the world. Chocolate consumption is favourite for all normally irrespective of gendered division. But in the world of advertisement the relation

between chocolate and women becomes an established genre now. In the analysis, indirectly the economic aspect becomes very prominent. Chocolate is generally a costly item. So, some kind of upper and upper middle class orientation can be linked with chocolate love of the people.

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