

An Analysis of “Are Artificial Sweeteners Safe or Harmful?”

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DSC 500 Introduction to Data Science

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November 18, 2023

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Looking at the presentation crafted by Ms. Deeksha Chawla on the effects of consuming artificial sweeteners as opposed to regular sugar, it was very gratifying to see a topic delved into so thoroughly, especially one that involved food (I guess this is my bias towards the foodservice industry showing). Chawla’s presentation was very well laid out, and the question of whether artificial sweeteners are harmful to the human body or not based on consumption is defined adeptly. Outlining such debatable issues as potential weight gain, increased appetite, and proper product identification for health reasons solidifies the seriousness of this issue and why it should be analyzed further.

Seeing the structure and detail in the presentation prompts some of the strengths within to be recognized. Chawla’s presentation does a wonderful job of providing an eye-catching and informative structure, with the presentation flow making logical sense and using colors that draw the attention of the reader to the information being relayed. Recognizing the ethical concerns of artificial sweeteners early on in the analysis process is advantageous to understand that the issue is not to be taken lightly, and the information gleaned from delving further into the topic is to be considered unbiased and credible.

While there are niceties about the presentation that have been addressed, there are also opportunities for polishing the analysis that can be revealed. Looking at the visual aids within the presentation that displayed real-world data concerning the safety of artificial sweeteners, the actual meaning that the aids were attempting to convey was a little murky. One of the visual aids offered very little in the way of color and space as the chart was very cramped and monotone in color; elements that make any viewer steer clear of information that otherwise was intriguing. The other visual aid did too much in the way of analysis by comparing many different things, muddling the meaning of the data and robbing the viewer of a clear snapshot of what the chart was displaying. While the presentation explicitly listed further opportunities to be explored, these concepts were not touched on, leaving the

reader in ambiguity as to why are these ideas considered opportunities. With the presentation more appealing to the eye than the visuals within and the opportunities listed not fully explained, the actual analysis performed in this presentation leaves much to be desired.

With studies of this level, assumptions tend to be made that may skew the data collected and may paint a slightly different picture than initially intended. Some assumptions may hurt the position or help depending on the evidence found to support or contradict the assumption. For this presentation, an interesting assumption that was made was the idea of individual variability when it comes to the human body's way of processing artificial sweeteners. This assumption could have been looked into further to help support the effect of artificial sweeteners on certain groups of people with varying health conditions. The overall outcome of the analysis revealed at the end of the presentation was that artificial sweeteners were not found to be overly good or bad for one's health. However, these results stem from the analysis of an undefined population, and the inclusion of multiple subpopulations each with a different set of health statistics would help to narrow down results to specific factors. This may mean that after analyzing a group of males aged 40-65 with diabetes, artificial sweeteners are healthy for them, but the same may not ring true for females aged 20-45.

I would have to say that the most skillful thing Chawla's presentation does is outline some of the ethical implications of this topic. Companies needing to label their sweeteners as artificial by the Food and Drug Administration have to follow the ethics behind sharing the ingredients used to make the sweeteners. Stevia has the ingredient erythritol clearly written on its label, which some may view as positive transparency yet others view as a questionable tactic given the debate among many concerning erythritol's health benefits (if any). The targeted marketing strategies used by companies also provide an opportunity for ethics to come into play. If a company gears its advertisement campaign towards those they believe will purchase these sweeteners, it may actually be offending their intended

customers as the consumers may see this pointed effort as being written off as unhealthy people who need help controlling their diet.

Overall, Chawla's presentation of the safety of artificial sweeteners was informative and aesthetically pleasing. The structure combined with the creative way of displaying pertinent information captured my attention and held it long enough to prompt me to analyze this topic further. I look forward to seeing if Chawla can accomplish further analysis of this issue in the real world to prompt a more complete answer to the question "Are artificial sweeteners safe or harmful?"