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A CONSUMER, COMPANY & CAPITAL PERSPECTIVE

The Scoop on India's Ice Cream Revolution

BRC Bytes
July 2025





The **₹30,000 Cr** Indian ice cream industry is no longer just about beating the heat — it's transforming into a **year-round, multi-format, experience-led indulgence market**. As **younger consumers demand more** from their food — be it health, taste, sustainability, or convenience — both **legacy brands and new-age challengers** are reimagining the frozen dessert experience.

Consumer Lens

From climate-driven cravings to premium snacking — decoding who's eating, why, and how much they'll pay.

Who is the Indian Ice Cream Consumer Today?



VS



Urban areas drive value, but tier II/III are catching up fast

Urban: Premium + impulse buying via modern trade & q-commerce

Tier II/III: Stronghold of unbranded, low-price local brands

Shift underway due to rising internet penetration & exposure



VS



Hotter regions favour a stronger adoption

South & West: More year-round buyers (hotter climate)

East & North: Still seasonal but changing habits slowly

Taste varies: Coconut & mango (South), Kulfi (North), Mithai (East)



VS



Gen Z is driving the health + experience wave

Gen Z & Millennials: Want indulgence + health (low-cal, vegan)

Older Gen: Value & familiarity matter (family pack, nostalgic flavors)

Younger tech-savvy users also prefer online-first discovery



VS



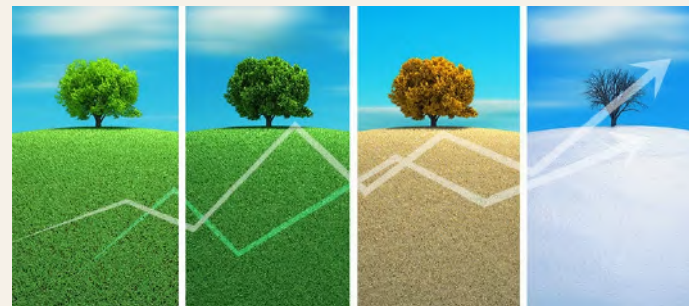
Large Tubs for the home, cones for the road

Families prefer larger packs for group/family snacking

Singles, youth prefer single-serve cups, cones via impulse retail

Gifting & festival-based ordering rising via Zepto/Swiggy

Consumption Trends: From Seasonality to Snacking



Seasonality vs Year-Round Snacking

- Ice cream is no longer just a summer treat — urban metros are driving **year-round consumption**, especially via home delivery.
- **Tier I cities** show consistent demand across seasons; Tier II/III still skew summer-heavy but shifting gradually.
- **Q-commerce** and indoor comfort eating are changing seasonality perception



Festivals, Gifting & Occasion-Based Buying

- **Ice cream gifting** is rising, driven by Zepto/Blinkit's curated packs (e.g., Diwali hampers).
- Birthdays, anniversaries, and weekend indulgence = **major Q-commerce categories**.
- Seasonal spikes during Holi, Diwali, and school holidays — players offering custom bundles for these occasions.



Branded vs Unbranded in Tier II/III Cities

- Branded consumption is growing, but **local and regional brands** still dominate Tier II/III cities due to price and availability.
- **Distribution challenges** (cold chain, retail penetration) limit national brand expansion in these markets.
- Consumers often unaware of new-age clean-label or healthy alternatives — education gap exists.

So What Does the Indian Consumer Want?



*Indulgence is non-negotiable — but **health is no longer optional***

Consumers are choosing:

- **Low-calorie** and **high-protein** ice creams.
- **Vegan & keto** offerings for dietary lifestyles
- **Sugar-free or low-GI** formats for conscious snacking



*Consumers care how it is **discovered, bought, and eaten:***

- Delivery via **Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, Blinkit** in <10 minutes
- **QSR-style parlors** for taste trials + experience
- **Instagrammable packaging** and storytelling

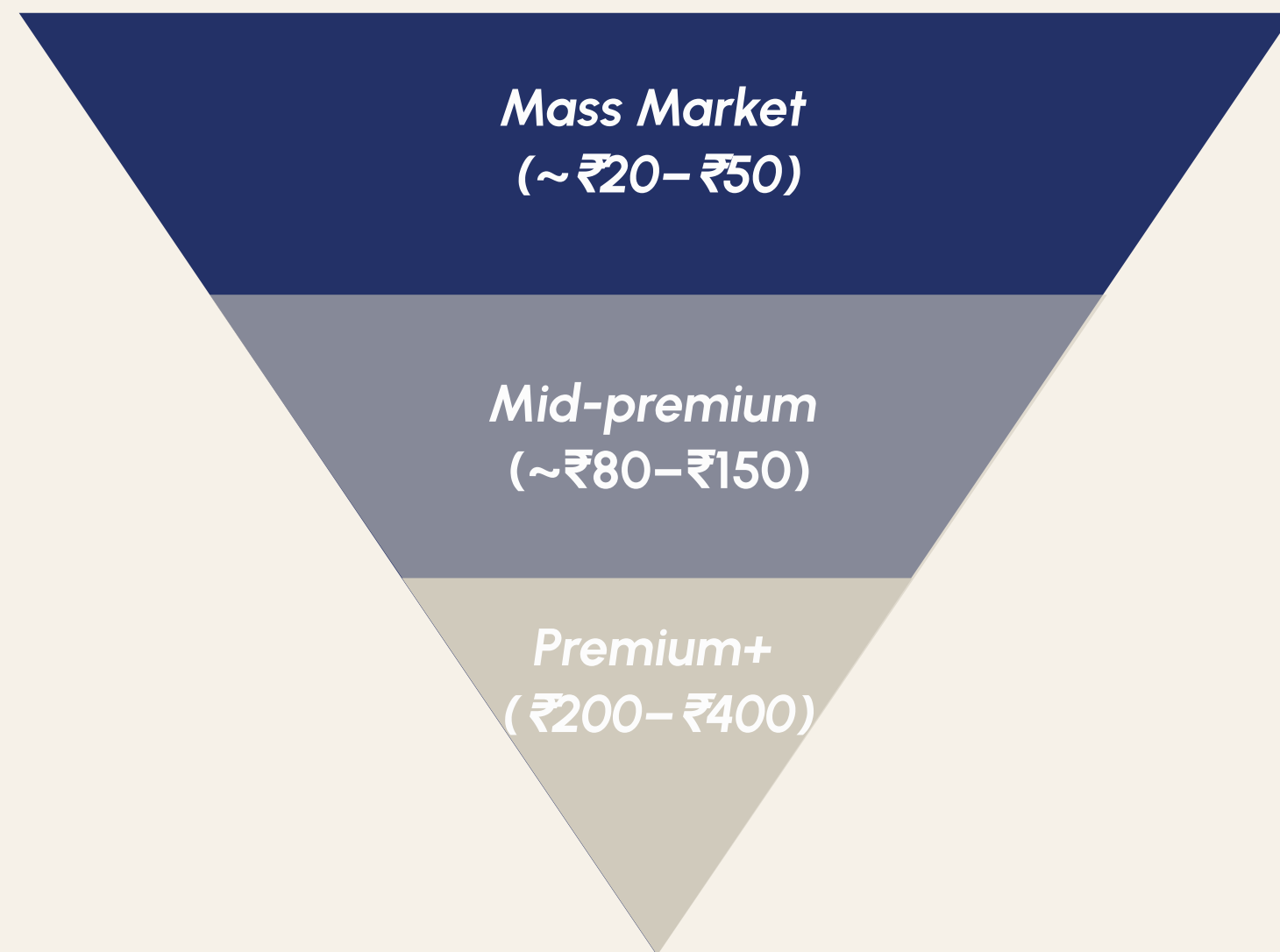


*"What's not in the ice cream" is **as important as what is.***

Consumers demand:

- **Clean-labels** with no artificial preservatives
- Use of **natural ingredients**, exotic or functional.
- Premiumization through **origin stories** (e.g., "Belgian cocoa").

How Much Are They Willing to Pay?



Non-Metros / Tier II/III:

- Still largely value-driven
- Exposure to premium brands limited by availability, awareness, and cold-chain
- Gifting formats (₹100–₹200) gaining traction during occasions

Metros:

- More willing to try & pay for health + innovation
- Premium formats often delivered via Q-commerce
- Taste-health trade-off is acceptable if product positioning is clear

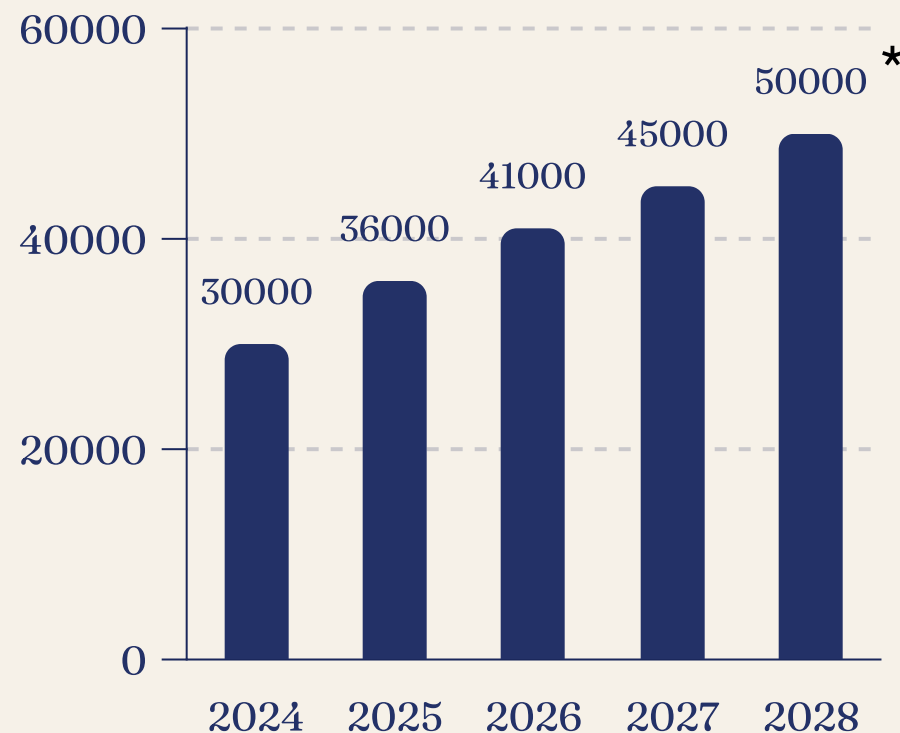
Consumers now pay more for a story — not just a scoop.

Company Lens

Inside the battle for the freezer — from industry insights to legacy brand reinventions to new-age challenger brands.

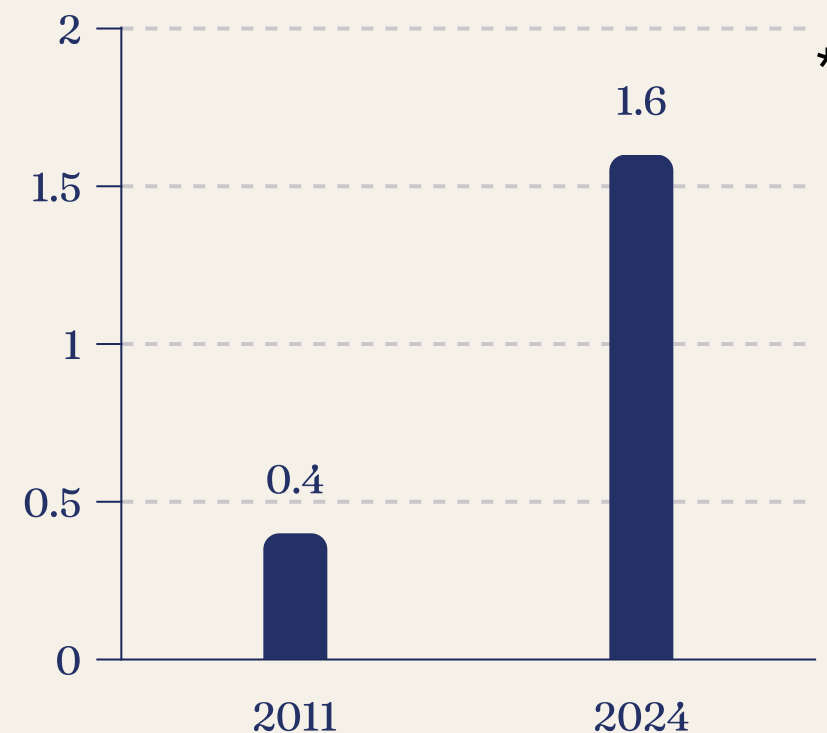


Industry Overview



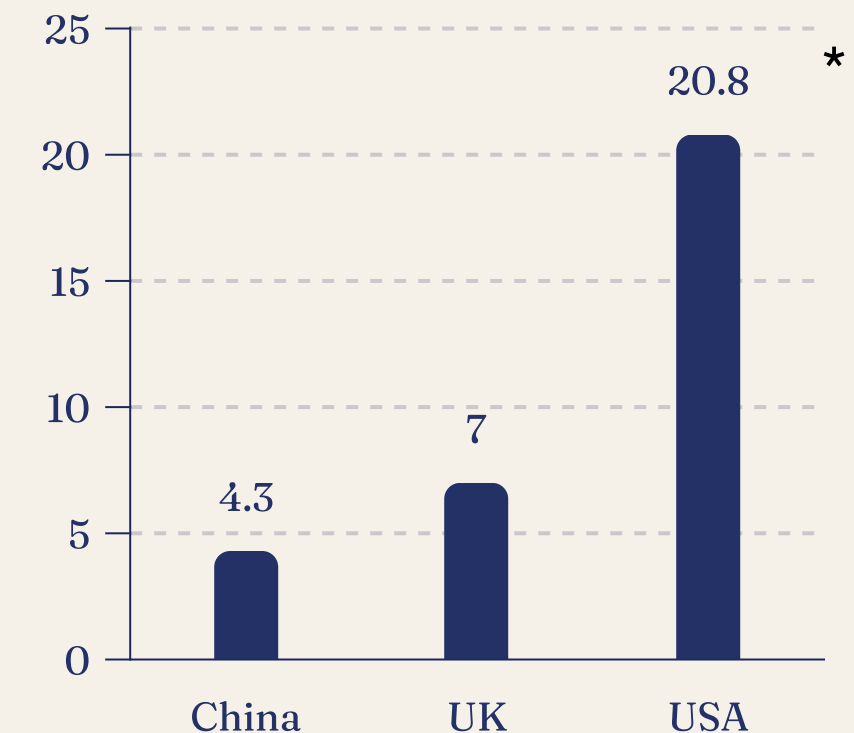
India's Ice Cream Market Size (in Cr)

- Market expected to grow from **₹21,000 Cr in 2024** to **₹50,000 Cr by 2028**
- Driven by **year-round consumption, premium product launches**, and **accessibility**
- CAGR: **~11%**



Indian Per Capita Consumption (in L)

- Per capita consumption up from **0.4L in 2011** to **~1.6L in 2024**
- Influenced by a **growing middle class**, **increasing disposable incomes**, and **increased availability of impulse formats & delivery**

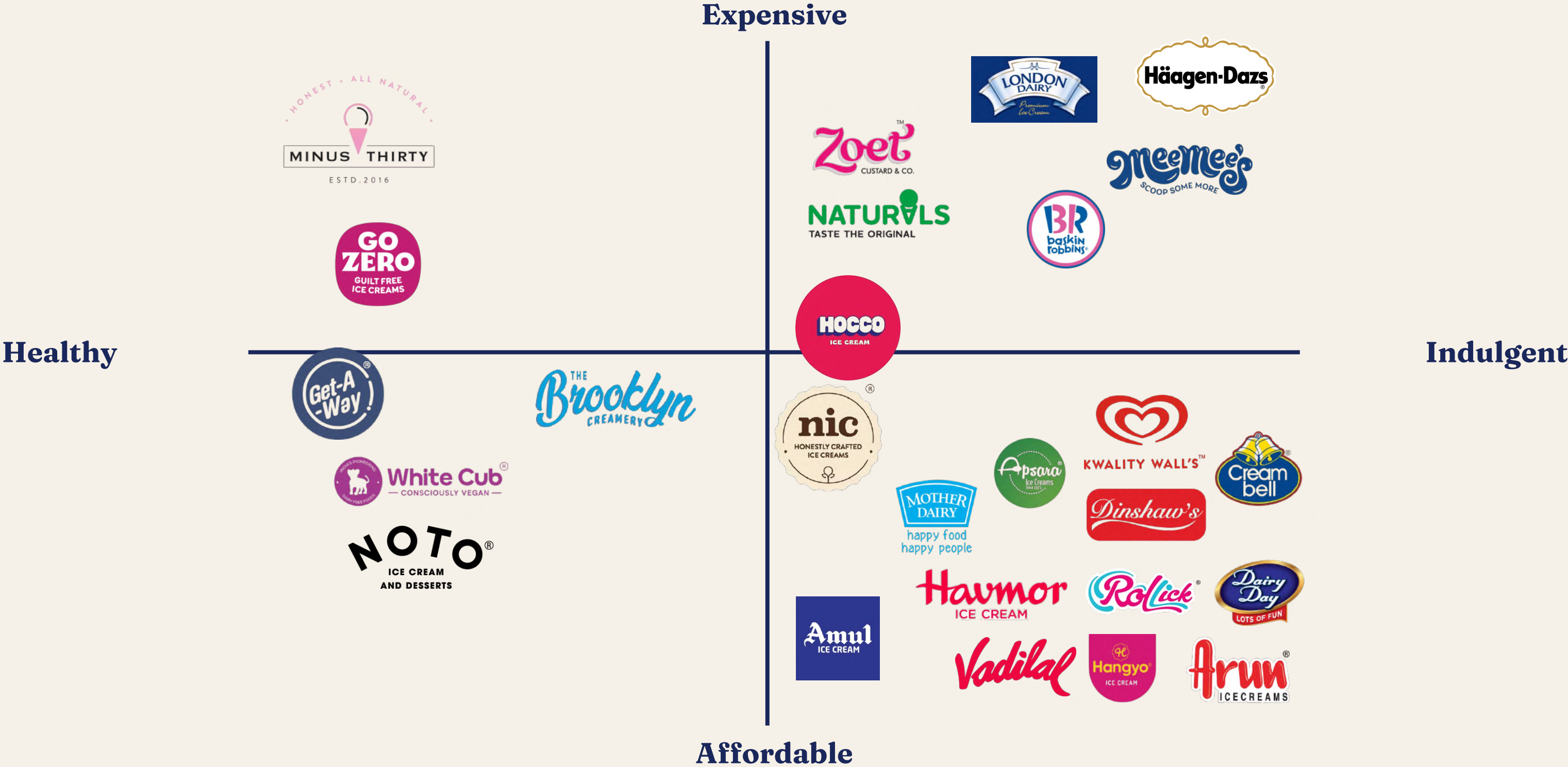


Global Per Capita Consumption (in L, 2024)




- Urban Indians are embracing **snacking & indulgence** — echoing China's curve in 2020.
- Even modest increases in per capita demand can unlock **massive market upside** — India is only just warming up.

India eats 25x less ice cream per capita than the U.S. That's not a gap — that's the growth story.

Industry Landscape



Meet The New Age Challenger Brands

Brands				
Positioning	Zero sugar, Vegan, plant-based	High-protein, keto-friendly, family-oriented	Low-calorie, low-sugar, high-protein	Artisanal, zero sugar, premium, low fat
What Worked	Built a health-first indulgence brand with sleek packaging & strong D2C presence	Smart brand storytelling + flavor variety + Q-commerce execution	Targeting ethical indulgence with a clean brand narrative	Premium positioning, chef-crafted feel, and direct-from-parlor delivery

How They Nailed it



Clear Positioning

Each brand stands for one strong idea — health, indulgence, veganism, or functionality. No confusion.



Modern Branding

Minimal, pastel-colored packaging, clean labels, and Instagram-ready communication.



Digital First Distribution

Scaled via D2C websites, Q-commerce (Zepto, Blinkit), and cloud freezers in premium locations.



Innovation in Flavours & Format

Trending flavors- Biscoff, Matcha, & mithai fusions are driving trial. Single-serve formats align perfectly with consumption habits.

How Are The Legacy Players Keeping Up?



Expanded into gelatos, regional flavors, and launched **protein ice creams & kulfis**.



Strong play on **value + variety**, from ₹20 impulse packs to ₹300+ premium tubs



Using **youth-focused ads** and memes to refresh the brand **appeal & perception**



Built by the original promoters of Havmor, **leveraging legacy goodwill** in Gujarat



Positioned as a **fresh, modern brand** with clean design, bold flavors & Gujarat-led nostalgia



Scaling via **retail tubs + exclusive parlors** with curated in-store experience



Refreshing packaging with **premium and modern visual language**



Expanding international exports + positioning as **"Indian gelato"** abroad



Launching **nostalgia+new fusion** SKUs (e.g., kulfi + Belgian chocolate)

Legacy players are evolving fast — with both nostalgia and novelty

Distribution & Channel Innovation

Cold Chain & Cloud Freezing



Challenger brands are placing **cloud freezers** in gyms and buildings for hyperlocal freshness.

Many are investing in **own cold-chain systems** to cut spoilage and ensure product quality — a must for formats like gelato and vegan. In a fragile category, **control over logistics = control over trust**.



Occasions & Experiences



Brands are building **scoop bars, food trucks, and curated parlors** to boost in-person engagement. Ice cream is now part of **gift boxes, date nights, and festive bundles**, turning it into a lifestyle-driven indulgence.



Q-Commerce



Blinkit, Zepto, and Instamart have made ice cream a **5-min impulse treat**, driving night-time and weekend demand.

EVERYONE !

General Trade vs Modern Trade

General Trade



Legacy dominated channel with impulse SKUs (₹10–50) and chest freezers at kiranas



High reliance on distributor-led cold chains with limited control on storage or visibility

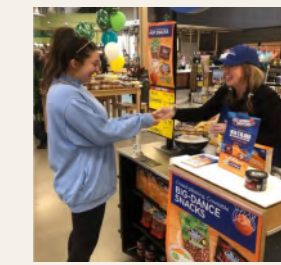


Low assortment & insights, with infra challenges like space, power, and freezer upkeep

Modern Trade



Premium-friendly channel for large SKUs and health-first formats like vegan, artisanal



Better visibility & discovery for new-age brands via shelf presence and in-store trials



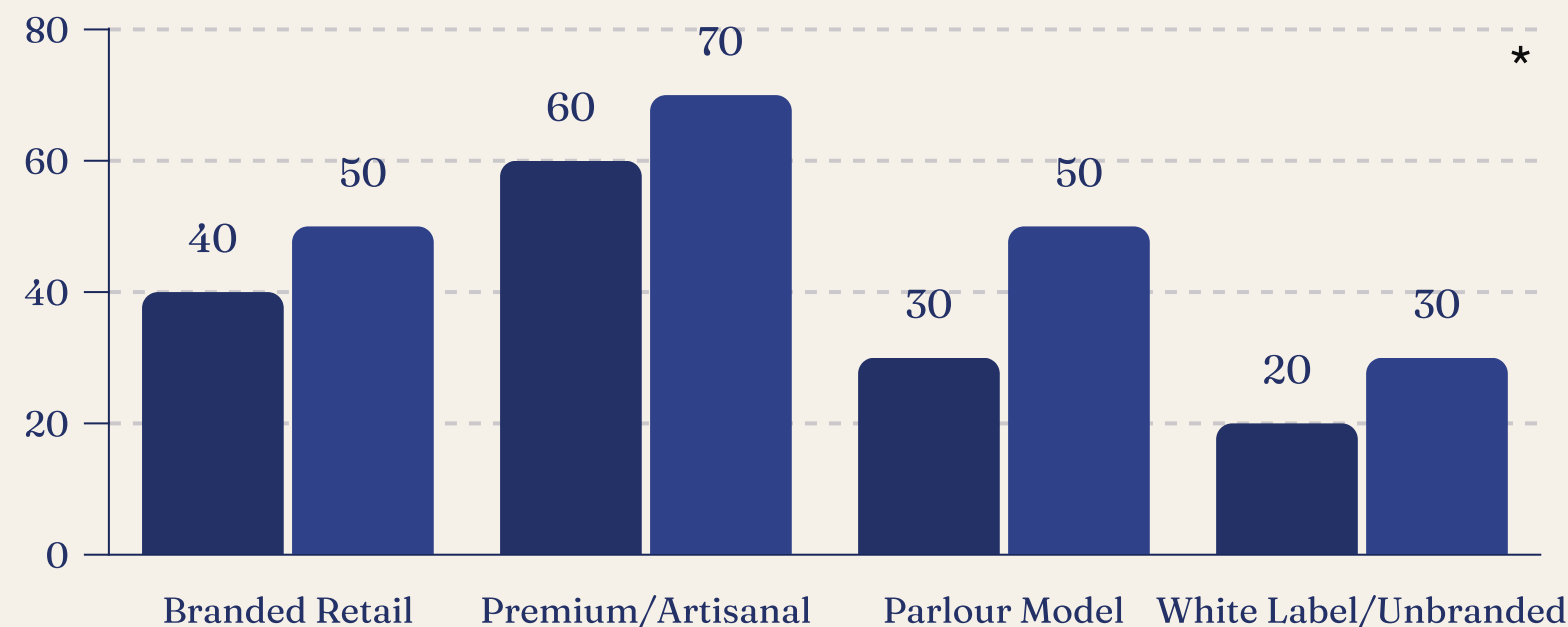
Superior cold chain & POS data enable smarter pricing, and inventory decisions

MT's share of ice cream sales has grown from ~15–20% (2018) to ~30–35%+ in metros by 2024.
Premium brands often launch in MT first to build discovery, then scale via GT or q-commerce

Modern trade is no longer just a channel — it's the discovery engine for new-age brands. But GT still holds scale — and cracking cold chain at the kirana level is the real unlock.

Margins, Shelf Life & The Cold Chain MOAT

Indicative Gross Margin% (Low vs High) Across Categories



Margins can be healthy — but **only if wastage is low & logistics are efficient**. Unit economics are favorable in:

- **Single-serve high-MRP SKUs**
- **Direct-to-consumer channels** with **subscription** or **bundle LTV**

Shelf Life & Storage – The Silent Killers

- Most premium ice creams have a shelf life of **6–9 months**
- High-end formats (gelato, vegan, fresh milk) may last only **2–3 months**
- Frequent temperature fluctuations lead to **texture loss, crystallization, and spoilage**
- Poor freezer compliance at retail = **silent margin erosion**

Cold Chain as a MOAT

- **Poor cold chain infra in India = high barrier to entry**
- Owning or controlling cold chain enables:
 - **Faster replenishment** → higher sell-through
 - Premium SKUs like gelato, vegan, and protein-based formats
 - **Lower spoilage** and **better unit economics**

Startups building **full-stack cold chain models** (e.g., **cloud freezers, in-house delivery**) are defensible.

Cold chain = the **invisible moat** behind brand success.

*[MarketResearchFuture](#)

*[Finnanssenteret](#)

Viral Marketing Moves

The Campaign

How Did They Pull it Off?

The Outcome



- Go Zero launched **limited-edition ice creams in partnership with Zepto**, which were available exclusively on the Zepto app.
- Promoted via **in-app banners**, Instagram contests & influencer taste tests
- Showcased how **quick-commerce + clean indulgence** can be a lifestyle moment

This caused Zepto to **push Go Zero's product** much more than other brands, resulting in increased visibility and sales



- Launched a **flavor inspired by Mumbai's street culture** ("Aamchi Ice Cream")
- The **unexpected, hyper-local design** made it instantly viral on social media
- Combined nostalgia with quirk, driving **organic visibility & meme-worthy reach**

5M+ organic impressions across Instagram & X, boosting **offline demand through the roof in Mumbai.**



- **Mobile-based campaign** where users had to **scream into their phone mics** to win discounts on ice cream
- **Louder screams** unlocked **bigger rewards** — creating a playful, gamified moment
- Went viral on social media, tapping into **Gen Z's love for challenges + gratification**

Viral traction across Instagram & X, driving uptick in **app sessions & ice cream orders** during the campaign window.

Global Inspiration

Global Trend	The Why	Trend Driving Brand	India's Apatation
Low Calorie, High Protein	Health-conscious millennials wanted indulgence without guilt		NOTO, Get-A-Whey made 75-100 cal tubs with whey protein
Vegan & Plant-Based	Rise in lactose intolerance, ethical consumerism	<i>VanLeeuwen</i>	Go Zero, Minus 30 started the use of coconut & almond milk
Format Innovation	Mochi balls, cookie cores, textural play for snackability		Kulfi pops, sandwich bars, ice cream truffles by Amul, NIC
Premium Single-Serve	Little luxury, portion control, strong branding		Amul & Havmor launched Epic & Premia respectively after the success of Magnum

Indian brands aren't just following trends — they're reengineering global ideas to fit local tastes, price points, and platforms.
The result: innovation that feels familiar, yet fresh.



Capital Lens

What's been funded, what's yet to be — and where the next scoops of capital should go.



Scooping Up Capital – Funding Trends

Investment is heating up as VCs chase the sweet spot between indulgence, health, and fast delivery

Recent Deals Snapshot

Company	Funding	Investors
Go Zero	\$6Mn	DSG, Saama Capital, V3 Ventures
Hocco	\$30Mn	Sauce VC, Chona Family Office
Nic	\$31Mn	Jungle Ventures, JM Financial
Hangyo	\$31Mn	Faering Capital
NOTO	\$9Mn	Rainmatter, White Whale Ventures

What Are Investors Betting on?



Health + Indulgence



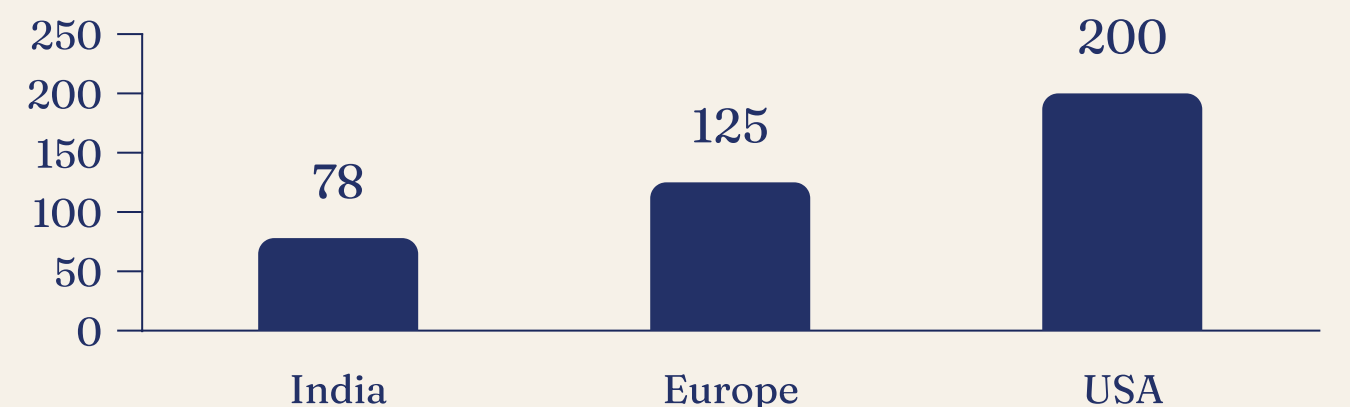
High Margin Formats



Logistics as a MOAT



Digital First Distribution



Funding in Ice Cream Sector Across Geographies (2024, \$Mn)

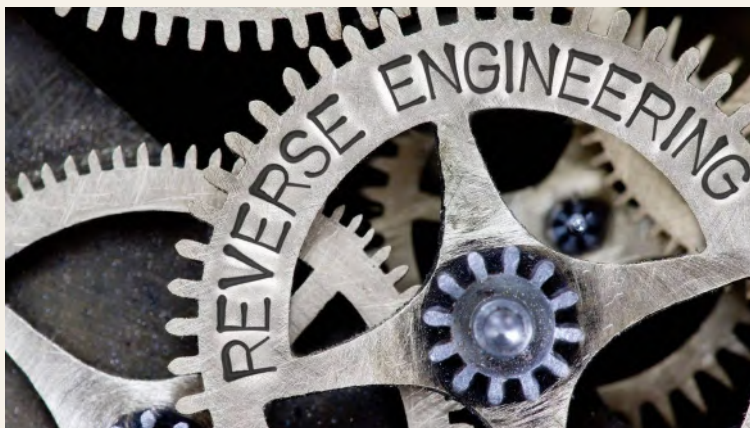
India's ice cream space remains underfunded compared to global markets. Investment has largely favored D2C health-first brands, leaving **regional, functional, and experiential players** as the next frontier for disruption.

BRC Insights

1

Reverse Engineering Products Around White Space:

New-age brands are not starting with recipes — they're starting with decoding **consumer gaps**. Successful startups are building products **backward from unmet needs**, not forward from traditional R&D labs.



2

Vertical Play Around Indulgence & Health:

Brands are moving beyond the freezer — into **snack bars, chocolates, & beverages** — creating a larger play around indulgence & wellness. **Ice creams are being used as a stepping stone into a wider portfolio**



3

Wave of Strategic Acquisitions Incoming:

With cold chain know-how, brand loyalty, and traction, emerging players are becoming **acquisition targets** for legacy & FMCG players. Expect a rise in **consolidation, brand roll-ups, and platform plays**.



4

Evolution of The "Treat as a Category":

New-age brands are no longer limited to **frozen formats**. They're positioning themselves to own the **"treat moment"** — whether it's through tiramisu cups or mini mud pies. Players will expand towards becoming full-stack **treat brands**.





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