The Grocer

Focus On: Snack bars by Rob Brown (robert brown rob_j_a_brown@hotmail.com) and Natalie Brown (natalie_brown@live.co.uk)

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The Story

The snack bar market is drowning in a sea of health claims. Products are boasting everything from low fat to high fibre – and until now, they have been reaping the rewards. But that's all come to an abrupt end. Sales of healthy snack bars have fallen 2.4% this year. That's despite 39% of snackers looking for healthier options all or most of the time, according to Kantar. At the same time, sports and nutrition bars have delivered double-digit gains. So what's behind these two very different fortunes? Are certain health claims losing their power? And why are sports-led bars hitting the mark?

Key themes:

Healthy bars: Why are healthy bars declining? Who has been hit hardest by the migration away from these snacks, and what can brands do to mitigate the decline? Which claims are struggling to resonate? Over in confectionery, Wowsomes was recently axed – does that show that low-sugar claims have had their day?

Sports and nutrition bars: Sports-led products appear to be benefiting from the drop in traditional healthy bars. Sales are up double digits thanks to protein NPD, while some are banking on nootropics being a rising trend with their recent launches. Why are these winning where healthy bars are losing? Also how are healthy brands getting in on this trend?

Treats: It's not all about health. Treat bars – those with a higher sugar content – have delivered yet another rise in sales this year. Why are these proving popular? Are consumers turning to snack bars over traditional treat sectors like confectionery and biscuits?

Own label: Retail ranges may hold the minority of market share, but they're still far outpacing brands in value growth. That's in spite of own label average prices creeping ever closer to their branded equivalents. How are retailers winning over shoppers?

Retailers: The mults struggled this year, while sales soared across bargain stores and the discounters. What's behind the decline of the supermarkets? And what can be learned from the retail strategies of the discounters and bargain stores?

Innovations: We identify eight new products that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before including launch date and RSP, and a picture of each.

Kantar data: Using Kantar commentary, we explain the reasons behind the rise and fall of certain sub-categories.

Nielsen data: Using Nielsen commentary, we look at the 10 fastest-growing brands and 10 fastest-falling brands of the past year.