

## **Consumer Oriented Marketing: Seafood Consumption Among Children**

M. Tolga Tolon, Dilek Emiroğlu  
*Ege University Faculty of Fisheries, 35100, Izmir, Turkey*  
Emails: *tolga.tolon@ege.edu.tr, dilek.emiroglu@ege.edu.tr*

### **Abstract**

Parents' dominance on determination of food consumption pattern of children has been changing in recent years by the effect of developing social communication via information technologies, improving education level and changing social status of the community. Increasing awareness of children on sustainable and healthy nutrition issues affects consumption habits of the modern families. Today, parents give more importance to the preference and proposals of their children for the food selection. In previous decade, adults were more health conscious and prefer healthy foods than the young ones but today an enormous amount of efforts has been launched to educate children about consuming healthy foods than never before.

Families with the children are an important market segment for the seafood industry. However, children's dislike of seafood or strong preferences for fast-food type consumption is the barriers to seafood marketing in many cases. Consequently, children are the preferential targets of seafood promotions and campaigns in most countries to gain more consumers today and in the future.

In this study, seafood consumption pattern and preferences of the children in age group of 10-14 has been researched. Randomly selected 400 children were surveyed through a questionnaire with personal interviews. The surveys have been conducted in primary schools of two cities which localized as seaside and inland in west part of Turkey.

Findings derived from the research have indicated that social interaction among children has strong impact on seafood consumption habit. Moreover, children would promote seafood consumption in their families. Besides education the forms of seafood specially cooked and packaged attractive to their age group and promotion campaigns lead most children to demand and consume more seafood.

This paper provides sample clues for improving marketing strategy by focusing on children's seafood consumption. The reasons of seafood resistance have to be identified clearly and continuously for the consumer oriented marketing in seafood.

**Keywords:** marketing, seafood, consumption, children, consumer oriented

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The consumer-oriented marketing is a new model of marketing that company should view and organize its marketing activities from the consumer's point of view. Consumer-oriented marketing, which focuses on fine-tuning a business by determining its customer base, is an important development in the evolution of marketing. This process is defined by three functions within the consumer-oriented market model: analysis, modeling and planning.

When a product is marketed in a consumer orientated way there must be a lot of research needed to find out the facts about the consumer. This is something that can be done through surveys. Also knowing the habits of those markets and consumer needs can be profitable by utilizing that information ahead of time.

The availability of customer information has grown exponentially, providing the raw material for more detailed analysis. Although this can be costly, the benefits of most consumer marketing campaigns do outweigh the initial research cost.

Another benefit would be gained from the consumer oriented marketing is to target a certain consumer group by the right marketing tools or promotions as in the seafood consumption case. Families with the children are an important market segment for the seafood industry.

As eating habits are formed in childhood, it is necessary that their determining factors be understood in order to establish effective educational and marketing processes that can change children's eating behavior (Angelis, 1995). The literature on infant feeding shows that children's eating behavior is firstly determined by their family and, in a second moment, by other psychosocial and cultural interactions (Maurem, 2000). Food consumption behavior, like any complex human behavior, will be influenced by many interrelating factors, like physical properties of the food (flavor, texture, odor), characteristics of the individual (personality, preferences, attitudes, perceptions, knowledge) or characteristics with the environment (availability, season, situation, culture) (Olsen, 2001).

Innovative and sustainable marketing methods are essential to increase the per capita consumption in markets which the seafood is not present traditionally as Turkey. Inclusion of children into the seafood market would be possible by modern marketing methods as consumer oriented marketing. Therefore, children are the preferential targets of seafood promotions and campaigns in most countries to gain more consumers today and in the future.

The main purpose of the present study was to provide sample clues for improving marketing strategy in context of consumer oriented marketing principles by focusing on children's seafood consumption habits between 10-14 ages. The factors affecting seafood consumption behavior and reasons of seafood resistance were identified in sample case in order to be utilized in consumer oriented marketing strategy for sustainable marketing efforts.

## **2.METHODOLOGY**

The subjects were students who are recruited from the primary schools of two cities, Muğla (agricultural city, 20km from seaside) and İzmir (industrial city, near seaside) both located in west part of Turkey.

Random selection of 400 children (203 girls, 197 boys) (stratified for age and town, 200 from each of the towns) ranging in age from 10 to 14 years was performed on the basis of local taxation registers in order to achieve an adequate variation of socio-economic factors.

Although the detailed demographic data were not collected from any of the students who participated, it is known that families in this subject pool are in and below the Turkish median for income. None of the children in the present study had previously participated in any seafood or economic survey.

A questionnaire asking respondents about their attitudes and seafood consumption behavior was constructed and pre-tested. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of consumer oriented marketing strategies which include to reveal the clues about consumption pattern, knowledge background, social context related with seafood consumption of the target group.

Descriptive statistics and chi-square test analysis were used to predict the relation between consumption behavior and other factors. All analyses were done with SPSS version 15, and a value of  $p \leq 0.05$  was taken as the level of significance throughout. The p-values are reported only for the significant results.

### 3.RESULTS

A total of 400 surveys were completed for this study during March 2012. Respondents surveyed can be sorted into one of four groups for purpose of data analysis (Table 1). Group 1 had 356 respondents (89%), which reported that they do eat fish or seafood regularly. Group 2 had 32 respondents who do not like the taste of fish and therefore not eating any fish or seafood. Group 3 had 8 respondents who are unable to buy or eat fish or seafood because of low financial situation. Group 4 had 4 respondents which reported that they had experienced health problems as poisoning and awn prick during fish consumption.

**Table 1.** Grouping for survey respondents

Number of children surveyed (N)	Ratio (%)	Groups
356	89	Group I – Eat fish regularly
32	8	Group II – Do not eat fish (Taste)
8	2	Group III – Do not eat fish (Financial)
4	1	Group IV – Do not eat fish (Health)

The key points and seafood consumption pattern of target group were analyzed and summarized to develop a consumer oriented marketing strategy (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Summary of the key points for consumer oriented marketing strategy in Group I.

Question	
Frequency	Bi-weekly (42%) , Once in a month (26%), Every week (24%)

Place	Home (91%), Restaurant (4,5 %) , Outdoor (4,5%)
Respect to decision	Sometimes (56%), Always (33%) , Never (11%)
Species	Anchovy (30%) ,Seabream (18%), Sea bass (9%)
Other seafood	Mollusk (48%), Canned tuna (43%) , calamari (30%) , fish finger (27%)
Identify	Yes (81%) , No (19%)
Benefit	Answer (95 %) , No answer (5%)
Source of knowledge	School (42%) , Social Media (39 %) , Family (19%)
Ads interest	Yes (76%) , No (24 %)
Angling	Yes (52%) , No (48 %)
Friends consumption	Yes (94%) , No (6%)
Sibling Consumption	Yes (76%) , No (24%)

Consumption frequency in Group 1 was reported as 42% bi-weekly, 26% once in a month and 24% every week.

Questions focused on the employment status of the respondents' family have showed that 92% of the fathers and 23% of the mothers are employed in a job. Only 21% of the students' both parents are found to be employed. Parents are in the middle and lower income group according to their business types.

The most popular fish species according to respondent's preference were anchovy (30%), sea bream (18%) and sea bass (9%).

The evaluation of deboned or prepared seafood consumption has showed that 48% of the respondents like the taste of mussels, 43% canned tuna fish, 30% calamari and 27% fish finger .

Most children stated that they consume seafood at home (91%), 5% of them are consuming at the restaurants and 4% at the outdoor facilities as picnic.

Participants reported that 33% of their gatekeepers "always" respect their food decisions, nearly half of them (56%) respect "sometimes" and 11% "never" ask their children's food preferences. An important amount (89%) of the gatekeepers is respecting their children's decision in preparing and serving food types.

Totally 304 respondent (76%) from all groups reported that they are remembering at least one commercial ad about seafood or fish products. Even 73% of non-fish eating groups' members (Group II,III,IV) are also remembering at least one commercial ad about seafood and fishes.

Most of the children (81%) had stated that they know or can identify the fish species that they eat. However, no significant relation has found between "fish eating" and "fish awareness" ( $p > 0.05$ )

A significant relation has been determined between "fish awareness" and "commercial fish ads" in all groups ( $p = 0.028$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Seventy seven percent (77%) of the respondents which are remembering fish ads are also stating that they are aware of fish species.

Although the seafood promotion activities in the schools were very rare, 88% of the respondents who witness a seafood promotion activity reported as they know or can identify the fish species. Also the fish consumption ratio within this group was 99%. There is a significant relation between the "fish promotion in schools" and "fish awareness" as well as "fish consumption" ( $p = 0.021$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ )

No significant relation can be found between the "aquarium hobby" and the "fish consumption". The presence of aquarium and hobby breeding of fishes as pet do not affecting the fish consumption positive or negatively ( $p > 0,05$ ).

Nearly all of the children (95%) had responded the "What are the benefits of fish consumption" question. The reported benefits of seafood were focused on eye wellness, intelligence development, bone and muscle development, growth, protein and omega-3 supply. Nearly half of the respondents (42%) stated that they learn such knowledge from lectures in schools, 39% from newspaper, magazines and internet, 19% from their parents and family members.

The question asking that "have you ever been in a bait fishing activity?" was responded as "Yes" by 52% of the respondents. Almost all of the children (93%) those answered this question positively were also stated as they are eating fish regularly. There is a significant relation between the "bait fishing" and "fish consumption habit" ( $p = 0.02$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

Greater than 94% of the respondents in all groups reported that their friends are eating fish regularly. This ratio was slightly higher in the Group I as 95%. Significant relation has been found between the "fish consumption" of the respondents and their "friend's fish eating behavior" ( $p = 0.016$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ )

Sibling's nutritional behavior also has impact on the respondent's fish consumption pattern. The percentage of children reporting their sibling's fish consumption behavior as positive was 76% in Group I. Sibling's fish consumption behavior has a significant impact on respondent's fish consumption habit ( $p = 0.04$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

#### **4.DISCUSSION**

Companies should principally develop their strategies for their target groups in consumer oriented marketing applications. The strategy adopted in this study was to increase the amount and frequency of consumed seafood by product diversification and adaptation according to the needs of target consumer group as children.

The researched group that has high percentage of seafood consumer (Group I) is a preferential target for consumer oriented marketing strategy. However, 8% of the respondents (Group II),

who do not like the taste and therefore not consuming seafood, would also be included into the target group of marketing strategy.

Psychosocially, eating behavior relies on parents' active participation as nutritional educators through family interactions that affect children's eating habits (Gillespie and Acterberg, 1989). The gatekeeper in the family is defined as the primary food decision maker and studies have shown that the gatekeeper's decisions are greatly influenced by other family members', food likes and dislikes (Wandel et al 1995). The high respect level (89%) of gatekeepers to the food decisions of their children and consumption of seafood intensively at home and with family members are the signs of a two-way interaction between children and parents on food consumption habits and decisions. In addition, the findings derived from the research had shown that proper knowledge about seafood is especially supplied by the teachers and followed by media sources as newspapers, internet and magazines. The nutritional facts about the seafood had been properly understood and adopted by almost all of the children researched. Although, children of such age group is not defined as a primary customer in context of economy, their consumption habits and demands are effectively forcing families to involve in seafood market as primary customers. Moreover, children would promote seafood consumption in their families.

Social interaction among children has strong impact on seafood consumption behavior. It is an important clue in developing marketing strategy that social environment of children especially their friends have more impact than their families on consumption behavior. In this case, children do not eat only because of hunger feeling but also by suggestion of the environment and social context (Birch and Fisher, 1997).

Children's dislike of seafood or their strong preference for hedonic consumption are barriers to seafood consumption (Olsen, 2001). Children prefer fast food type deboned seafood varieties instead of fish meals that are cooked and served in classic styles. The demand of children for such type of seafood as mollusk, canned tuna fish, calamari, fish finger and fish balls is a strong sign for such preference. Analyzing the serving and eating styles of best preferred meals of the target group and serving seafood products in such forms has to be included in the marketing strategy which would promote effective consumption in the market.

Children's point of view to the seafood products is another important key point in planning consumer oriented marketing strategies. As the aquarium hobby do not affecting fish eating motivation of the children in positive or negative manner, but involving in activities such as bait fishing and fishing for nutritional aims would promote seafood consumption of the children strongly. Informative promotions that are emphasizing edibility of the aquatic organisms would increase the market effectiveness of seafood among the target consumers. Considering the memorable feature of seafood ads by the most of the children, suitable ads that conforms the interests of children would be published through interactive social media and TV's as consumer oriented marketing strategy. Immediate and future campaigns can be then planned well so that it can create better impact to the consumer segment.

## **5.CONCLUSION**

There are a lot of other buying factors that consumers may have but children do not consider price over other factors. Children's preferences are mainly driven by their hedonic needs. It's important to take into consideration consumer's habits, values, and all other factors that influence

their decisions. With these data at hand, any company can create strategies that can work around the individual needs of these customers.

#### ACKNOWLEDGE

Special thanks to primary school teachers Miss ÖzlemÇizmecigil and Mrs.DenizÇakıroğlu who collaborate in conducting surveys and collecting precious data.

#### REFERENCES

- Alphanet Marketing (2012) Consumer Oriented Marketing Definition, URL <http://www.alphanetmarketing.com/2010/12/consumer-oriented-marketing-definition.html>
- Angelis R.C. (1995)Alimentaçãoainfânciavsconseqüênciasulterioresnasaúde. Rev Paul Ped;13:126-7.
- Birch L.L and Fisher J.A. (1997) The role of experience in the development of children's eating behavior. Why we eat what we eat. The psychology of eating. 2nd ed. p. 113-41. Washington
- Brown A.J. (1998) Effective Customer-Oriented Marketing, URL <http://www.information-management.com/infodirect/19980401/932-1.html>
- Gillespie A.H and Acterberg C.L. (1989) Comparison of family interaction patterns related to food and nutrition. J Am Diet Assoc ;89:509-12.
- Maurem R. and Lilian M.S. (2000) Development children's eating behavior, Jornal de Pediatria - Vol. 76, Supl.3, S229-S237
- Mennell S, Murcott A, Otterloo AH. (1992) The sociology of food: Eating, diet and culture. Current Sociology. J Intern SocAssoc; 40:1-147.
- Olsen S.O. (2001) Consumer involvement in seafood as family meals in Norway: an application of the expectancy-value approach, Journal of Appetite, Volume 36, Issue 2, Pages 173–186
- Roininen K. Roininen, L. Lähteenmäki, H. Tuorila (1999) Quantification of consumer attitudes to health and hedonic characteristics of foods, Journal of Appetite, 33 (1999), pp. 71–88
- Wandel M, Bugge A, SkoglundRamm J. (1995) Matvanerendringogstabilitet (Change and stability in food habits). SIFO,:4.