

RESEARCH ON CONSUMPTION AND PURCHASING OF FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS IN BIHOR COUNTRY

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Abstract

Fish is a clean protein resource. For a balanced diet, Romanians should take about two fish or seafood meals per week. According to statistics, at this moment in Romania we consume, on average, a fish meal at three weeks, which is extremely low. The sociological causes of the differences in the species of fish consumed were related to the accessibility of products, the price of certain fish species or the perception of price, but also to consumer's education on the characteristics of the different types of fish and the benefits associated with certain fish species. Strategic actions that can help increase fish consumption should focus on product accessibility, especially in rural areas or small towns, education on the benefits of fish consumption among young people and differences in the properties of fish species.

Key words: consumption habits, fish and fish products, consumer's profile.

INTRODUCTION

Fish is one of the most important of human food products, because it has a tasty and easily digestible meat (Banu et al., 2009, 2010). The fish is sold in the form of live fish, fresh chilled fish, salted fish, smoked fish, semipreserved and preserved fish (Chiran et al, 2014, 2015).

Recent studies of the average annual fish consumption in the European Union show that a Spanish, for example, eats nearly 40 kilograms of fish a year, while Romania is one of the last on this list, with an average of less than 6 kilograms (Kotler et al, 2009, 2010).

A family in Romania consumes, on average, a fish meal every three weeks (Saunders et al, 2009).

At present, Romanians eat a little over 6 kilograms of fish per capita annually, and at the opposite end are countries such as Spain (40 kg of fish per capita yearly) and France (38 kg/capita yearly).

If the Romanian caught in the statistics would consume an average of 18 kilograms of fish a year, the value of the local fish market and fishery products will increase from EUR 350 million, as it is now estimated, at EUR 1 billion, in 2021.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The main purpose of the survey is to research the consumption and purchasing habits of fish and fish products in Bihor County.

The overall objectives of the research are: to determine the types of fish and fish products consumed and the profile of the consumer, the reasons for consumption, to identify the reasons for buying different types of fish and to identify the place of purchase of fish and fish products (Ajzen, 2005; Morna, 2013) .

The study was conducted on a sample of 200 people.

As a research method, the quantitative study was used through the online questionnaire via iSondaje.ro, between 10 October 2016 and 13 February 2017 (Pallant, 2007).

The research tool used was a questionnaire consisting of 23 questions.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSIONS

A total of 200 participants were invited to respond on-line to the produced and distributed questionnaire, 169 (85%) of the respondents completed the questionnaire entirely, 31 (15%) partially, so the answers of the final respondents in the analysis was $n = 169$.

The respondents are resident in Bihor County as follows: 84% urban and 16% rural.

With regard to the determination of fish species and fish products consumed, the most consumed products are fresh fish (32%) and canned fish (23.1%).

Of the interviewed respondents and those who declared consumption for at least one category, more than half are considered as regular consumers and only 11% casual consumers.

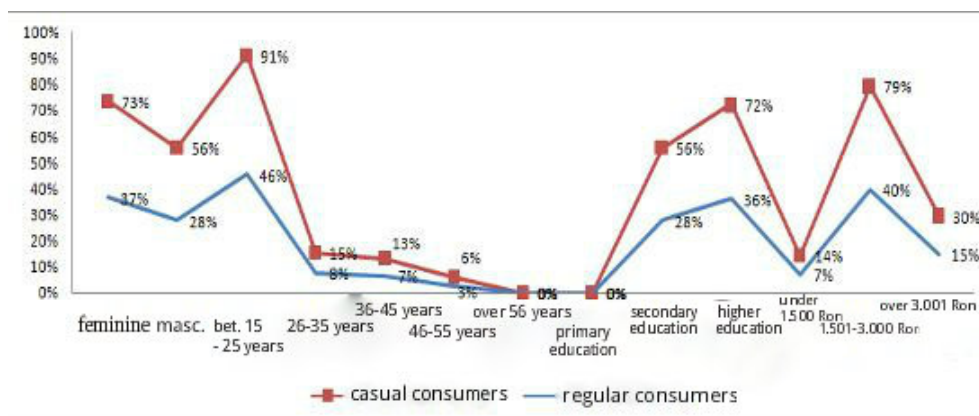


Figure 1.1 Profile of fish and fishery products consumer

Looking at the socio-demographic profiles of the two types of consumers, there can be noticeable differences between regular and casual consumers, especially in terms of age, education level, and income.

Thus, regular consumers are both women and men, aged 15-25, with higher education and an income between 1,501-3,000 Ron, while casual consumers are predominantly over 55 years of age, primary education and income below 1,500 Ron.

Analyzing the socio-demographic profile of those who prefer these two categories of fish, one can notice that fresh fish is preferred by men (15%), while frozen fish is preferred by women (2%), people aged 15-25 years prefer fresh fish to a greater extent, while frozen fish is preferred by people aged 36-45 years.

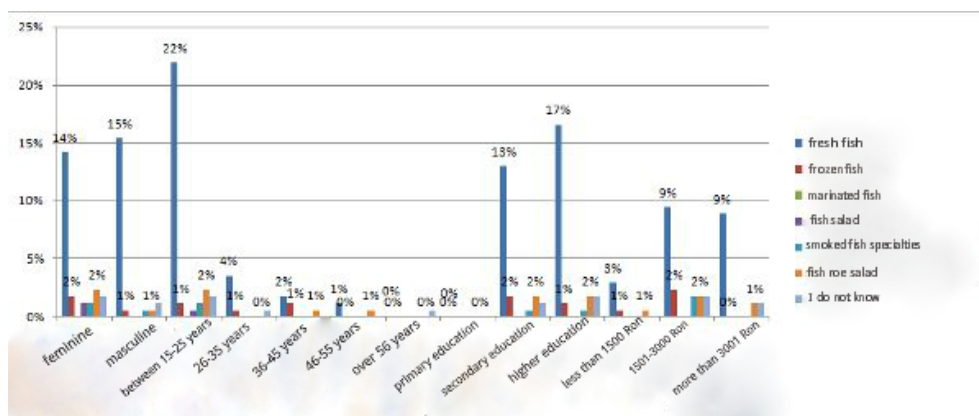


Figure 1.2. Profile of preferred fish consumer based on age, income and average residence

The reasons behind the fresh fish acquisition are those related to diet, at the doctor's recommendation (94%), taste (92%), freshness/safety (92%) and healthy diet/food regime (92%) while frozen fish is based on the promotion method (14%) and the influence of the family/group of friends (14%).

With regard to the reasons chosen by the respondents for product categories and fish species, it is noted that most (57.4%) choose these products due to the price-quality ratio, because they are beneficial for the organism (50.9%) and because they are tasty (50.3%).

If we refer to the place where fresh and frozen fish are purchased, there may be differences regarding the places used for the purchase of fresh or frozen fish.

Thus, fresh fish is purchased from supermarkets (56.2%) and fisheries (28.4%), while frozen fish is most often bought in supermarkets (62.7%).

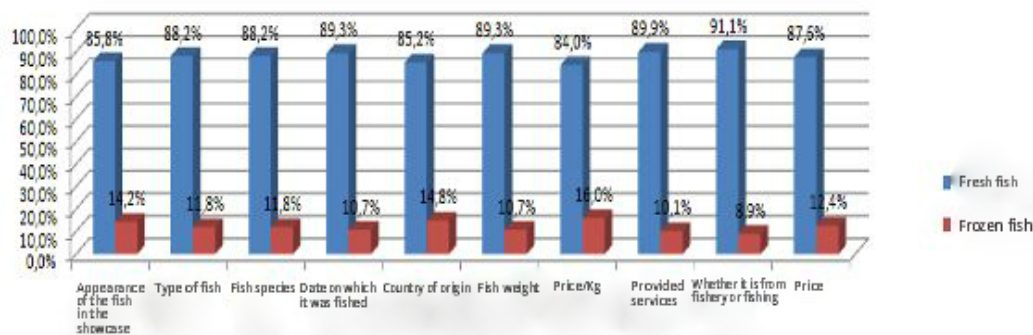


Figure 1.3. Criteria / Reasons to Purchase Fresh and Frozen Fish

Talking about the most important criteria that consumers take into account when purchasing fresh fish and frozen fish, for over one third (91.1%) origin is important, whether farmed or wild. Other important aspects, mentioned in over 25% of cases are the appearance, weight and species of fish.

CONCLUSIONS

Of the interviewees, 84% come from the urban area and 16% from the rural area, suggesting that urban people are more informed and more open to a diversified diet containing fish or products from fish at least once a week.

Age is an important criterion, because people aged 15-25 prefer fresh fish, fish cans, frozen fish, and ready-to-eat caviar salads, while people over the age of 56 prefer fish specialties.

Although preferred by people over the age of 56, fish specialties are consumed occasionally, while fresh fish and canned foods are consumed at least once a week.

After analyzing the consumption frequency, it can be noticed that regular consumers are both women and men aged 15-25 with higher education and income of 1500-3000 RON, and those casual over 56 years old and an income of less than 1500 RON.

With regard to the socio-demographic profile of fish consumers, those who consume fish more often than once a month were defined by young consumers (15-25 years old), higher education and income of 1500-3000 Ron.

The places where most people buy fresh or live fish were the specialized shops. For this reason, we find that the accessibility of fresh, native products is the main factor for the increase of fish consumption in Romania.

Two types of criteria used by consumers were noted: freshness, presentation or promotion are more about the criteria for choosing a store where fish with these qualities can be found.

On the other hand, the taste, the environment of origin or the composition are the characteristics of the favorite fish, factors that, once set, define the preference for certain species or types of fish.

The first category of criteria is that which can be used in actions to increase consumption of fish among consumers.

Stimulating local farms in areas where river basins are reduced, improving distribution networks, supporting local fresh fish traders are just some of the ways to harness the potential for rising fish consumption.

Strategic actions that can help increase fish consumption should focus on product accessibility especially in rural areas or small towns, education on the benefits of fish consumption among young people and differences in the properties of fish species.

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