

# SARA LEE® BREAD:

## BAKING IN A NEW SWEETENER STRATEGY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fresh-bread category probably captures the entire U.S. consumer base better than almost any other, since bread is both widely consumed and regular consumed. In fact, according to Nielsen, 96 percent of all households purchased bread in each of our reference years dating back to 2009, and they purchased bread nearly 20 times each year, on average.<sup>1</sup>

While bread contains a relatively low amount of sweetener by weight compared to the other categories we've looked at thus far, a few bread brands have made the type of sweetener in their bread a point of differentiation in labeling and communication. Like all other major bread manufacturers, Sara Lee's bread lines are sweetened mainly in one of two ways - with table sugar or high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). In 2010, Sara Lee made a sweetener switch, removing HFCS from a number of its products.

Given that Sara Lee has reformulated sweetener strategy and marketed many of its bread brands based on sweetener type, this switch offers us a unique opportunity to look at Nielsen data in order to determine if changing sweetener strategies has a meaningful impact on sales.

New research borne out of collaboration between Nielsen and Mintel, called the Sweetener360 (S360), gives us a clearer view of how expressed concerns about food ingredients vary across consumer segments, including for sweeteners. By exploring data from Nielsen covering the past two years,<sup>2</sup> we can trace the purchase habits of our six S360 segments across the bread category and the Sara Lee brands, in particular. In addition, we use Nielsen shelf scan data dating back to 2009 in order to examine sales of Sara Lee's bread brands, analyzing the impact of sweetener switch on sales volume.

This analysis syncs up survey answers about specific food ingredient concerns with the purchase histories of the same survey participants—giving us a unique ability to compare what consumers say they do in surveys versus what they actually buy in the marketplace.

This case study explores the impact that changing sweeteners had on the sales of Sara Lee's products. After examining consumer attitudes, we found the following:

- Sales of white bread are stagnant or down because U.S. consumers are focused on whole grains and gluten-free products.
- HFCS is not a big priority for bread buyers, but of the consumer lifestyle segments surveyed, two segments (one-third of the population) expressed HFCS as a bigger concern than the other four segments. However, what these consumers said and what they did (reflected in products purchased) were different.
- Sara Lee makes bread with three different types of sweeteners. When Sara Lee removed HFCS from one of its brands, sales dropped. Even a dramatic increase in the use of promotion couldn't drive up sales.
- Analysis that accounts for price differences, distribution intensity, category seasonality and sweetener type influenced higher sales when the brands were sweetened with HFCS rather than sugar.
- Consumers are increasingly concerned with the amount of total sugars they are consuming and are less concerned with any specific sweetener.

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## BACKGROUND

Even though fresh bread is consumed widely, the data shows that overall sales of bread have been stagnant for the past several years. This is largely because, starting around 2000, Americans began consuming less bread. This drop in consumption is part of a broader trend, where U.S. consumers are eating fewer products that contain white flour—consuming about 0.6 percent less each year since 2000.<sup>3</sup>

Our data examining a recent two-year period shows the average household is purchasing bread less often. In fact, sales of the category of fresh bread fell 5.3 percent during the past year. The number of households that purchased bread was also flat over that time. This means that increases in overall households due to the growth in population (roughly 1 percent) was offset by a drop in the proportion of U.S. households purchasing bread (97.3 to 97 percent).<sup>4</sup>

According to the IBIS World 2014<sup>5</sup> research report, this sales dip is expected to continue in the future due to health and diet trends focusing on the importance of whole grains and an explosion of gluten-free products. This decrease has been most visible in the white-bread category.

For this case study, knowing that sales are expected to decline, we'll define "success" in the bread category in more modest terms—from asking "Do product formulation/marketing choices with regard to sweetener type help grow sales," to asking "Do these strategic choices help keep sales from shrinking?"

We are interested to see if our results are consistent with research that reports while some consumers are likely to respond in surveys that they take issue with, especially in certain food ingredients (such as HFCS), on the whole, most consumers don't take ingredients into account when deciding what brands to purchase.

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RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY MINTEL INDICATES, HOWEVER, THAT AMERICANS ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED WITH THE OVERALL AMOUNT OF SUGAR THEY ARE CONSUMING, A FACTOR THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE DOWNWARD TREND IN BREAD SALES.

# KEY FINDINGS

## CONSUMER PROFILES

During the course of our work on consumer attitudes about food and beverages and what goes into them, we've looked at numerous survey results about what consumers say they read labels for, what they consider before buying, as well as what they try to avoid. Time and again, we see three things mentioned most often that we have come to call "the big three"—fats/oils, salt/sodium and sugar. Given their prominent place on food and beverage labels, this finding shouldn't come as a surprise. Other common responses include calories, which is usually near the top, along with various sweeteners, cholesterol, fast food and soda. There are also large portions of consumers who express that they have no concerns at all with avoiding any foods.

The questions in the S360 survey were designed to uncover attitudes about sweeteners, so several were mentioned among the seven possible answers, as well as "none of these ingredients."<sup>6</sup> When asked which of seven things they consider when purchasing bread, fiber is mentioned most often by a wide margin of respondents, followed by calories. The big three are next – salt, sugar and fat (in that order) (Figure 1). Two sweeteners round out the list – HFCS and zero-calorie sweeteners. The most common answer was actually "none of these ingredients," which was mentioned slightly more often than fiber.

<p><b>WALTER</b> No health worries <i>Doesn't care about sweetener ingredients; dines out most often.</i></p>  <p>8% US HH</p>	<p><b>TERESA</b> Making ends meet <i>Is balancing saving money with healthy decisions.</i></p>  <p>18% US HH</p>	<p><b>SANDRA</b> Taste over health <i>Needs to satisfy everyone in the family – taste driven.</i></p>  <p>13% US HH</p>
<p><b>JOAN</b> Diabetic &amp; dieter <i>Has diabetes and is trying to lose weight by avoiding sugar.</i></p>  <p>16% US HH</p>	<p><b>JULIA</b> Seeks healthy balance <i>Wants to have good habits for children, even if they don't do it themselves.</i></p>  <p>15% US HH</p>	<p><b>STACEY</b> All natural <i>Prefers all-natural lifestyle, sometimes trending toward the extreme.</i></p>  <p>17% US HH</p>

OF THE SEVEN THINGS CONSUMERS WERE ASKED IF THEY CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING FRESH BREAD, HFCS RANKED AS THE SIXTH MOST FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED CONCERN OVERALL, AHEAD OF ONLY ZERO-CALORIE SWEETENERS. THIS FINDING TELLS US THAT HFCS IS NOT A BIG PRIORITY FOR BREAD BUYERS IN GENERAL.

As we've seen in other food categories studied in the S360, the level of concern about sweeteners varies widely across the six consumer lifestyle segments brought to life in the study. These segments are based on what more than 10,000 consumers really think about nutritive and non-nutritive sweeteners and what motivates purchasing behavior. Two segments, Walter and Sandra, are much more likely than the other four segments to state that they don't consider any of the ingredients listed when purchasing bread (Figure 2).

The consumer lifestyle segments that say they are most worried about what is in bread are Stacey, followed by Julia, Joan and Teresa. In four of the segments, HFCS ranks six out of seven in importance, but Stacey and Julia express that HFCS is a much bigger concern.

FIGURE 1: HOW OFTEN CONSIDERED WHEN PURCHASING FRESH BREAD

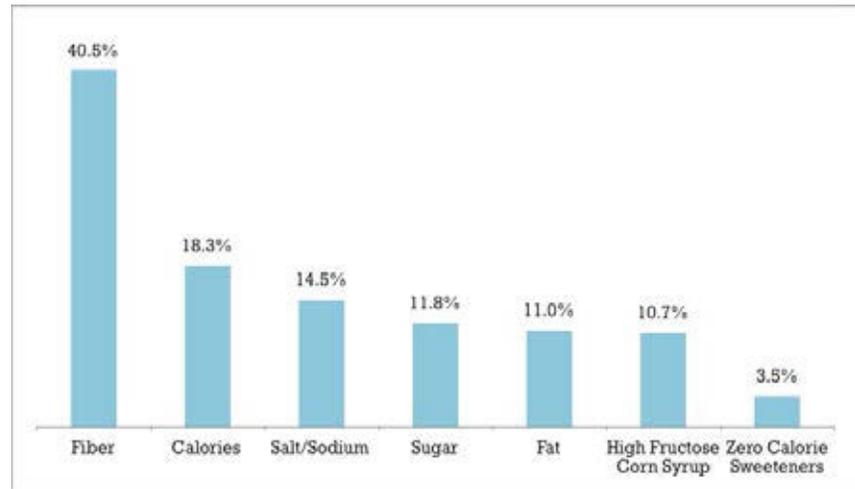
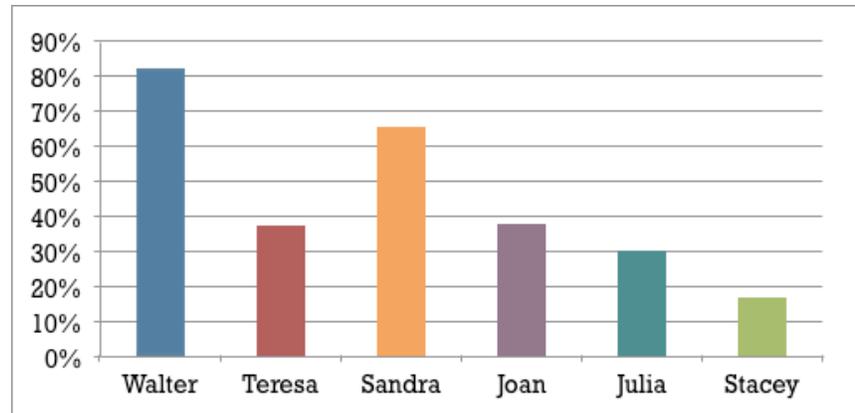


FIGURE 2: CONSIDERED "NONE OF THESE INGREDIENTS" WHEN BUYING BREAD



# KEY FINDINGS

As the chart in Figure 3 reveals, Julia and Stacey are more than three times as likely to mention HFCS as a concern than Joan, who has the highest concern of the remaining four segments. The remaining three segments show very little concern for HFCS in bread.

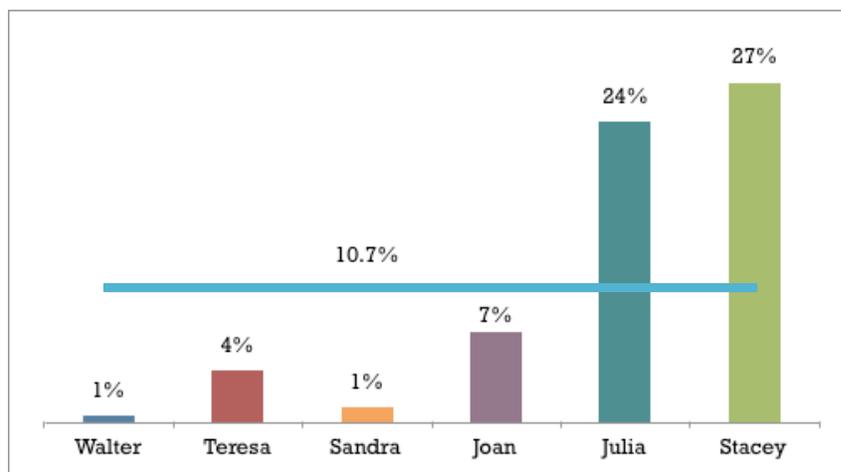
Clearly, concern about HFCS in bread is concentrated into two consumer segments: Julia and Stacey. Through our work with the S360, Stacey has shown over and over to be the most passionate and strident consumer about food ingredient concerns across nearly all food and beverage categories. She presents a challenge to marketers because she voices concern with greater frequency on average than the other segments. Consider that while Stacey ranked first among the segments in voicing concern about HFCS, among her ingredient concerns, HFCS ranked only fifth. On the other hand, Julia's expressed concerns about HFCS were second only to fiber.

There is a case to be made that Julia's expressed concerns are more relevant given their ranking among other ingredients, and that Stacey's concerns should be discounted somewhat since her response frequencies are so much higher than everyone else's. Keep in mind that this question was aided, which tends to produce higher measures of opinions and concerns in survey research, compared to unaided questions.

The issues for us to consider are twofold: Does Stacey have a response bias compared to the other segments? If so, is it unduly skewing our results? While it's possible, if not likely, that Stacey's answers do inflate her genuine concerns somewhat, we don't think it hampers our ability to analyze the data correctly. In the end, we group Stacey and Julia together as the HFCS-avoider type of bread buyers, and consider the remaining four segments "HFCS unconcerned."

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT BY THE MIDDLE OF 2013, SARA LEE SWEETENED APPROXIMATELY 70 PERCENT OF ITS BREAD OFFERINGS WITH SUGAR, ABOUT 30 PERCENT WITH HFCS, AND A VERY SMALL AMOUNT WITH NON-NUTRITIVE SWEETENERS.

FIGURE 3: CONSIDERS HFCS WHEN BUYING BREAD



SARA LEE IS UNIQUE IN PRODUCING BREAD WITH THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SWEETENERS – SUGAR, HFCS AND LOW/NO SWEETENERS.

## MARKETING SARA LEE BREAD

Sara Lee's key sub-brands that had sales over our reference period:

1. Sara Lee® Classics – carry the tag line “Classic Family Favorites” and represent the bulk of the total sales of Sara Lee bread family (approximately 52 percent). At the time of this study, this brand contains a mix of HFCS and sugar.
2. Sara Lee® Delightful™ Wheat bread – Sara Lee Delightful has an emphasis on “light” and is a group of reduced-calorie bread offerings that represent about 16 percent of sales. This brand has no HFCS, no trans fat, and no artificial colors or flavors.
3. Sara Lee® Soft & Smooth® – advertised that it contains no HFCS, represents the remaining 32 percent of Sara Lee's bread sales.

Brand marketers have pointed to consumers' expressed concerns about sweeteners as a reason to reformulate bread; in particular, removing HFCS in favor of sugar or other sweeteners. One example comes from August 2010, when Sara Lee decided to remove HFCS from many of its bread product lines. It said it did so because “our core audience, parents with children, has indicated that they want product options without high fructose corn syrup.”<sup>7</sup>

Sara Lee is a good choice to analyze because its bread brands make up about 7 percent of the fresh-bread category, putting it in the top five bread brands. With its very public pledge to remove HFCS from its Soft & Smooth bread as well as from whole-wheat bread varieties from all of its other brands, Sara Lee has made a point of differentiating its brand with its choice of sweetener, saying: “With this new recipe, Sara Lee Soft & Smooth bread is responding to the needs of our consumers while continuing to provide great-tasting breads with the mild taste and soft texture families love.” – Jeff Dryfhout, director, Sara Lee North American Fresh Bakery.<sup>8</sup>

Through the S360 we can see that concerns about HFCS in bread are concentrated within two consumer segments that together represent about one-third of the population. That means the “no HFCS” bread offerings are likely to appeal to

a niche of about one-third of the population. Given the comments from Sara Lee, it is clear that the company was aiming the Soft & Smooth bread product at HFCS avoiders Stacey and Julia. What isn't clear from this statement is whether or not Sara Lee recognizes that survey data strongly suggests that its “core audience” for this point of difference is only about 32 percent of the entire market

**THE QUESTION NOW IS HAVE SARA LEE'S EFFORTS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN HFCS AVOIDERS TO ITS SOFT & SMOOTH BRANDS BEEN SUCCESSFUL?**

# EXAMINING SARA LEE SALES

Sales of Sara Lee Soft & Smooth fell over 18 percent year over year,<sup>9</sup> while the other two brands had positive sales growth. At a high level, the fresh-bread category sales fell 5.3 percent over our reference period, while combined sales for all of Sara Lee's brands fell by only 3.4 percent. Looking at the "big picture," Sara Lee outperformed the category (Figure 4) even though the highlighted brand Soft & Smooth did very poorly.

Looking within the results for Sara Lee overall, we see a number of offsetting dynamics: more households buying Sara Lee bread, but their average spend coming down and netting out to an overall loss of sales. While the number of households that purchased Sara Lee bread bucked the category trend and actually went up (6.5 percent up for Sara Lee versus -5.6 percent for the category), those marginal households were spending much less on bread, bringing the average annual spend down by 9.3 percent.

The reduction in annual spend was all about a reduction in purchase frequency. For example, in 2012 the average Sara Lee buyer bought Sara Lee bread on 4.6 occasions, but in 2013 that number fell to 4.0 purchases. This bread was also bought on promotion more often, and those customers were a little less likely to be repeat buyers.

Focusing on Soft & Smooth, we see that the sales drivers were largely negative: Sales were down 18 percent year over year, because 4.5 percent fewer households purchased Soft & Smooth in 2013 than in 2012. Those that did purchase spent 14.1 percent less than they did the year before. Average purchase size nudged up a bit (from \$2.74 to \$2.82), but that was negated by a decrease in purchase frequency of nearly 17 percent (from 3.9 times to 3.2). In short, fewer households were buying the brand, and those that were buying the brand did so much less often throughout the year.

Nielsen provides a very interesting measure of promotional activity, which it calls "Percentage on Deal." As the name implies, it tells us how much sales volume for a product or category is sold through some sort of promotion, or "deal," which can include special displays, price discounts, etc. For bread, the category average is 20 percent (which compares to 32 percent across the 15 categories in the \$360). This is interesting in that while Sara Lee Soft & Smooth had a Percentage on Deal in 2012 that was in line with the category average, in 2013 Sara Lee actually expanded deal promotion significantly (from 20.7 percent to 24.0 percent). In other words, even a dramatic increase in the use of promotion couldn't help shore up this brand's sales.

FIGURE 4: CHANGE IN SALES (2012 – 2013)



THE BRAND THAT CHANGED SWEETENER AND HIGHLIGHTED THAT SWEETENER CHANGE IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS WAS ACTUALLY THE BRAND THAT PERFORMED THE WORST AMONG THE THREE SARA LEE BRANDS, AND BY A SUBSTANTIAL MARGIN.

According to Nielsen sales data, Sara Lee Soft & Smooth has had a very poor recent sales record, but how much of that can be attributed to the choice of sweetener? It's clear that in the period since switching sweeteners from HFCS to sugar in most SKUs, this brand has struggled. Given that our segmented sales and concern data covers only the past two years, and the sweetener switch was made nearly four years ago, it is not possible to say that the change from HFCS to sugar was solely responsible for the brand's struggles, but certainly it seems clear that it didn't help. A later section analyzes the impact of sweetener change on sales while considering other factors such as sales price relative to competition and distribution intensity.

One way to learn more is to see how the brand fared among the key target segments, Stacey and Julia. Recall that these two segments were overwhelmingly the source of vocal concern about HFCS in bread, so if they have supported the Sara Lee Soft & Smooth brand over the past two years, then perhaps there's a case to be made that HFCS-free bread is a potentially successful niche.

## SEGMENT RESPONSE

Neither Stacey nor Julia bought as much Soft & Smooth bread in 2013 as they did in 2012. Although they both responded to the S360 in May 2013 that HFCS was a consideration when buying bread, we can see that they aren't supporting Soft & Smooth, a brand that changed its formulation away from HFCS, explicitly to cater to moms like Stacey and Julia. Put plainly, HFCS-free is a foundation of the Soft & Smooth brand, yet Stacey and Julia are buying it much less often over time. Like we've found in many other food categories, this is a clear-cut case of consumers' stated attitudes not lining up with their actual purchase behavior.

With Julia, the sales drivers for Soft & Smooth all point negative (Figure 5), with a sales reduction of 23.9 percent from 2012-13, which is made up of both a reduction in households buying the brand (-5.3 percent) and an 18.9 percent reduction in the frequency in purchasing the brand throughout the year. Julia bought this brand increasingly on deal (from 21.8 percent to 27.1 percent), and was less likely to buy the brand more than once over the year (from 67.8 percent to 57.3 percent).

With Stacey, the results are mixed yet still net out negatively. Stacey bought 9.4 percent less of the brand in 2013 than in 2012, and

though this loss of sales was less than the average for the brand, it was nonetheless worse than the category. Interestingly, there were a few more households purchasing the brand in 2013 than in 2012 (2.8 percent), but that was more than offset by the decrease in annual spend from \$10.34 to \$9.12. Stacey is responding to the promotional efforts; her Percentage on Deal increased considerably from 15.0 percent to 20.5 percent, and the repeat buyers are up slightly (50.5 percent to 54.5 percent). All in all, Stacey is purchasing the brand less frequently than before, on deal more than before, and her sales total is shrinking faster than the category.

# SEGMENT RESPONSE

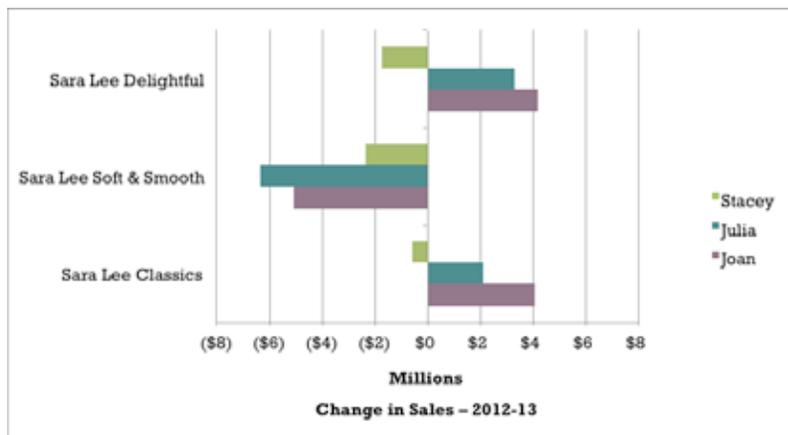
Stacey and Julia are important segments for bread brands, to be sure, as they spend more on bread each year (per household) than the other four segments (Julia 4 percent more; Stacey 7 percent more). Stacey and Julia were also the most likely to express concerns about the ingredients of the bread they purchase for their families.

In 2013, Stacey was the only segment to show negative sales for all three Sara Lee brands; her overall loss of sales was second only to Teresa, the largest segment by population. We've talked about Stacey's performance with Soft & Smooth, but she also has a curious performance with Sara Lee Delightful. This is the Sara Lee brand that is growing fastest and caters to consumers with expressed health concerns, in this case, calories and sweetener content. With Delightful, Stacey bought 10 percent less product in 2013 than in 2012, despite an increase in households purchasing of 24 percent. Both purchase size and frequency have come down over the period, while Percentage on Deal has gone up. Clearly, Stacey has had an opportunity to experience Delightful and finds it less appealing over time, even though this is a brand formulated for consumers like her.

For Sara Lee Classics, Stacey did show a slight reduction in sales (-1.6 percent), but compared to the other brands, that looks pretty good. In fact, the reduction in sales was lower than Sara Lee overall, and much less than the category. The drivers show positives as well; with more households purchasing, lower dependence on deal and an increase of repeat buyers.

Julia is the premium-promotion bread buyer. She presents an interesting case in that, while she spends more on bread each year than the category, her purchase frequency is equal to the category average. This means that she spends more each time she purchases. What's interesting is that she ranks first in bread purchases on deal by a pretty large margin. This finding tells us that she is purchasing premium-priced brands on promotion, which is the only way her average purchase price (after discounts) could be above the category average. Just as Julia follows brand promotions around the category, we find that she has actually moved around the Sara Lee brands. In fact, as we discussed how Julia bought much less of Sara Lee Soft & Smooth in 2013, she bought more of the other two brands, Delightful, so that on net, her purchases of Sara Lee bread brands went down marginally. Julia's support of Delightful is interesting, since she told us that calories were in her top four on her list of things to consider when buying bread.

FIGURE 5: CHANGE IN SALES OF SARA LEE BRANDS, BY SEGMENT



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Sara Lee should look more closely at Joan. It turns out that over the past year, Joan has been the most valuable segment for Sara Lee, purchasing 4.9 percent more of its brands in 2013 than the year before. Known for her high level of health concerns and diabetes, in particular, we've seen Joan be a very reliable consumer for lower-sugar and lower-calorie products in nearly every category. Like Julia and Stacey, Joan has dramatically cut back on purchases of Sara Lee Soft & Smooth, but she has more than made up for it with increased purchases of Sara Lee Classics and, specifically, Sara Lee Delightful.

As a calorie- and sugar-content-sensitive shopper, it's not surprising that Joan should be drawn to Delightful, and her sales drivers for Delightful are strong: 47 percent increase in households using the brand, offset by a softening in purchase frequency (from 4.0 times in 2012, to 3.7 times in 2013). Joan has purchased Delightful less often on deal in 2013 than in 2012, so it looks like she is a strong segment for Delightful, and Sara Lee overall.

## ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

In addition to looking at these consumer segments, multiple regression<sup>10</sup> was used to statistically analyze the relationship between the sweetener type (HFCS or sugar) used in two key Sara Lee brands (Sara Lee Classic and Soft & Smooth) and their resulting sales while controlling for other key variables.

We examine Nielsen shelf scan data from 2009-2014 to explore the question: "What is the impact of changing the type of sweetener on sales (Total Equivalent Volume, EQ Volume) of Sara Lee bread while accounting for: (1) sales price (Average Price per unit), (2) distribution intensity (All Commodity Volume, ACV), and (3) seasonality?"

## THE REFERENCE PERIOD WAS BROKEN INTO TWO PARTS:

1. WHEN SARA LEE'S PRODUCT PORTFOLIO WAS SWEETENED WITH HFCS, FROM MARCH 2009 UNTIL AUGUST 2010
2. WHEN SARA LEE'S PRODUCT PORTFOLIO WAS SWEETENED MAINLY WITH SUGAR, FROM SEPTEMBER 2010 THROUGH MARCH 2014

Using the Nielsen data that we obtained, the most powerful influences on sales of Sara Lee bread during the time period of interest are (in order of influence): average price per unit, type of sweetener used, seasonality, and distribution intensity. To summarize these findings, the regression model shows:

- Average price per unit had by far the strongest influence on sales of Sara Lee bread, especially the Soft & Smooth brand. In other words, price increases had a powerful downward impact on sales.
- Periods in which HFCS was used were associated with higher EQ volume than when sugar was used. Specifically, average EQ volume was 20,337,715 during the time period when sugar was used, compared with 23,326,777 when HFCS was used as a sweetener.
- Distribution and seasonality were less powerful, in terms of their impact on sales. As expected, higher ACV accounted for higher sales.

# CONCLUSION

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The S360 enables us to see the expressed concerns that consumers have about what is in food and beverages and makes their purchase decisions much clearer. Sara Lee made sweeping changes to the formulations of much of its fresh-bread product line, and the S360 helped us to see that this approach was responding to the expressed concerns of one-third of the population.

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**SARA LEE SOFT & SMOOTH, THE BRAND THAT SWITCHED 100 PERCENT OF ITS BRAND AWAY FROM HFCS TO SUGAR, HAD THE WORST SALES PERFORMANCE BY FAR OF THE SARA LEE BRANDS.**

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We found that one certain segment, Stacey, who expressed the highest levels of concern about healthfulness of food and beverages, and voiced the sharpest concerns about what was in her bread, bought less of all three Sara Lee brands over our two-year period. What was actually striking was that when we looked closely, we found that Stacey did have some relative positives among the Sara Lee Classics brand, the traditional bread offering. She was decidedly negative on the two brands that

catered to those voices of ingredient concern, Sara Lee Soft & Smooth and Sara Lee Delightful.

We saw some positives for Sara Lee's other two brands, and two health-conscious segments, Julia and Joan, in particular, seem to be responding to the Delightful brand, which puts a focus on the amount of sweetener, not the type. This is a dynamic we've seen in other food and beverage categories as well, and is consistent with recent Mintel research that indicates that consumers are increasingly concerned with the amount of total sugars they are consuming, and are less concerned with any specific sweetener.

Beyond our look at Sara Lee purchases by segment over the past two years, we examined Nielsen Shelf-Scan data going back to 2009, a year before Sara Lee made the sweetener switch. Our regression results showed that consumers of Sara Lee bread appear to be motivated largely by price. In addition, we found that while accounting for price differences, distribution intensity and category seasonality, sweetener type influenced sales in that sales were higher for the brands of interest during time periods when products were sweetened with HFCS compared with sugar.

The Sara Lee story is consistent with what has been seen in other food and beverage categories. Voices of concern about food ingredients, and sweeteners, in particular, are concentrated in a vocal minority of the consumer base. Very often, as we've seen here, those most vocal about avoiding specific food ingredients often purchase products that contain them, and don't necessarily support products that act on their expressed concerns.

What this means for the bread category is that consumers are more concerned about the total amount of sugar in a product than the specific type of sweetener used. In this case, there is no link between sweetener type and sales in the bread category.

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WE FOUND THAT NOT ONLY DID THE TWO SEGMENTS THAT PROFESS TO HAVE THE GREATEST CONCERN ABOUT HFCS IN BREAD NOT PERFORM BETTER ON AVERAGE THAN THE OTHER SEGMENTS, BUT ALSO THEY PERFORMED WORST OF ALL.

# METHODOLOGY

*Case study content was not part of any informal or proprietary discussion with Sara Lee Corporation. The comments and conclusions in this case study reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily express the views of Sara Lee Corporation.*

This analysis draws on data commissioned from the Sweetener360: Consumer Attitudes about Sweeteners (S360). This is a unique research study completed in part by Nielsen and Mintel Consulting (October 2013) that looks at a sample of more than 10,000 American consumers, and examines their stated attitudes toward food and specific brands in a survey. Covering 15 major food categories, the S360 brings together Mintel consumer research, Nielsen shopper data and in-depth consumer interviews into one comprehensive view of how consumers feel about sweeteners, why they feel like they do and how that impacts their purchase decisions. Sweetener attitudes are brought to life through six consumer lifestyle segments. Conclusions are based on what more than 10,000 consumers really think about nutritive and non-nutritive sweeteners and what motivates their purchasing behaviors.



NIELSEN SCAN DATA IS A POWERFUL TOOL FOR LOOKING AT PRODUCT CATEGORY SALES TRENDS, AND THE SALES PERFORMANCE OF SPECIFIC BRANDS AND SKUS BY VALUE AND VOLUME.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Nielsen Sara Lee Category Data extract, April 2014. Advertising Age, March 15, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>The Sweetener360 research pulled sales for the 52 weeks ending May 25, 2013, and in order to see changes in sales, we had Nielsen provide us with an additional 52 weeks of sales just prior to that (ending May 26, 2012).

<sup>3</sup>USDA.

<sup>4</sup>Nielsen Sara Lee Category Data extract, April 2014.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Please tell us which of the following ingredients you considered, if any, for each of the types of foods and beverages you purchased in the past six months. Please select all that apply for each type of food or beverage. Fresh/package bread

<sup>7</sup>Sara Lee Corporation. (2010, August 10). Sara Lee® Soft & Smooth® Bread Reformulates Its Two Most Popular Breads. [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20100816005433/en/Sara-Lee%2%AE-Soft-Smooth%2%AE-Bread-Reformulates-Popular#.U11ZNIcXIss>.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Nielsen Sara Lee Category Data extract, April 2014.

<sup>10</sup>Multiple regression analysis is a multivariate statistical technique that allows the researcher to predict the impact of several independent variables on a dependent variable.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Martin Concannon**, managing director, Lafayette & associates, has more than 20 years of experience advising senior executives of leading multinationals on business strategy, corporate finance, performance measurement and process improvement. He has served clients around the world in industries including consumer goods, manufacturing, chemicals and financial services.

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