



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

A STUDY ON CUSTOMER PREFERENCE ABOUT FISH AND FISH PRODUCTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NEITHAL FISH RETAIL OUTLET, KALAVASAL, MADURAI

KEY WORDS: Fish Retailing, Consumer Preferences, Expansion, Diversification

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ABSTRACT

Consumer orientation is a vital drive for success in any venture. Every industry needs to fulfill its consumer preferences to sustain in the industry for a long run and to succeed. So is with fish industry. Seafood has always been considered as an important part of diet among human beings in most parts of the world. The consumption of fish was prevalent since the existence of human beings on earth. In the global market fish consumption is more than 155 million tons. Mostly, customers today prefer healthy and organic foods. Fishes raised in natural surroundings tend to be more healthy, tasty and nutritious to human health. Of late, fish and many other fish products are becoming the most preferable non-vegetarian foods among the people of Tamilnadu. Since aquaculture is believed to offer good scope in the market, the state government of Tamilnadu is creating a good platform for further increasing the market boundaries for fish industry. The present study investigates the preferences of consumers living in Madurai city on fish and fish products. The present study is done with special reference to Neithal Fish Retail Outlet located at Kalavasal, Madurai. Moreover, the study tries to identify the prospects for Neithal Fish retail outlet in expansion of fish retailing using online platform and diversification of fish retailing to sea food-based restaurant.

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer orientation is a vital drive for success in any venture. Every industry needs to fulfill its consumer preferences to sustain in the industry for a long run and to succeed. So is with fish industry. Sea food has always been considered as an important part of diet among human beings in most parts of the world. The consumption of fish was prevalent since the existence of human beings on earth. In the global market fish consumption is more than 155 million tons (Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, 2019). Fisheries sector occupies an important place in the socio-economic development of the fishermen. It includes both fish production and fish marketing. The present study focuses on fish marketing. Fish marketing is confronted with certain peculiar problems such as greater uncertainty in fish production, highly perishable nature of fish, assembling of fish from numerous landing centres, too many varieties and numerous demand pattern, recurrent fluctuations in prices, difficulties in fiddling with supply to variations in demand and need for transportations of fish in specialised ways of transport (P.S. Rao, 1983). However, of late, fish and many other fish products are becoming the most preferable non-vegetarian food among the people of Tamilnadu. Since aquaculture is believed to offer good scope in the market, the state government of Tamilnadu is trying to create a good platform for further increasing the market boundaries for fish industry.

1.1 FISH MARKETING STRUCTURE

In Tamilnadu, the fish marketing structure consists of primary market, whole sale market and retail market. The retail market is further broken in to retailer at landing center, retailer at the consumer center and vendors. In the fish market lots of people are involved in different marketing activities as given below,

- (a) Auctioneers
- (b) Retailers
- (c) Wholesalers
- (d) Commission Agents

AUCTIONEER

The auctioneer is an important participant in the marketing channel. As the fish is landed in the primary market or brought into the wholesale market, the auctioneer buys the fish through

auction on behalf of the fishermen producer. Among the various market functionaries, the auctioneer enjoys the highest status.

WHOLESALE / COMMISSION AGENT

The Wholesaler who also acts as a Commission Agent receives fish from the retailers who bring fish from the landing centres to the secondary market and sell it to the retailers / vendors in the secondary market.

RETAILER AT LANDING CENTRE

The Retailers will acquire the fish from the fishermen by way of auction at the landing centre. The Retailers carry the fish to the wholesale market in the town and ask the Commission Agent to sell the fish on behalf of them.

RETAILER AT CONSUMING CENTRE

These Retailers get hold of the fish from the Wholesaler / Commission Agents at wholesale market. At times they purchase fish from the Landing Centres directly and take it to different retail market places and sell it.

VENDORS

Vendors belong to retailers. They purchase fish from the Wholesaler / Commission Agents at the wholesale market directly from the primary market in open auction. The Vendors are mostly women who carry fish directly to the consumer households.

1.2 CHANNELS OF DISTRIBUTION IN FISH MARKETING

Landing centres of marine fish are scattered all over coast. But consuming centres are spread far and wide from the landing centres. Fish is often carried over long distances to the consuming points by various means transport. Fish marketing usually uses a multi-channel marketing system. The channels to reach the ultimate consumers are given in the table below,

S.no	Channel level	Participants
1.	Channel-I	Producer - Retailer - Consumer
2.	Channel-II	Producer - Auctioneer - Retailer - Consumer

3.	Channel-III	Producer - Retailer (LC) -Wholesaler/Commission Agent - Retailer (CC) –Consumer
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Note:LC - Landing CentreCC - Consuming Centre

This marketing study is based upon a primary investigation the researcher carried out in Madurai city. The study investigates the preferences of consumers living in Madurai city on fish and fish products. The present study is done with special reference to Neithal Fish Retail Outlet located at Kalavasal, Madurai. It falls under retailing at consumer centre in the marketing channel of fish distribution. They procure fish from the Wholesaler/Commission Agents at wholesale market and sell it. The present study investigates the preferences of consumers living in Madurai city on fish and fish products. Moreover, the study tries to identify the prospects for Neithal Fish retail outlet in expansion of fish retailing using online platform and diversification of fish retailing to sea food-based restaurant.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The future of deep-sea fishing relies on eco-friendly techniques that maintains deep-sea ecosystem and tolerate appropriate human uses of the marine environment. In this study the author (Christopher K. Pham et al, 2014) demonstrates that deep-sea bottom long line fishing has little impact on susceptible marine ecosystem, reducing by catch of cold water corals and restraining extra damage to benthic communities.

Sivanesan. R (2014) says that the socio-economic condition of the fisher men of southern coastal area of Kanyakumari district are very poor. The standard of living of the fisher folk in Kanyakumari district needs to be improved in this situation it is highly essential to take steps to improve their income and reduces their expenditure to obtain in socio-economic balanced society.

This study by Balasubramanian, Ganesh Kumar, Datta, K et al., (2008) has been conducted in all the major coastal states and some selected inland states to understand the domestic marketing of fish in India. The study has showed the need for creating a uniform market policy for fishes. This may lead to ease in operation and regulation so that the country's fish production is ably managed and delivered to the consumers, at the same time making sure the remunerative prices to the fishers.

Mugaonkr et.al, (2011) says that there is a change in consumption pattern of fish and fish product in urban area especially there are willing to use processed forms.

Geethalakshmi et.al, (2013) Changing life style and rising income have set a new trend in the demand for quality food among the consumers. To enhance awareness about nutritious diet and health, the necessity to bring in firm quality control, value addition and consumer plea in food products has become important. A study was conducted in Palakkad District of Kerala to assess the consumer preference and willingness to pay for value added fish products.

A lot of studies have been done in the area of fisheries sector from the marine eco system to fish and fish products retailing. Based on the reviews, it is identified that most of the studies are confined to coastal areas. Hence, the researcher in the present study tries to explore the preferences on fish and fish products of consumers living in Madurai city. Moreover, the study tries to find out whether the consumers will be buying the fish online and will the current consumers and other prospects of Neithal Fish retail outlet will encourage a sea food-based restaurant by Neithal.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a descriptive research design for

conducting the study. The researcher followed a convenient sampling method a non-probability sampling technique. The residents of Madurai city, especially the people residing in and around Kalavasal and Sammatipuram were considered to be in the population. Based on the approachability, the researcher circulated his questionnaire to 250 people. However, a few of them were incomplete, a few were not appropriate and a few were not returned on time. The sample size thus was 204 consumers. The researcher used a structured and validated questionnaire designed for the purpose of the study. Observing the change in consumer preferences towards fish and fish products, the following objectives were framed:

- To investigate the preferences of consumers living in Madurai city on fish and fish products.
- To identify the prospects for Neithal Fish retail outlet in expansion of fish retailing using online platform.
- To identify the prospects for Neithal Fish retail outlet in diversification of fish retailing to sea food-based restaurant.

This study covers a period of three months from December 2019 to February 2020. Simple percentage analysis was used for the study.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The results of the simple percentage analysis are described in the following sections.

4.1 DESCRIPTIVES

The sample consisted of 204 consumers. Most of the consumers (43%) belonged to the age group of 20 to 25. Most of the consumers (58%) had a secondary education and the number of members in the consumer's family was more than 4 in most of the cases (53%). Most of them were male (68%). Most of the consumers (56%) declared that their income level was less than 20,000. Interestingly most of them (59%) consumed fish and fish products. Most of them declared that they know Neithal fish retail outlet (87%) and most of them have said that (62%) they have bought

4.2 CONSUMER PREFERENCE OF FISH AND FISH PRODUCTS

The preference of consumers on fish and fish products are explored and presented (Table 4.2.1) in this section.

TABLE 4.2.1 SHOWING THE CONSUMER PREFERENCE OF FISH AND FISH PRODUCTS

S.No	Variables	Code	Percentage
1	Purchase Frequency	Q7	3 to 5 times in a month (72%)
2	Amount of money spent on Buying fish and fish products	Q8	Rs 250 – Rs 500 per month (62%)
3	Species of Fish purchased frequently	Q9	Barracuda (25%)
4	Fish product bought frequently	Q10	Frozen Fish (90%)
6	Favorite fish-based dish	Q11	Fish Fry (47%)
7	Point of purchase of Fish	Q12	Local fish retail outlet (90%)
8	Point of purchase of Fish Products	Q13	Super Markets (87%)
9	Customer service received at the retail outlet	Q14	Very good customer service (71%)
10	Opinion about Price range of fish	Q16	Reasonable (41%) and Affordable (41%)
11	Opinion about Price range of fish products	Q17	High (59%)

It is observed that the purchasing power and purchasing interest for buying fishes are good in the study area. More over, frozen fish seems to be the most commonly purchased fish product in the area of research. Similarly, it is bought in super markets. Fish is preferred to be bought in local retail outlets and the consumers are happy with the service provided and feel that the price is reasonable. However, when it comes to fish products, they feel the price is high. This highlights that if the local retailers offer a few other fish products such as frozen fish, dried and special cuts in their outlets for comparatively lesser prices the customers may prefer to buy them as well, enhancing the scope of their business.

4.3 PROSPECTS FOR NEITHAL FISH RETAIL OUTLET IN EXPANSION OF FISH RETAILING USING ONLINE PLAT FORM AND IN DIVERSIFICATION OF FISH RETAILING TO SEA FOOD-BASED RESTAURANT

The preference of consumers to buy fish online and their opinion about Neithal retail expanding to Neithal sea foods are explored and presented (Table 4.3.1) in this section.

TABLE 4.3.1 SHOWING THE CONSUMER PREFERENCE ABOUT EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF NEITHAL FISH RETAIL OUTLET

S.No	Variables	Code	Percentage
1	Preference for buying online	Q18	Not interested (97%)
2	Opinion about Neithal sea foods	Q19	Interested (80.4%)

It is observed that 97% of the consumers in the study area were not interested in buying fish online. However, 80.4% of them were interested in Neithal diversifying to Neithal sea foods.

5. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The consumption of fish was prevalent since the existence of human beings on earth and the fisheries sector which includes both fish production and fish marketing occupies an important place in the socio-economic development of the fishermen. The present study focuses on fish marketing. Based on the analysis it was observed that the purchasing power and purchasing interest for buying fishes are good in the study area. They feel that the pricing of fish is also reasonable. However, when it comes to fish products, they feel the price is high. This highlights that if the local retailers offer a few other fish products such as frozen fish, dried and special cuts in their outlets for comparatively lesser prices the customers may prefer to buy them as well, enhancing the scope of their business. It is observed that 97% of the consumers in the study area were not interested in buying fish online. Hence, it may be not the correct time for Neithal retail outlet to expand its business online. However, 80.4% of them were interested in Neithal diversifying to Neithal sea foods and sea food has always been considered as an important part of diet among human beings in most parts of the world. It is also identified that the consumers in the study area prefer fish fries. Hence, a positive trend is observed in the expansion of Neithal fish retail outlet to Neithal sea foods.

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