

Consumption Habits, Expenditure, and Development Trends of China's Snack Market

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China's snack market is in a pivotal phase of structural upgrading, encompassing sub-categories such as processed foods, chocolate, and coffee. Consumer demand is marked by distinct traits of diversification, health consciousness, and scenario-specific consumption. Drawing on data from authoritative third-party institutions—including the China Commercial Industry Research Institute, Euromonitor, and China Insights Consultancy—this report systematically analyzes the consumption habits, expenditure characteristics, category growth/decline trends, and future development directions of China's snack market. It also provides positioning strategies for overseas brands entering the Chinese market, with a focus on highlighting the core value of collaborating with chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center.

I. Multi-dimensional Differences in Consumption Habits and Expenditure

Driven by factors including age, region, income, and gender, China's snack consumption exhibits clear hierarchical characteristics, with significant variations in the scale and structure of expenditure across different groups.

(1) Age Factor: Generational Gaps Shape Consumption Preferences

Snack consumption habits vary drastically across age groups, with Generation Z and the silver-haired generation emerging as dual core growth engines. Data indicates that Generation Z constitutes 47% of snack consumers, solidifying their position as the core consumer group. They favor personalized and scenario-specific products: 62% of post-2000s consumers buy snacks via social platforms, with a post-purchase sharing rate exceeding 40%, and they are prepared to pay a premium of more than 30% for personalized offerings. Products such as "night economy" snack packs and co-branded items enjoy high acceptance among this cohort. Meanwhile, the silver-haired

group—projected to reach 320 million people by 2030—prioritizes health attributes, driving rapid growth in demand for sugar-controlled elderly snacks and high-protein, easy-to-digest options, with an estimated annual growth rate of over 25%.

Benefiting from policy standardization and increased family investment, the children's snack segment is expected to reach a market size of 80 billion Yuan by 2025 and surpass 150 billion Yuan by 2030, maintaining an annual growth rate of over 15%. Parents increasingly prefer nutritious products that comply with the *General Requirements for Children's Snacks*.

In terms of expenditure, the 18–35 age group spends an average of 800–1,500 Yuan per month on snacks, with coffee, chocolate, and similar categories accounting for over 30%. For consumers aged 50 and above, monthly expenditure averages 300–600 Yuan, primarily concentrated on healthy options like nuts and traditional pastries.

(2) Regional Factor: Rise of Lower-Tier Markets and North-South Preference Divides

Regional differences significantly influence snack consumption patterns, with lower-tier markets emerging as a key growth driver. In 2023, lower-tier markets (third/fourth-tier cities and rural areas) contributed 38% of total market revenue, a figure projected to rise to 45% by 2030. Consumers in these regions prioritize cost-effectiveness, making snack discount stores—the mainstream channel—popular due to their "de-intermediation" advantage, offering prices 25% lower than traditional supermarkets. By 2025, per capita annual snack expenditure in lower-tier cities is expected to reach 1,800 Yuan.

In terms of channel expansion, snack discount stores in lower-tier cities are growing far faster than those in first/second-tier cities. As of September 2025, over 60% of stores operated by leading brands such as Mingming Henmang and Wanchen Group are located in lower-tier markets.

Distinct north-south preferences persist: Northern consumers favor savory snacks (e.g., braised foods, puffed snacks), while southern consumers lean toward sweet options (e.g., pastries, chocolate). Regional culture also fuels innovation—for instance, spicy snacks are popular in southwest China, and seafood snacks enjoy high acceptance in east China.

In expenditure terms, per capita annual snack consumption in first-tier cities is approximately 2,800 Yuan. Although the average customer price in third/fourth-tier cities is only 58% of that in first-tier cities, e-commerce penetration exceeds 63%, and community group buying orders have surged, becoming the core driver of expenditure growth.

(3) Income Factor: Parallel Growth of High-Endization and Cost-Effectiveness

Income levels determine snack consumption tiers, forming a dual structure of "high-end upgrading + cost-effective foundation." High-income groups (households with monthly incomes exceeding 20,000 Yuan) prioritize quality and functionality: the sales share of high-end chocolate (priced above 50 Yuan per unit) rose from 18% in 2020 to 32% in 2024, and premium freshly brewed coffee accounts for over 60% of their coffee consumption. They are willing to pay a 20–50% premium for healthy snacks with clean labels or organic certifications.

Middle-income groups (monthly household incomes of 8,000–20,000 Yuan) are the core consumers of healthy snacks. Expenditure on low-sugar, low-fat nuts, fruit and vegetable crisps, and similar categories has increased year-on-year, with a 18% growth in healthy snack spending among this group in 2024.

Low-income groups (monthly household incomes below 8,000 Yuan) focus on cost-effectiveness, with bulk-weighted snacks and affordable puffed foods as their primary choices. The low-price strategy of snack discount stores aligns perfectly with their needs, accounting for 45% of low-income groups' snack expenditure in 2024.

(4) Gender Factor: Demand Differences Drive Category Innovation

Gender differences lead to variations in snack preferences and expenditure structures. Female consumers favor healthy snacks, sweet foods, and functional products, making up over 70% of buyers of low-sugar chocolate and collagen snacks. In 2024, the frequency of female snack purchases rose by 14.6% year-on-year—higher than the 9.8% growth rate for men—and over 50% of their snack spending occurs in scenarios such as office afternoon tea or gatherings with friends.

Male consumers, by contrast, prefer savory and energy-boosting snacks. Men account for 58% of coffee consumption, particularly as the core audience for freshly brewed and functional energy coffee.

In terms of expenditure, women's monthly snack spending is 20–30% higher than men's, with beauty-enhancing functional snacks and high-aesthetic co-branded items driving growth. Men, meanwhile, show faster expenditure growth in high-end coffee, imported nuts, and similar categories.

II. Growth and Decline Trends of Snack Categories

Driven by consumption upgrading and heightened health awareness, the category structure of China's snack market is undergoing accelerated iteration. Healthy and functional categories continue to grow, while traditional high-oil, high-sugar options gradually decline.

(1) Growing Snack Categories

1.Health-Focused Snacks: Low-sugar, low-fat, and high-protein products have become mainstream, accounting for over 35% of the total market share in 2023 and projected to exceed 50% by 2030. Nuts, fruit and vegetable crisps, and plant-based snacks are growing particularly rapidly—each with an annual growth rate exceeding 15%. As a niche standout, konjac snacks reached a terminal market size of approximately 27 billion Yuan in 2024, with leisure konjac snacks accounting for over 18 billion Yuan and a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly 20% over the past decade.

2.Functional Snacks: Aligning with the "wellness economy" boom, demand for products infused with probiotics, collagen, oat peptides, and other functional ingredients has surged. The market size is expected to exceed 200 billion Yuan by 2028, with a CAGR of 12.3%. For example, Ximai Food's functional offerings—such as medicinal-edible oat cereal powder and enzymatically hydrolyzed oat powder—drove record sales in the instant retail channel.

3.Chocolate-Coffee Fusion Categories: With overlapping consumer bases, fusion innovation has become a trend. In 2024, the market size of chocolate-infused coffee beverages in China reached 6.83 billion Yuan, a 14.7% year-on-year increase, and is

projected to hit 19.27 billion Yuan by 2025. Freshly made products grew by 17.3%, while ready-to-drink options expanded by 14.8%. Products like Starbucks' Belgian Dark Chocolate Latte sold over 2 million cups in their first week of launch.

4.Children's Nutritious Snacks: Driven by policy standards and increased parental health awareness, nutritionally compliant children's snacks continue to grow. The market is expected to reach 80 billion Yuan by 2025, covering niche categories such as children's probiotic biscuits and additive-free fruit puree.

(2) Declining Snack Categories

1.Traditional High-Oil, High-Sugar Puffed Snacks: As health awareness rises, the market share of traditional fried puffed snacks has been on a steady decline, with a CAGR of -2.3% from 2020 to 2024. Notably, ordinary puffed snacks without health attributes saw their sales share in first-tier cities drop from 15% in 2020 to 8% in 2024.

2.Ordinary Sugar-Containing Candies: Beyond holiday scenarios, daily demand for ordinary sugar-containing candies continues to fall, with a 3.1% year-on-year decline in market size in 2024. In contrast, low-sugar and sugar-free candies are gaining traction, with a penetration rate exceeding 40% in 2024.

3.Traditional Bulk Heavy-Flavor Snacks: Unbranded, unpackaged, high-salt, and high-oil traditional bulk snacks (e.g., loose spicy strips, low-quality dried meat) are losing market share due to stricter food safety regulations and consumption upgrading. Their sales dropped by 5.2% between 2023 and 2024, gradually being replaced by branded, standardized healthy alternatives.

III. Future Consumption Trends (2025–2030)

China's snack market will achieve high-quality development driven by health consciousness, scenario-specific consumption, digitalization, and lower-tier market penetration. The market size is projected to climb from 1.2 trillion Yuan in 2023 to 1.8 trillion Yuan in 2030, with a CAGR of approximately 6.5%. Key trends include:

(1) Deep Integration of Health and Functionality

Health consciousness has evolved from a "basic need" to a "core competitive advantage."

Clean labels, organic certifications, and functional ingredients will become product staples. By 2030, functional snacks are expected to account for over 25% of the market, with innovative categories like "konjac-plus" and "oat-plus" expanding the market ceiling. Niche segments such as plant-based and probiotic snacks will continue to grow. Additionally, following revisions to the *General Principles for Nutrition Labeling of Prepackaged Foods*, enterprises are expected to invest over 1.5 billion Yuan in formula upgrades, driving industry-wide health-oriented transformation.

(2) Precise Penetration of Scenario-Specific Consumption

Consumption scenarios will become more segmented, extending beyond traditional "leisure" to include breakfast, fitness, late nights, and travel. Enterprises will develop scenario-tailored products—such as coffee-chocolate danishes for breakfast, high-protein nut bars for fitness, and decaf coffee paired with chocolate bagels for late nights—to extend product lifecycles.

(3) Digitalization and Omnichannel Integration

Online penetration will keep expanding, with e-commerce channels projected to account for over 55% of the market by 2030. Social e-commerce and live commerce will contribute over 60% of incremental growth, with snack categories on platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou growing at over 30% annually. Offline channels will focus on experiential consumption, with smart vending machines, unmanned convenience stores, and themed snack collection stores accelerating expansion—expected to reach over 60% coverage by 2025. The omnichannel model (integrating online and offline) will become mainstream, with services like online ordering/offline pickup and online promotions/offline redemption enhancing the consumer experience.

(4) Dual-Wheel Drive: Lower-Tier and High-End Markets

Lower-tier markets will continue to release consumption potential, with their contribution rate rising to 45% by 2030. Snack discount stores will penetrate county-level markets, boosting the penetration of chocolate, coffee, and similar categories by 15 percentage points. The high-end market will expand rapidly, with premium products accounting for 30% of the market by 2030 (up from 18% in 2023). Benefiting from favorable cross-border e-commerce policies, the imported snack market will maintain a 10% annual growth rate over the next five years, with brands from Southeast Asia and

Europe accelerating their entry into China.

(5) Sustainable Development and Localization Innovation

The adoption of eco-friendly packaging will exceed 70% by 2025, with investments in technologies like biodegradable materials and lightweight design growing by over 20% annually. Localization innovation will become a core competitive advantage—for example, Glico launched localized products such as Da Hong Pao tea-flavored almond milk and Pretz retro butter-flavored co-branded snacks, aligning with Chinese consumers' taste preferences.

IV. Positioning Strategies for Overseas Brands Entering China

China's snack market is highly competitive yet full of potential. Overseas brands must adopt precise positioning based on market characteristics to achieve effective breakthroughs. Core strategies include:

(1) Focus on Niche Segments to Build Differentiated Advantages

Steer clear of red ocean competition in traditional categories and focus on niche segments such as health-focused, functional, and scenario-specific offerings. For example:

- Overseas nut brands emphasizing "organic + functional" can target high-income groups in first/second-tier cities.
- Brands in the children's nutritious snack segment can launch products complying with the *General Requirements for Children's Snacks*.
- Coffee and chocolate brands can leverage fusion innovation to develop regionally distinctive products (e.g., tea-infused chocolate coffee).

(2) Align with Consumption Tiers to Target Specific Groups

Match products to target audiences based on positioning:

- High-end brands: Focus on high-income consumers aged 25–40 in first-tier cities, distribute via premium supermarkets and high-end online platforms, and emphasize quality and brand value.
- Cost-effective brands: Deepen presence in lower-tier markets, cooperate with snack discount stores, and attract consumers with "low prices + diverse selections."
- Tailor offerings for women (high-aesthetic, functional snacks) and Generation Z (co-branded, personalized products).

(3) Adapt to Channel Traits to Build an Omnichannel Layout

- Online: Prioritize social e-commerce platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, and boost brand awareness via live commerce and influencer distribution.
- Offline: Enter leading snack discount stores, chain convenience stores, and premium supermarkets to leverage their channel reach.
- Adopt an omnichannel model (e.g., Glico's "online communication + offline distribution + B2B co-creation") to expand into B-end scenarios like coffee shops and catering, increasing product coverage.

(4) Promote Localization Innovation to Meet Market Needs

Drive localization across products, R&D, and marketing:

- Product: Adapt to Chinese taste preferences (e.g., reduce sweetness, add regional flavors like spicy).
- R&D: Establish local R&D centers to conduct continuous consumer insights and respond quickly to market changes.
- Marketing: Launch promotions tied to Chinese festivals and Guochao culture (e.g., Spring Festival limited gift boxes, co-branded collaborations with IPs like the Palace Museum) to enhance brand recognition.

V. The Importance of Collaborating with chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center

Overseas brands entering China face numerous challenges, including complex policies, cumbersome market entry processes, and high compliance risks. Collaborating with chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center is a crucial enabler for smooth market entry and sustainable development. Its core value lies in:

(1) Professional Policy Interpretation to Mitigate Compliance Risks

China's snack industry is subject to strict regulatory oversight, with policies like the *Food Safety Law* and *General Principles for Nutrition Labeling of Prepackaged Foods* imposing clear requirements on product standards, labeling, and additive use. chinaentryhub.com's professional policy team provides accurate interpretations of core policies—including food import tariffs, quarantine standards, and certification

processes—helping overseas brands complete formula compliance reviews and standardized label design. This mitigates risks such as product removal and fines stemming from policy unfamiliarity. For example, the center can assist enterprises in formula upgrades and label updates to comply with the revised *General Principles for Nutrition Labeling of Prepackaged Foods* (2025).

(2) Efficient Market Entry to Shorten Timelines

Food import involves complex processes such as customs classification, tariff planning, and license application. chinaentryhub.com offers one-stop market access services, including global customs commodity classification consulting, end-to-end import/export guidance, and license agency services. Leveraging an AI-powered classification interface (processing 10 million commodities daily) and a professional team to coordinate processes, the center can reduce market entry timelines by over 40% compared to self-handled applications, lowering time and labor costs.

(3) Precise Resource Connection to Facilitate Channel Landing

With deep industry resources, the center helps overseas brands connect with core sales terminals—including leading snack discount stores (e.g., Mingming Henmang, Wanchen Group), e-commerce platforms (e.g., Douyin E-commerce), and supermarkets—addressing the "difficult landing, limited channels" challenge. It also provides one-stop cross-border supply chain integration services (e.g., customs clearance, visualized logistics management) to ensure efficient product delivery and supply chain stability. Additionally, the center offers market research services to help brands gain insights into Chinese consumer needs and optimize product positioning and marketing strategies.

(4) Full-Cycle Risk Management for Sustainable Growth

Post-entry, overseas brands face risks such as raw material price fluctuations, policy adjustments, and intensified competition. chinaentryhub.com provides full-cycle risk management services, including regulatory update alerts, compliance audits, and voluntary disclosure support, helping brands respond to policy changes promptly. Through global trade data consulting, it delivers insights on raw material price trends and market competition, enabling brands to optimize procurement and competitive strategies. The center also facilitates connections with certified trade service providers, helping

brands obtain authoritative certifications like AEO to improve customs clearance efficiency and market credibility.

VI. Conclusion

China's snack market is in a golden era of upgrading, driven by health consciousness, scenario-specific consumption, and digitalization. Healthy snacks, functional products, and fusion innovations are the core growth drivers, with lower-tier and high-end markets acting as dual engines. For overseas brands, success hinges on understanding consumer group differences and category trends to develop differentiated positioning strategies. Collaborating with chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center provides access to professional policy interpretation, efficient market entry support, and rich resource connections—effectively mitigating compliance risks, shortening entry timelines, and enhancing market competitiveness. This partnership serves as a crucial guarantee for brands looking to successfully establish and expand their footprint in the Chinese market.



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