

The role of ethical concern in evaluation of farmed seafood

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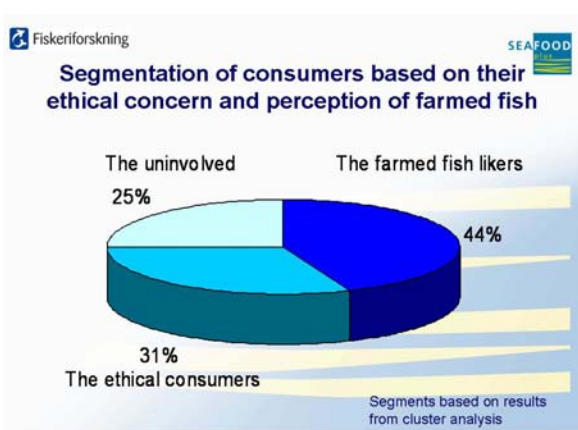
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Procedures

- In-home test of one Icelandic farmed cod product per subject
- Experimental design: Three levels of info:
 - Basic:
Farmed cod
 - General ethic:
This cod has been farmed in order to meet all environmental and ethical standards
 - Extended ethical information:
This cod has been farmed Without suffering; With respect to their rights, well being and ethical standards; In an environmentally friendly way; In a way that has not polluted the sea or other environment; Under strict governmental supervision



The main objective of the project is to explain how product-related, environmental and individual factors influence consumers' evaluations of a product, and how these evaluations in turn influence their willingness to buy and consume the product. This presentation deals with a study of how ethical concern influences consumers' evaluation and perception of farmed fish products. The project CONSUMEREVALUATE is lead by professor Svein Ottar Olsen, Fiskeriforskning and Norwegian College of Fishery Science, Norway. Other partners come from The Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.

The data in this field experiment was collected in Valencia, Spain, and the sample consisted of 452 consumers. 93% of the sample was women. They were chosen because they are mostly responsible for purchasing and cooking. A random route sampling was used in different parts of the city to recruit the subjects. The average age of the subjects was 41 years, and most of the respondents classified themselves belonging to middleclass (defined by education and occupation).

The consumers were offered to test one farmed cod product at home, with recipes on how to prepare the meal. The products were frozen Icelandic farmed cod. The experimental design included three levels of manipulation of information. One group received only information that the product was famed cod (simple cue), and the two other groups received more specific information about ethical production methods (cues 2 and 3). The subjects were given a questionnaire covering evaluation of the product after tasting, intention to buy the product, willingness to pay, fish consumption habits and, finally attitudes towards fish, health, farmed fish and farmed cod. The questionnaire also included questions about the subjects' knowledge about fish and information usage.

90% of the sample evaluated farmed cod as satisfactory and gave the product high scores on most quality attributes. Just above 60% also planned to buy the product in near future. The information manipulation did not result in any differences in evaluations of the tested product. A cluster analysis was conducted in order to find potential differences in how ethical concern influences consumers' evaluations and perception of farmed fish. The analysis resulted in three segments: (1) the farmed fish likers, (2) the ethical consumers and (3) the uninvolvement. These represented 44%, 31% and 25% of the sample respectively. The segments were profiled using discriminant analysis with evaluation of the product, attitudes, type of information used, health concern, knowledge and demographics as discriminating variables.