

A Report on

**“Mechanism of Minimizing the Negative Perception of Sugar Substitutes in Bangladesh:
A Strategic Roadmap for Zerocal’s Market Expansion”**

By

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An internship report submitted to the Brac Business School in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration

Brac Business School

Brac University

March 2025

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The internship report submitted is my own work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The report does not contain any materials that were previously published by any authors, except the appropriately cited sources with proper referencing.
3. The report does not contain resources which have been accepted or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at any institution or universities.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name and Signature:

Azizur Rahman Sakib

20304038

Supervisor's Full Name and Signature:

Afsana Akhtar

Assistant Professor,

Brac Business School,

Brac University.

Letter of Transmittal

Afsana Akhtar
Assistant Professor,
Brac Business School,
Brac University.

Subject: Submission of Internship Report titled, “**Mechanism of Minimizing the Negative Perception of Sugar Substitute in Bangladesh: A Strategic Roadmap for Zerocal’s Market Expansion**”

Dear Ma’am,

I am honored to submit my internship report titled “Mechanism of Minimizing the Negative Perception of Sugar Substitute in Bangladesh: A Strategic Roadmap for Zerocal’s Market Expansion” as part of the requirements for the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program at Brac Business School (BBS) of Brac University. During my 3 months of internship at STL, I have applied my academic knowledge to real life business problems and gained valuable insights that have enhanced my professional capabilities.

I would be grateful for your valuable feedback and suggestions for improvements.

Sincerely yours,

Azizur Rahman Sakib
ID: 20304038
Brac Business School,
Brac University.

Non-Disclosure Agreement

This present agreement is made and executed by and between the Square Toiletries Limited as one party and the undersigned student of BRAC University whose name is Azizur Rahman Sakib as the other party. Square Toiletries Limited's sensitive information must be kept confidential by the undersigned at all times during their employment with the company and at no time afterward, unless permission has been granted in writing by Square Toiletries Limited. The person or party that signs below confirms to the fact that they have read through this non-disclosure agreement and agrees to be bound by all the terms of the agreement.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Azizur Rahman Sakib

ID: 20304038

Brac Business School,

Brac University.

Internship Company Supervisor's Full Name & Signature:

Sadia Yeasmin Chowdhury

Brand Manager,

Square Toiletries Limited.

Samson Center, 43 South Avenue, Road 126, Gulshan 1, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh.

Executive Summary

This internship report on the topic “Mechanism of Minimizing the Negative Perception of Sugar Substitute in Bangladesh: A Strategic Roadmap for Zerocal’s Market Expansion” has 3 chapters.

I have mainly conducted the 1st chapter (Overview of Internship) by sharing my internship learnings, contributions, challenges and recommendations to other internees for future reference. In the 2nd chapter (Organization part), I have picturized an overall description of Square Toiletries Limited (STL) in light of points such as its history, vision, mission, management and marketing practices. In the last chapter (Project part), I have made an analysis of the survey I have conducted and based on that I have provided some recommendations to Zerocal. Also, I also shared the problem statement, literature review, objectives and other findings.

I strongly believe that the analysis, recommendations and findings of this report have highlighted and indicated some crucial aspects of the sugar substitute industry in Bangladesh for future reference.

Key Words: Sugar Substitute; Consumer Perception; Negative Perception; Artificial Sweetener; Consumer Awareness.

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List of Acronyms

STL: Square Toiletries Limited

FMCG: Fast-Moving Consumer Goods

SS: Sugar Substitute

R&D: Research and Development

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

SEO: Search Engine Optimization

PR: Public Relations

HoReCa: Hotel, Restaurant & Cafe

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

Chapter 1: Overview of Internship

1.1 Student Information

Name: Azizur Rahman Sakib

ID: 20304038

Program: Bachelor of Business Administration

Major: Marketing

Minor: Finance

1.2 Internship Information

1.2.1 Time Period and Company Details:

Time Period: 12 weeks. 10 November 2024 to 10 February 2025.

Company Name: Square Toiletries Limited

Department: Marketing

Address: Samson Center, 43 South Avenue, Road 126, Gulshan 1, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Work Office Shift and Timing: Sunday to Thursday, 8.30 AM to 5.30 PM.

1.2.2 Internship Company Supervisor's Information:

Name: Sadia Yeasmin Chowdhury

Designation: Brand Manager

Square Toiletries Limited.

1.2.3 Job Description:

I was assigned to the marketing department at Square Toiletries Limited (STL). Sadia Yeasmin Chowdhury was responsible for supervising me at my workplace. Moreover, the supervisor introduced me to all the functions of the marketing department, responsibilities of interns and the atmosphere of the workplace. As an intern I was given multiple responsibilities, and worked alongside with other members of the marketing team. The main responsibilities of my internship were following:

- **Consumer Survey:** I have conducted multiple surveys for different brands of STL among current and potential consumers, to identify upcoming products strengths and current products satisfactions.
- **Retail Survey:** To evaluate the market trends and customer preferences, I had to visit multiple markets all around the city to conduct retail surveys. Where I had to talk with retailers and get their feedback on STL's products and observe their shelf allocation for different brands of STL.
- **Operational Tasks:** I have contributed to the brand team by assisting day to day operational tasks of the marketing department, such as documentation and coordinating with other departments etc.

1.3 Internship Outcomes:

1.3.1 Contribution to Company:

As a marketing intern I have contributed to the brand team. Where I have contributed to 13 brands by conducting more than 45 surveys in three months of time period. These survey

outcomes are handed over to the brand managers that make it easier to make decisions for their respective brands.

1.3.2 Benefits to the Student:

As a marketing intern I got hands-on experience of the marketing department of a FMCG company. I have developed my communication and analytical skills by conducting and analyzing numerous surveys. These learnings will help me to build my career in the marketing field.

1.3.3 Challenges Encountered During Internship:

As a fresh graduate with limited corporate experience, I have faced multiple challenges during my internship. First of all, conducting surveys of unfamiliar products like sanitary napkins, female skin care products was challenging at the beginning. Also, in a limited time frame conducting multiple surveys was a bit of an inconvenience. But gradually with guidance of my supervisor, I overcame these challenges and successfully completed my internship at STL.

1.3.4 Recommendations:

Overall the internship period was full of learning and improvements, though some changes can enhance the internship experience for the future interns. The following recommendations are proposed:

- **Orientation Program:** STL can introduce a formal orientation on the first day of the internship. The program can include a comprehensive overview of the organization, values, and organization structure etc. Moreover, introducing the functions and roles of each

department and understanding their cross departmental relation can help new interns get a clear idea of the organization as a whole.

- **Responsibilities and Guidelines:** Providing interns a detailed outline of responsibilities and their roles is crucial. It can include key tasks, reporting hierarchy, and other protocols of the department and organization.

Chapter 2: Square Toiletries Limited.

2.1 Overview:

Square Toiletries Limited (STL) is one of the largest FMCG companies in Bangladesh. STL was established in 1988 as a concern of the Square Group. In 1994, STL became a distinct private limited company. STL currently manufactures more than 50 types of products and represents 20 brands in various segments like health and hygiene, oral care, hair care, fabric care and many more. Among the company's most well known brands are Meril, Senora, Revive, Jui, Supermom, Maya, Sepnil, Zerocal, Select Plus, Magic, Rain Shower, White Plus, Xpel, Spring, Shakti, Max clean, Chamak, and Chaka. STL is also exporting its made in Bangladesh products in 13 countries across the world including the UAE, Germany, the UK, Australia, Malaysia (Square Toiletries Ltd., 2025).

2.2.1 Vision:

Square Toiletries Limited (STL) always aims to comprehend the distinct needs of the customers and converts those needs into products that satisfies them in the form of high quality products, excellent service and a reasonable pricing in a distinctive way (Square Toiletries Ltd., 2025).

2.2.2 Mission:

- To consider consumers' knowledge as the most valuable assets and to make every effort to understand consumers' changing needs so that STL can provide maximum satisfaction.

- To provide products at reasonable prices while adhering to a stringent quality policy. With continuous R&D and innovation, STL tries to ensure that product quality meets worldwide quality standards.
- To create a pleasant working environment in order to cultivate and develop STL's most valuable asset, its people. As well as pursuing a top level employee motivation.
- To honestly uphold the obligation to the government and society with the highest ethical standards, as well as to work tirelessly for a social order free of malpractice, and anti-environmental conduct, unethical and corrupt deals (Square Toiletries Ltd., 2025).

2.2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility:

The three main pillars of STL are values and ideals are the welfare of the consumer, the employee and society. According to STL, it is their duty to contribute to societal well being. Although STL is a commercial organization, it aims to be fulfilling its societal obligations rather than constantly choosing to make a profit. As a result it has a strong responsibility to its customers, employees and society at large. All of STL's actions, from daily activities to company policy, are based on these fundamental beliefs and ideals (Square Toiletries Ltd., 2025).

2.3 Departments of Square Toiletries Ltd.

- Marketing
- Accounts and Finance
- Management Information System (MIS)
- Human Resource Department
- Product Development

- Commercial
- Sales
- IT and Technical Services

2.4 STL's Organizational Structure:

To understand STL's organizational structure, the organogram is given below:

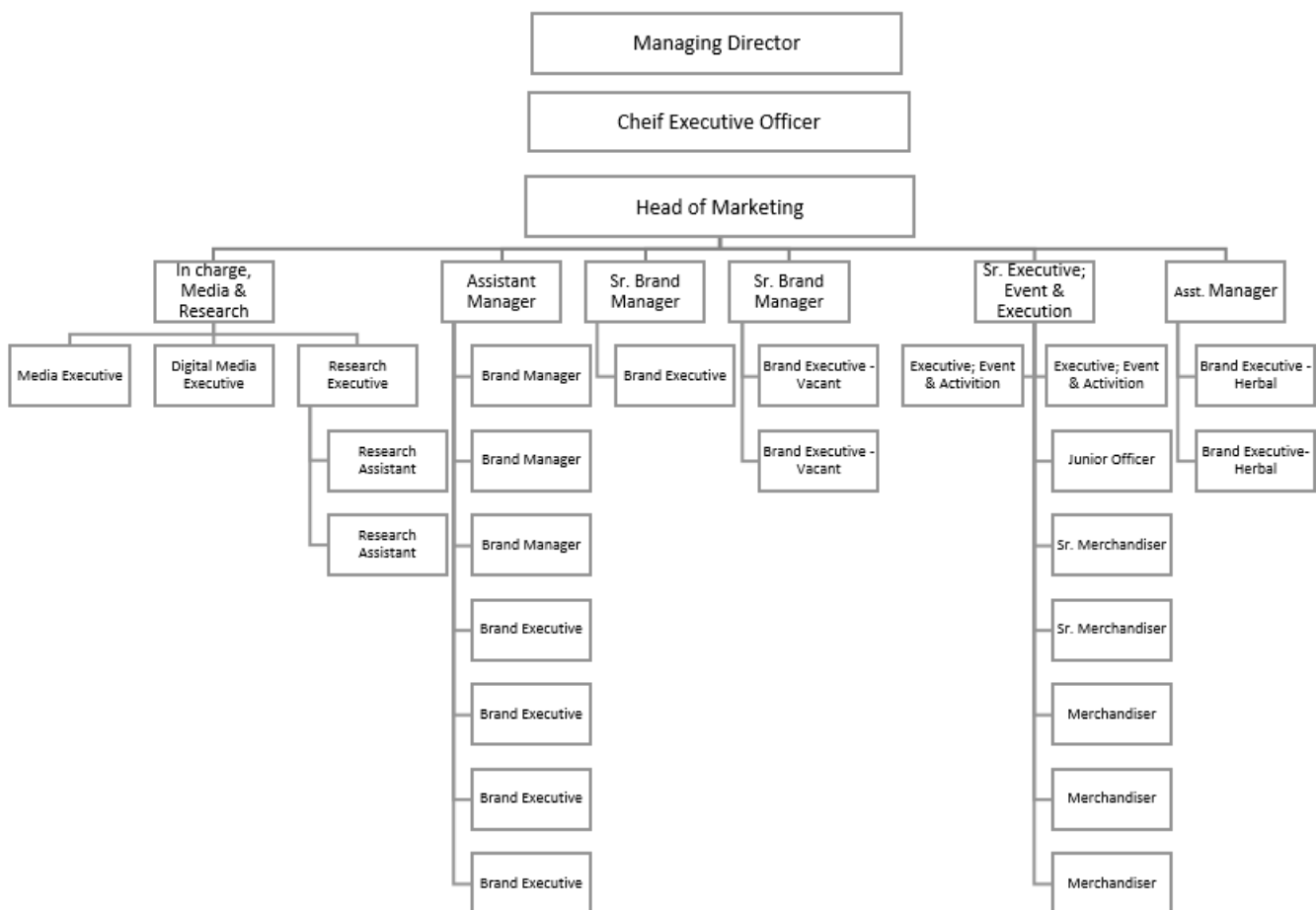


Figure 01: STL's organogram

2.5 Marketing Practice of STL:

To portray the marketing practice of STL, the detailed analysis of Marketing Mix (4Ps), SWOT analysis, Porter's Five Forces analysis have been conducted and given below:

2.5.1 Marketing Mix (4Ps) Analysis:

Product: STL's portfolio consists of a diverse range of products that consumers need, ensuring quality and innovation. All the products of STL can be categorized into:

1. Personal care:

- Hair care: Hair oil, Shampoo, Conditioner, Hair serum.
- Skin care: Soap, Body lotion, Petroleum jelly, Olive oil, Glycerin etc.
- Men's Grooming: Shaving foam, Aftershave, Deodorant etc.

2. Healthcare and Hygiene:

- Sanitary Napkins
- Baby care: Diapers, Baby wipes, Baby lotion, Baby powder, Baby shampoo and Baby body wash etc.
- Health Supplements: Sugar substitute
- Oral care: Toothpaste, Toothpowder, Mouthwash etc.

3. Household Products:

- Air fresheners, Liquid dishwashers, Fabric brighteners, Toilet cleaner and other essential household products.

Price: STL's pricing strategy is competitive and value based pricing, ensuring affordability while retaining profitability. Product categorization, market demand and rival price all have influence on STL's pricing approach.

- Competitive pricing: STL keeps its price aligned and comparable with its competitors like Unilever, Marico, P&G, ACI, Keya, SMC and Reckitt etc.
- Value based pricing: STL sets prices of premium products to reflect perceived benefits and brand value.
- Promotional pricing: To boost up sales STL provides discounts, bundles and seasonal promotion and sets the prices accordingly.

Place: Due to its extensive distribution network throughout Bangladesh, STL products are highly available in both urban and rural areas. STL distributes through a variety of channels:

- General Trade: Traditional retail stores like departmental stores, pharmacies and convenience stores.
- Modern Trade: Mainly in urban areas STL makes its products available in super shops like Agora, Unimart, Swapno, Meena bazar, Daily shopping and Price bazar etc.
- E-commerce: STL products are available in all the popular e-commerce such as Chaldal, Daraz, Aroga, Panda mart, Shajgoj etc. where customers can purchase products online.

Promotion: To boost sales, engagement and brand awareness, STL uses various types of promotional strategies as a part of integrated communication plan.

1. Traditional advertising:

- TV commercials

- Print media
- Outdoor advertising and billboards

2. Digital marketing:

- Social media marketing (Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok etc.)
- Influencer marketing
- SEO and Google ads

3. Trade promotions:

- Retailers cash incentives
- In-store brandings
- Free stock

4. Sponsorships and events:

- Sponsoring health, beauty, lifestyle, and sports events.

2.5.2 SWOT Analysis of STL:

Strengths	Strong Brand Image: As a concern of Square Group and high product quality, STL gained consumer trust and brand loyalty in the FMCG sector from beginning to till now. Strong Distribution Network: STL has a robust distribution system from urban to rural areas, which ensures its product availability in all over Bangladesh. Diverse Product Portfolio: Offering a diverse range of products in various segments enhances consumer acquisition and it also ensures financial stability in all seasons.
Weaknesses	Unequal Contribution of Brands: Among more than a dozens of brands, only few brands such as Meril, Senora, Meril Baby etc. are highly contributing in sales and revenue. In contrast brands like Chaka, Shakti, Spring etc. have lower contribution. Low Global Presence: STL has limited global presence compared to its competitors in the toiletries industry. Also, the gap of not establishing any brands, as a globally well known brand can be considered as a weakness for this 37 years old company.

Opportunities	Export Market Penetration: Utilizing the low manufacturing cost of Bangladesh, and the increasing demand of toiletries products worldwide, especially in the Indian subcontinent can be a big opportunity for STL for exporting. Digital Transformation: Keeping in mind the growing trend of digitalization and internet uses, STL can strengthen its digital presences. Strong partnership with e-commerces and opening own e-commerces like UShop (by Unilever Bangladesh) can benefit STL to uplift online sales and digital presence. Addressing Niche Market: Nowadays people's own preference, priority and need for the customization products are increasing. To leverage this opportunity, STL can capitalize on rising consumer centric approaches, for example, chemical free products, skin type wise unique products etc. to cater the niche market.
Threats	Economic Fluctuations and Political Instability: Higher foreign currency rate can increase the expenses for imported raw materials. High inflation rate can cause reducing the customer purchase power, which may lower the sales as well. Also, in recent times, due to the insatiable political situation domestic demand can fluctuate rapidly. Emerging Competitors: Many startups and new companies are coming up in the industry with new products which are gaining popularity as well. Companies like Remark HB, Rivana, Skin Cafe and many more are competing in the market with similar products. Therefore fighting with these new companies and existing established companies could be a threat to STL's market share in the near future.

Table 01: SWOT analysis of STL

2.5.3 Porter's Five Forces Analysis of STL:

Porter's Five Forces analysis for STL is given below:

➤ **Threat of New Entrants:** Moderate to low.

Establishing a FMCG company and building efficient production capacity, distribution system and marketing/ sales team requires a big amount of capital, which will make the new entrants struggle to compete with established companies like STL.

➤ **Bargaining Power of Suppliers:** Moderate.

As most of the key raw materials and machinery are imported from other countries, STL can switch suppliers according to their need. Though the packaging are sourced domestically but due STL's business size and long term relationship provide some advantage while negotiating with suppliers.

➤ **Bargaining Power of Buyers:** High.

As there are numerous competitors with similar products, both in the high end market and low end market, buyers have the opportunity to compare quality, price, features etc. To illustrate, soap (Meril Soap) is one of the leading products for STL. In this same category for small shop customers, there are many brands with similar price points like Keya, Tibet, lux etc. Likewise for modern trade customers, there are many foreign brands with the same or higher quality brands such as Dove, Pears, Fiama etc.

➤ **Threat of Substitute Products:** High.

There are many brands in Bangladesh's FMCG industry offering products with similar price point, variation, and consumer needs. Many local and global brands are coming up with innovative solutions to cater customer demands. Customers are also influenced to try out new products and have the tendency to shift brands quite often due to heavy promotion by the brands. Also, easy accessibility and affordability of foreign products through global e-commerce sites make it easier for urban class customers to find substitute products according to their needs.

➤ **Competitive Rivalry:** High

Competitive rivalry is high in the FMCG sector of Bangladesh, all the companies are fighting for gaining more market share by offering aggressive pricing, offers, product variation and innovative marketing strategies. Moreover, all the companies are heavily investing in marketing to promote their products through online, television, newspaper and store promotion to lead in this very highly competitive industry.

Chapter 3: Project part

“Mechanism of Minimizing the Negative Perception of Sugar Substitutes in Bangladesh: A Strategic Roadmap for Zerocal’s Market Expansion”

3.1 Introduction:

With a strategic focus on Zerocal, a renowned sugar substitute brand, this chapter focuses on comprehending and addressing consumers' negative perception towards sugar substitutes in Bangladesh. To do so the brand and product analysis, consumer survey, and strategic recommendation to overcome the obstacle will be discussed in this part.

Zerocal is a Sucralose based sugar substitute product (Square Toiletries Ltd., 2025). Sucralose was invented by british researchers in 1976 which is 600 hundred times sweetener than regular sugar (Tandel, 2011). Zerocal can be used in tea or coffee, drinks & beverages, baking and desserts etc. Moreover, Zerocal is a scientifically proven sugar substitute approved by Apex Regulatory Bodies (Square Toiletries Ltd., 2025).

Zerocal Product Range		
Product	SKU Size	Image
Zerocal Tablet	100 & 200 pcs pack	

Zerocal Sachet	25, 75 & 150 sachets	
Zerocal Stevia	30 pcs sachets	

Table 02: Zerocal's product range

3.1.1 Background:

Globally the sugar substitute market has expanded rapidly in recent decades, due to rising health consciousness, higher diabetics rate and increased demand for low calorie food items (Palsdottir, 2024). Sugar substitutes such artificial sweeteners are a feasible solution of reducing sugar intake for the health conscious people (Tandel, 2011). The market for sugar substitutes in Bangladesh is still in the primary stage. Zerocal, a brand by Square Toiletries Ltd. (STL) is a prominent sugar substitute manufacturer in Bangladesh facing obstacles to increase its market size.

3.1.2 Problem Statements:

Despite rising demand for healthy sugar alternatives, limited consumer awareness leading consumers towards negative perception about sugar substitutes like Zerocal. Misleading information, cultural preferences, lack of knowledge regarding sugar substitutes category are fueling negative perceptions (Hossain, 2022). The lack of a clear strategic roadmap to cater these obstacles has hindered Zerocal's potential to capitalize the sugar substitute market.

3.1.3 Objectives:

This report is prepared and structured after determining a few objectives to work on the report in an organized and professional manner.

Broad Objective:

The main objectives of this study is to analyze the mechanism for minimizing negative perceptions of sugar substitutes in Bangladesh and develop a strategic roadmap for Zerocal.

These specific objectives include:

- Identify the key variables that contribute to the negative perception of sugar substitute in Bangladesh.
- Evaluate Zerocal's present customer perception.
- Make effective suggestions to Zerocal on how to overcome the challenge and leverage opportunities.

3.2 Literature Review:

Worldwide sugar substitute market has grown gradually, with a projected compound annual growth rate of 5.8% from 2024 to 2030 (Grand View Research, 2024). This growth is driven by higher health awareness, increasing obesity rates, and widespread diseases like cardiovascular diseases and diabetes etc (Grand View Research, 2024). Although consumer acceptance of sugar substitute varies notably across regions, specifically in the developed countries showing higher adoption rates compared to less developed countries (Singh et al., 2020). Researchers explored that in Bangladesh the negative perceptions are mainly rooted in lack of understanding in scientific studies, for example sugar substitutes can be consumed only after diagnosing diseases like diabetes and other misinformations (Shil et al., 2023 and Jahan, 2022). Historically, South

Asian countries have strong connection and preference for natural sugar due to its high availability of sugarcane based sweeteners, which somehow kept people unaware of sugar alternatives (Mohan & Singh, 2020). A survey conducted by International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) among Asian consumers found that they considered artificial sweeteners as bad. Moreover, those consumers believe that it may affect kidneys and think that as it is low calorie it must have some side effects; likewise due to limited knowledge consumers have negative perception towards sugar substitutes (Drewnowski et al., 2019).

3.3 Methodology:

To complete this study multiple methods will be followed, such as:

- Both primary and secondary data used in this study. Primary data collected through online surveys and from Zerocal's own web page. Secondary data collected from research papers, journals, newspapers, online articles and magazines.
- Conducting qualitative surveys keeping some open ended questions among current and potential consumers of sugar substitutes.
- Evaluating Zerocal's present and previous marketing strategies.

3.4 Findings and Analysis:

This survey was conducted to identify consumers' perceptions, influencing factors and concerns about sugar substitute in Bangladesh. The survey results provide insights about negative perceptions towards sugar substitutes and possible strategies to counteract them.

3.4.1 Demographic Informations:

The survey participants were widely diverse in terms of age, income, and education.

Gender Distribution:

Gender:
77 responses

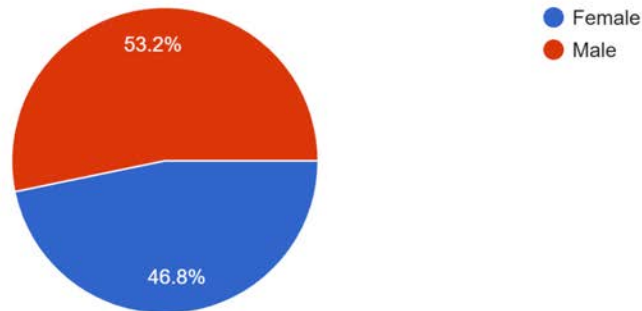


Figure 02: Gender distribution of the survey

The sample population was split into both male and female. 53.2% (41 persons) participants were male and the other 46.8%(36 persons) were female.

Age distribution:

Age:
77 responses

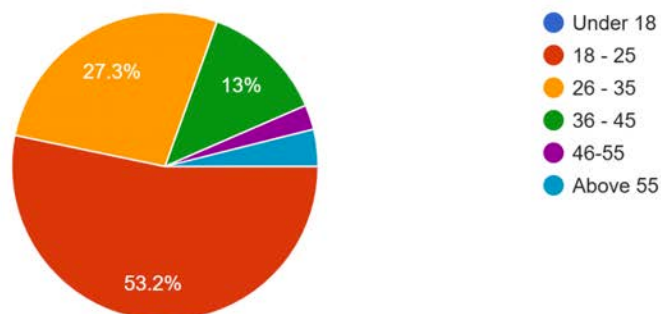


Figure 03: Age distribution of the survey

The majority respondent 53.2% were aged 18-25, showcasing a younger and health conscious demographic. Also, 27.3% were aged 26-35, while 13% were distributed across the 36-45 aged

people. The remaining respondents are aged 46-55 (2.26%) and the rest of the 3.9% are above 55 years old. This ensured that this survey had participants from all ages of people.

Education level:

Education level
77 responses

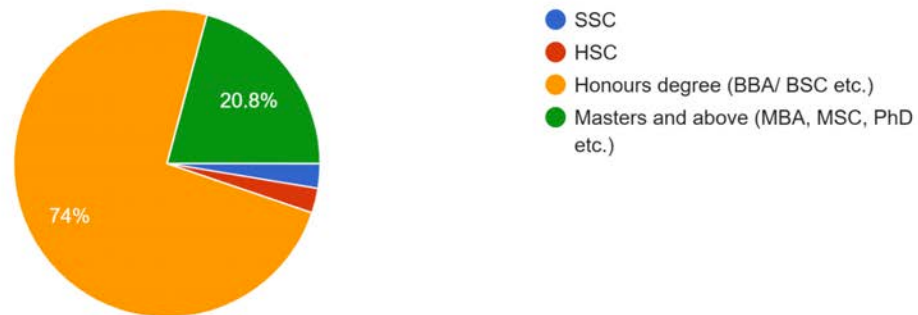


Figure 04: Education level of the respondents

A significant proportion of the respondents, 74% held an ‘honours degree’ while 20.8% had a ‘masters or higher degree’. And the remaining participants hold SSC (2.6%) and HSC (2.6%) level education qualification so far.

Income level:

What is your total family income per month?
77 responses

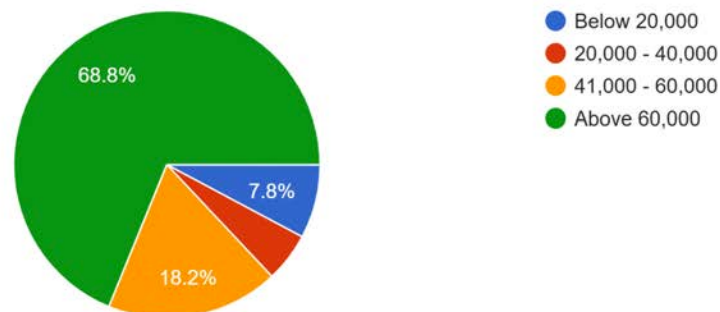


Figure 05: Income range of the respondents

The income range of the survey participants are skewed toward higher income level brackets. Most of the participants (68.8%) monthly family income is above BDT 60,000. Also, 18.2% participants had a family income between BDT 41,000 to 60,000. Moreover, 5.2% of participants' families earn BDT 20,000 to 40,000 and 7.8% have earnings below BDT 20,000 per month.

3.4.2 Awareness and Perception of Sugar Substitutes:

The survey explored how much people are aware of sugar substitute products and what is their perception towards it.

- Awareness sugar substitutes:

Are you aware of sugar substitutes (e.g.: Zerocal, Sugar-Free, Splenda etc.)?
77 responses

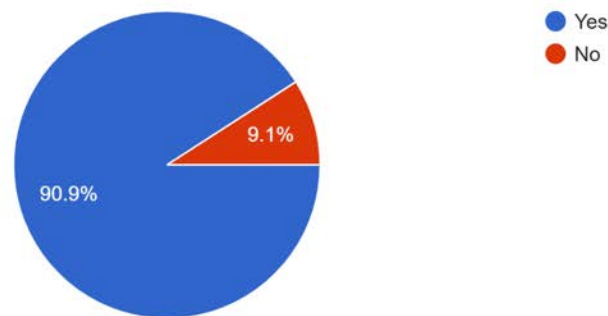


Figure 06: Awareness of the respondents

The survey shows that 90.9% of the respondents are aware of sugar substitutes, while 9.1% are not. This indicates a relatively high level of awareness, but a little portion of the population remains uninformed.

- Perception of sugar substitutes:

What is your overall perception of sugar substitute?

77 responses

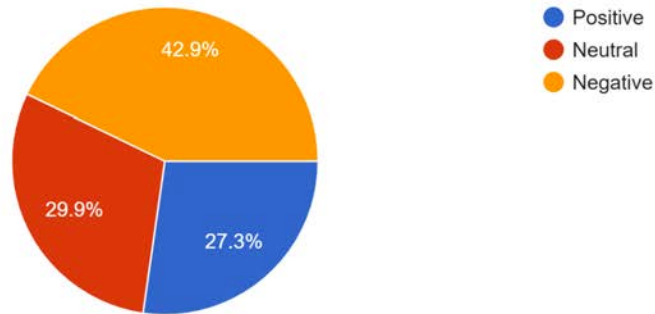


Figure 07: Perception of the respondents

The overall perception of sugar substitutes is mixed. In the survey only 27.3% people have a positive perception towards sugar substitutes. Other 29.9% have neutral perception but majority of the respondents (42.9%) have negative perception about it.

3.4.3 Consumer Behavior and Preferences:

The survey shows the type of sweeteners consumed usually by the population.

- Primary sweetener usages:

What type of sweetener do you usually consume?

77 responses

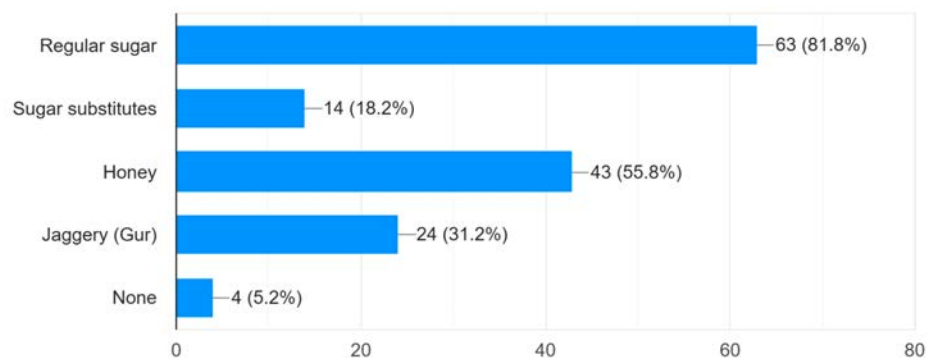


Figure 08: Primary sweeteners of the respondents

Out of 77 respondents 81.8% of them use regular sugar to sweetener their food. Also, 55.8% respondents use honey and 31.2% people use Jaggery as a replacement for sugar. From these participants 18.2% use only sugar substitutes as a primary sweetener or beside other sweeteners. The 5.2% respondents do not consume any type of sweeteners.

3.4.4 Concerns Regarding Sugar Substitutes:

This survey revealed several key concerns that hinder the adaptation of sugar substitutes.

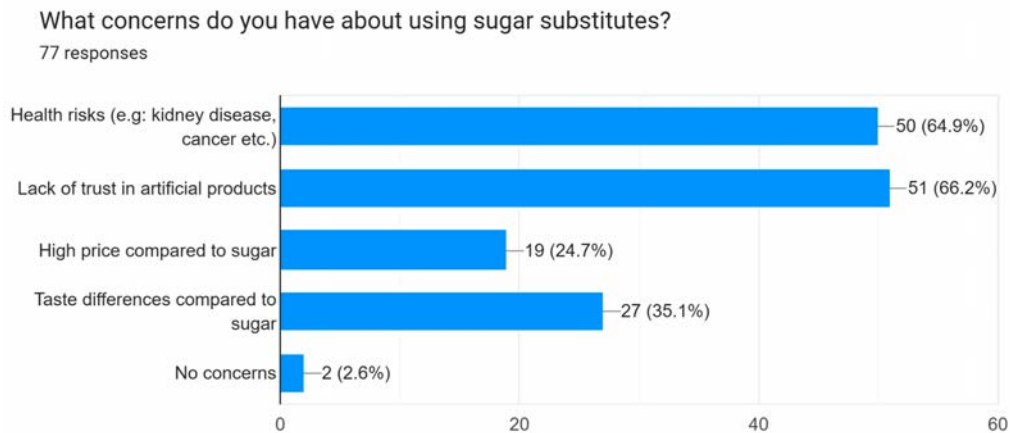


Figure 09: Concerns regarding sugar substitutes

Here, 64.9% of respondents show concerns about health risks, such as kidney disease and cancer. With that 50% of the respondents have lack of trust in artificial products as a barrier to adaptation. 40% of respondents found a taste difference with regular sugar and 25% people among 77 respondents are concerned about the higher price of sugar substitute.

3.4.5 Brand Familiarity:

This survey wanted to find out which brand is most familiar among the participants.

Which brand(s) of sugar substitute are you familiar with?

77 responses

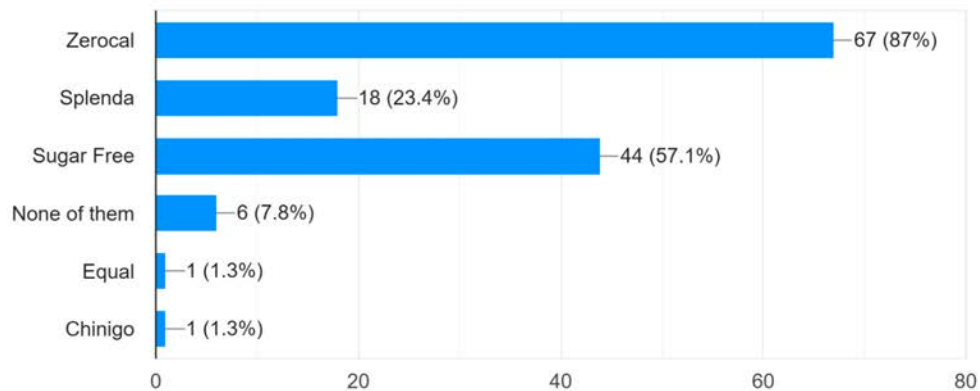


Figure 10: Sugar substitute brand familiarity

It shows that Zerocal was the most recognized brand with 87% of respondents familiar with it. The second place is held by Sugar Free which is recognized by 57.1% people. Splenda was the third most familiar brand. Moreover, the rest of the people are familiar with Equal (1.3%) and Chinigo (1.3%) as a sugar substitute brand; and 7.8% respondent are not aware of or recognized any brands.

3.4.6 Perception about Zerocal:

The survey specifically tried to understand respondents' perception of Zerocal as a brand.

What is your perception of Zerocal as a brand?

77 responses

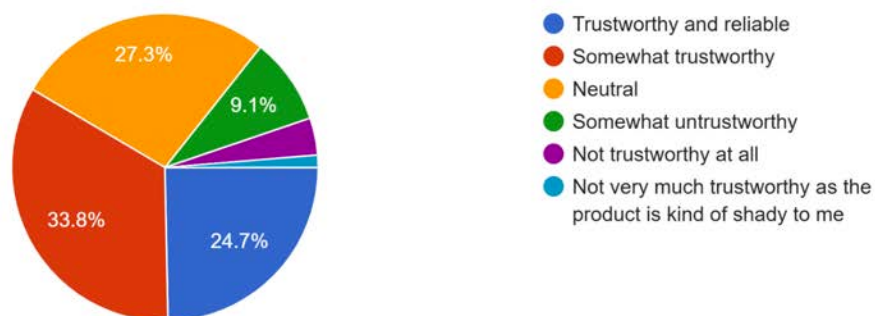


Figure 11: Perception about Zerocal

Among all respondents, 24.7% think that Zerocal is fully trustworthy and reliable and 33.8% think it is somewhat trustworthy. In contrast, 24.7% believes that Zerocal is not trustworthy at all and 9.1% also thinks it's somewhat untrustworthy. A significant number of respondents (27.3%) shared neutral perception regarding Zerocal.

3.4.7 Influencing Factors and Mitigation Strategies:

This survey presented several ways that could help mitigate negative perception and make sugar substitute more reliable to the people. Also, what it finds out is what can be the most influencing factor for sugar substitutes.

- **Influencing factors on sugar substitute:**

What influences your opinion on sugar substitutes the most?
77 responses

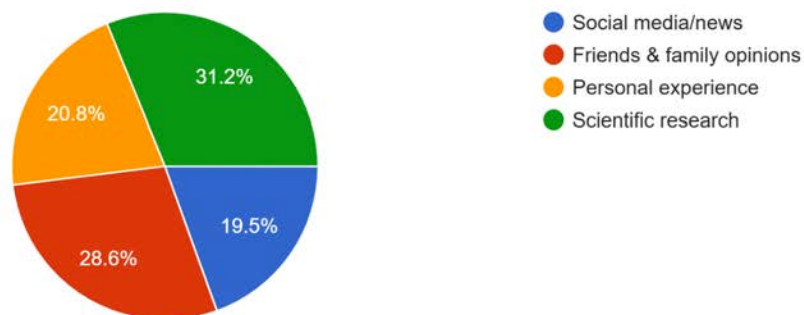


Figure 12: Influencing factors on sugar substitute

This shows that scientific research (31.2%) is the most influential factor shaping consumer opinion on sugar substitutes, followed by friends and family opinions which hold 28.6%. Also, personal experience (20.8%) plays a crucial role. At the same time, social media/ news (19.5%) influence the respondents regarding sugar substitute.

- **Possible ways to mitigate negative perceptions:**

What would make sugar substitutes feel more reliable to you?

77 responses

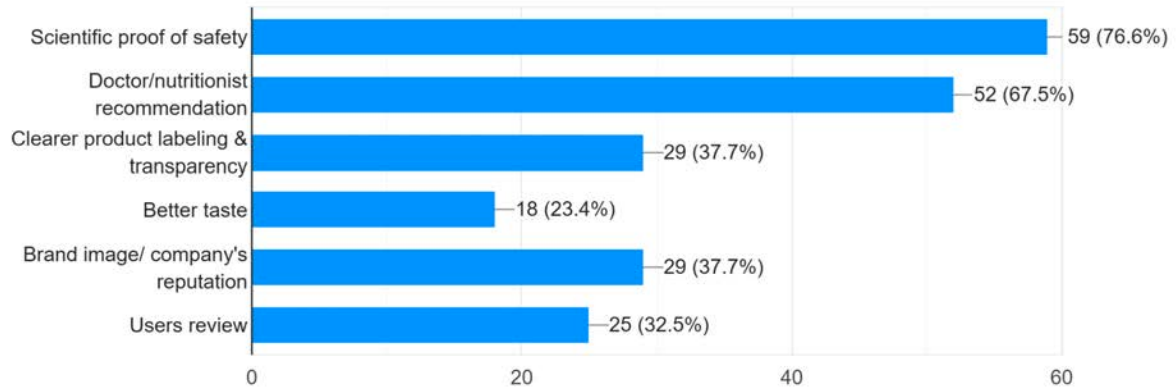


Figure 13: Possible ways to mitigate negative perceptions

Here, 76.6% of people believe that scientific proof of safety would make them feel more confident about consuming sugar substitute. Also, 60% of people shared that endorsement from doctors or nutritionists would improve their perception. 50% of them also think that educational campaigns about health benefits of sugar substitute can resolve their concerns. After all, 40% of respondents stated that real-users testimonials and success stories will build trust and credibility of this product.

3.5 Recommendations and Implications:

Based on the findings and my understanding, here I am sharing some recommendations that can be implemented to achieve the market goal of Zerocal.

Update Product Packaging: Zerocal can make its packaging more engaging by adding its health benefit, proven scientific studies and address consumers concerns. In the survey, 67.5% of the respondents shared that endorsement from doctors and nutritionists will make them trust

more in sugar substitute, so Zerocal can add “Doctors Recommended Sugar Substitute” in the product labeling, after getting approval from respective bodies. For example, Splenda mentions in their packaging that “#1 recommended brand by doctors and dietitians” ([Figure: 14](#)). It will make Zerocal more credible among the customers who have negative perceptions.

Moreover, Zerocal can add a QR code titled ‘Scan to explore more’ in the product labeling, which will be linked to a web page consisting of multiple sections such as Scientific Studies, FAQs, Users Review and Recipes. In the first section named ‘Scientific Studies’, where all the relevant scientific studies will be listed briefly like ([Figure 15: About the Splenda Brand](#)) for the clarification that Zerocal is safe to consume. As 76.6% respondent believes that scientific proof of safety will make sugar substitute more reliable to them, so it will help to minimize and clarify negative perception of consumers. In the second section named ‘FAQs’, where consumers will get answers to the most commonly asked questions. For reference, we can follow the FAQ section of SweetLeaf as well ([Figure 16: SweetLeaf FAQs](#)). Also, some common concerns like whether artificial ingredients are safe or not (66.2% respondents) will be addressed in this part. In the third section named ‘Users Reviews’ some users' experience regarding Zerocal will be there; as 32.5% of the respondent believes that users review can make sugar substitute more reliable to them. Lastly, the last section will consist of recipes that will show how Zerocal can be used in baking, drinks and in other meals.

Social Media and Lifestyle Marketing: Nowadays social media is the most influential tool for marketers. The survey also shows that 61.7% of the respondents get information about sugar substitutes from social media; Zerocal can also leverage this opportunity by doing social media

campaigns. As the target groups demographics are diverse in nature that's why Zerocal can continue two campaigns, and the details are given below.

Campaign 1	Campaign 2
Focus: Lifestyle Contents	Focus: Educational Contents
Goal: Reach to more audience and create awareness regarding Zerocal	Goal: Create a positive attitude towards Zerocal
Timeline: 4-6 months	Timeline: 4-6 months
Target Group: Fitness conscious students & young professionals. Age: 13-40 Location: Urban and semi-urban	Target Group: Students, homemakers, current & retired professionals. Age: 13 and above Location: Urban, semi-urban & rural
Platform: Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube	Platform: Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube, online magazine & newspapers
Content Type: Images, short videos	Content Type: Images, infographics, videos, articles

Table : Campaigns details

In Campaign 1, Zerocal can strategically partner with well known social media celebrities, fitness influencers, fitness trainers of Bangladesh. In the survey 61% people responded that their primary source of information is social media so it will be helpful to reach a huge group of people. Zerocal can collaborate with 10-15 celebrities & influencers on social media for this campaign. In the 1st phase of the campaign, the celebrities & influencers will post with Zerocal's product and its features to create awareness. In the 2nd phase, they will talk about Zerocal's usages and benefits to create a positive mindset toward sugar substitute. In the 3rd phase encouraging their followers, influencers will start an online challenge called #21_days_of_ZeroCalorie_Challenge. Where they will post everyday that they're having Zerocal with their meals; so that followers are attracted to use it for their daily meals too. In the final phase of the campaign, both the influencers and participants will upload a video sharing

experience of replacing sugar with Zerocal. Among all the participants, the top 10 will be selected as the winner and will get a chance to win exciting gifts and share moments with their favorite celebrities. Moreover, this campaign will help to create awareness and buzz among the health and fitness enthusiast social media users about Zerocal.

In campaign 2, Zerocal can collaborate with doctors, nutritionists and health professionals, 68.8% of people think that endorsement from professionals will make sugar substitute reliable to them. The doctors and nutritionists will make detailed videos addressing sugar substitute benefits, side effects and how much quantity is safe for a person per day. These videos will be featured in Zerocal's social media platform. Also, every month a live online talk show will be arranged on Zerocal Facebook and Youtube with doctors and nutritionists discussing sugar substitute myths and facts. On live shows, viewers can raise their question directly to the professionals which will help the audience to understand the product better and minimize negative thoughts. Apart from video contents, infographics of how sugar substitutes works, its proven benefits and way of uses will be posted regularly on Facebook and Instagram. This campaign will build acceptance among health conscious people and they will get experts' opinions on sugar substitutes which will encourage them to consume Zerocal.

Free Product Trials Campaign: Zerocal can initiate a free sample distribution program to create a new consumer base and make the potential consumers first try the product. Also, 19.5% responded that they want to try Zerocal first through free sampling. Firstly, Zerocal can launch free trials campaigns in HoReCa (Hotel, Restaurant & Cafe) with the aim to promote sugar substitutes. Zerocal can collaborate with popular coffee shops of Dhaka including North End, Crimson cup, Gloria Jeans, Arabika etc. to serve Zerocal with their coffee and drinks. For

example, Zerocal will make an agreement with top 30 outlets of multiple chain coffee shops that each day during rush hour (4 to 8 pm), first 50 customers will get complementary Zerocal sachet with their coffee. Also, during the campaign period (3 months) all the customers will receive a leaflet while giving the cafe's menu to the customers. The leaflet will consist of Zerocal's health benefits, why Zerocal is better than regular sugar and its product description, so that customers willingly get interested about Zerocal. Implementing this campaign with coffee shop Zerocal can reach thousands of potential consumers. Also as a partner, the coffee shops will develop a positive brand image as a health conscious and customer centric brand. Furthermore, gradually Zerocal can expand its product trialing campaign in airport lounges, corporate offices etc.

Moreover, in occasions and programs like marathon, fitness and yoga events where the health conscious people have access, Zerocal can run free product trial campaigns as an event partner. Also, in Dhaka city where people go for morning or evening walk, places like Ramana park, Dhanmondi lake, Hatirjheel, Botanical garden, Shahabuddin park etc. Zerocal can place temporary vendors to make them try Zerocal with tea or coffee. Moreover, as a relevant brand for diabetic patients, each Friday Zerocal can sponsor free diabetic tests in those public places. Where Zerocal's products and the uses benefits will be briefed to them and they can try free samples as well. It will help the consumers to test Zerocal before making a purchase and a positive experience can help to build them into a regular consumer.

Launching Zerocal App: Zerocal can be established as a lifestyle brand targeting fitness conscious and healthy people. In our survey we can see that 80.5% respondents are aged between 18 to 35 and these people are tech savvy also a significant portion of this are health conscious.

To keep them aligned with the brand, Zerocal can launch a health & fitness app, where they will get value added services for free. To illustrate, the app will included with the following features:

- **Personalized Health Dashboard:** Where users can log in the app and analyse their weight, calorie intake, blood sugar level and fitness progress regularly.
- **Nutrition and Meal Planning:** This segment will consist of recipes that incorporate Zerocal products. Also, users can get diabetic friendly, low calorie, tailored meal plans.
- **Fitness Tracking and workouts:** Interconnecting with wearable devices (e.g.: smartwatch) to track daily steps, workouts and guide workout routine for users. It will create a positive image about Zerocal to their fitness conscious people and will establish a holistic wellness experience.

In short, implementing the above recommendations will minimize the negative perception about sugar substitutes in Bangladesh. Also, it will help Zerocal to expand its market and convert the potential target group into regular consumers.

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Appendix



Figure 14: Splenda packaging

About the Splenda® Brand

Based outside of Indianapolis, Heartland Food Products Group is a global leader in the production of low-calorie sweetener products, creamers, beverage concentrates, coffee, and nutritional drinks. Heartland is on a mission to help people live happier, healthier and longer lives by making it easier to reduce sugar through its delicious, low-calorie sweeteners. The Splenda® Brand is the most recognizable and iconic low-calorie sweetener ("LCS") brand in the world, having sold more than 100 billion yellow packets since its launch in 1991. Today, the Splenda Brand is the clear #1 LCS brand in the USA. Splenda is the name for great tasting, low calorie foods and beverages. Its line features a range of products including low-calorie sweetener products including [Splenda Original Sweeteners](#), [Splenda Stevia Sweeteners](#) and [Splenda Monk Fruit Sweeteners](#); [Splenda Coffee Creamers](#), [Splenda Diabetes Care Shakes](#), [Splenda Sweet Teas](#) and more. To learn more, visit Heartland at www.heartlandfpg.com and Splenda at www.splenda.com.

¹ Splenda Professionals. 22, May 2023, Scientific Publications Summary, <https://www.splenda.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Scientific-Publications-Summary-2023.pdf>.

² Calorie Control Council. 22, May 2023, Low-and No-Calorie Sweeteners Continue to be Safe and Effective Options for Managing Non-Communicable Diseases like Diabetes, Heart Disease and Obesity, <https://caloriecontrol.org/low-and-no-calorie-sweeteners-continue-to-be-safe-and-effective-options-for-managing-non-communicable-diseases-like-diabetes-heart-disease-and-obesity/>.

Figure 15: About the Splenda Brand

All your sweetener questions, answered.

What is SweetLeaf® Stevia? 

Is SweetLeaf® approved by the FDA as a sweetener? 

Is stevia safe? 

Is erythritol included in your products? 

What are Natural Flavors? 

Are SweetLeaf® products appropriate for people with diabetes? 

What are the ingredients in SweetLeaf® Stevia Sweetener? 

Do SweetLeaf® products have an aftertaste like other stevia products? 

Do SweetLeaf® Sweet Drops® Liquid Stevia need to be refrigerated? 

Can SweetLeaf® Stevia Sweetener be used in cooking and baking? 



Figure 16: SweetLeaf FAQs

- Google Form Survey Questionnaire:

Survey on Sugar Substitute Products

B *I* U  

A sugar substitute is a food additive that provides a sweetness like that of sugar while containing significantly less food energy than sugar-based sweeteners, making it a zero-calorie or low-calorie sweetener. We are conducting this survey to explore and understand consumers' perception towards sugar substitutes in Bangladesh. The collected data will be only used for research purposes. Thank you for participating in our survey.

Name *

Short answer text

Gender: *

☐ Female

☐ Male

Age: *

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18 - 25
- ☐ 26 - 35
- ☐ 36 - 45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ Above 55

Education level *

- ☐ SSC
- ☐ HSC
- ☐ Honours degree (BBA/ BSC etc.)
- ☐ Masters and above (MBA, MSC, PhD etc.)

What is your total **family income** per month? *

- ☐ Below 20,000
- ☐ 20,000 - 40,000
- ☐ 41,000 - 60,000
- ☐ Above 60,000

Are you aware of sugar substitutes (e.g.: Zerocal, Sugar-Free, Splenda etc.)? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What type of sweetener do you usually consume? *

- ☐ Regular sugar
- ☐ Sugar substitutes
- ☐ Honey
- ☐ Jaggery (Gur)
- ☐ None

What is your primary reason for choosing a particular sweetener?

Short answer text

What is your overall perception of sugar substitute? *

- ☐ Positive
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Negative

If "Negative" kindly mention the reason

Short answer text

What concerns do you have about using sugar substitutes? *

- ☐ Health risks (e.g: kidney disease, cancer etc.)
- ☐ Lack of trust in artificial products
- ☐ High price compared to sugar
- ☐ Taste differences compared to sugar
- ☐ No concerns
- ☐ Other...

Which brand(s) of sugar substitute are you familiar with? *

- ☐ Zerocal
- ☐ Splenda
- ☐ Sugar Free
- ☐ None of them
- ☐ Other...

Which brand of sugar substitute have you consumed?

Short answer text

What is your primary source of information about sugar substitutes? *

- ☐ TV/ Newspaper
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Friends/ Family
- ☐ Doctor/ Health Practitioner
- ☐ Billboard/ Posters/ Store promotions

What is your perception of **Zerocal** as a brand? *

- ☐ Trustworthy and reliable
- ☐ Somewhat trustworthy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat untrustworthy
- ☐ Not trustworthy at all
- ☐ Other...

What influences your opinion on sugar substitutes the most? *

- ☐ Social media/news
- ☐ Friends & family opinions
- ☐ Personal experience
- ☐ Scientific research
- ☐ Other...

What would make sugar substitutes feel more reliable to you? *

- ☐ Scientific proof of safety
- ☐ Doctor/nutritionist recommendation
- ☐ Clearer product labeling & transparency
- ☐ Better taste
- ☐ Brand image/ company's reputation
- ☐ Users review
- ☐ Other...

Which approach would make you trust sugar substitutes more? *

- ☐ Educational campaigns about health benefits
- ☐ Real-user testimonials & success stories
- ☐ Endorsements from health professionals
- ☐ Promotional offers or free samples
- ☐ Other...

What would encourage you to try or continue using sugar substitutes?

Short answer text

.....