

Designing customer education activities to change people's perception of Catfish

Stevanus Pratama Suwito¹, Meidiahna Kusuma², Gamaliel Waney³

^{1, 2, 3} University of Ciputra Surabaya, UC Town, CitraLand, Surabaya, 60219, East Java, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 23 February 2017

Revised 17 March 2017

Accepted 24 April 2017

JEL Classification:

D23

Key words:

Consumer Behavior,
Customer Education,
Marketing Communication Mix, and
Perception.

DOI:

10.14414/jebav.v20i1.620

ABSTRACT

Most people see catfish as an unhygienic fish, so less people want to consume it. In fact, catfish has better nutrition compared to Gourami. Therefore, catfish producers need to educate people. The purpose of this research is to design customer education activities to change people's perception towards catfish using marketing communication mix. This research is a qualitative research and it uses in-depth interview method in gathering the required data. Based on the preliminary survey conducted to 50 people in Surabaya, it is known that Surabaya people are considered novice customers. As such, catfish producers can conduct customer education activities until people want to taste the catfish. The company can add picture, video, and oral information about the benefits in consuming catfish or the nutrition and the certificate of hygienic cultivation system. The producers can provide tester for the catfish and show the customers the comparison between good and bad quality catfish. The producers can also add two more marketing communication activities i.e. events and experiences as well as public relations and publicity. The producers need to use reliable sources in informing the catfish's nutrition facts such as the certificate of catfish breeder, and certification from BPOM..

ABSTRAK

Masih banyak orang yang mempersepsikan ikan lele sebagai ikan yang tidak higienis. Hal ini membuat orang tidak tertarik untuk mengkonsumsinya. Bila dibandingkan dengan gurami, ikan lele memiliki tingkat nutrisi yang lebih baik. Oleh karena itu, produsen ikan lele perlu melakukan edukasi untuk mengubah persepsi masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merancang aktivitas edukasi pasar guna mengubah persepsi masyarakat tentang ikan lele dengan menggunakan bauran komunikasi pemasaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dan menggunakan metode wawancara mendalam untuk mendapatkan data yang dibutuhkan. Berdasarkan hasil investigasi awal, diketahui bahwa masyarakat di Surabaya tergolong pelanggan pemula. Oleh karena itu, produsen lele disarankan untuk mengedukasi masyarakat hingga mereka mau mencoba ikan lele. Para produsen dapat menambahkan informasi melalui gambar, video, dan informasi tentang manfaat atau nutrisi dan sertifikat sistem pembudidayaan ikan lele yang higienis. Produsen juga dapat menawarkan contoh produk dan membandingkan ikan lele berkualitas baik dengan yang buruk kepada pelanggan. Produsen juga disarankan untuk menambahkan dua lagi kegiatan bauran komunikasi pemasaran, yaitu melalui events and experience serta public relation and publicity. Produsen perlu menggunakan sumber yang tepercaya untuk mengkomunikasikan kandungan gizi ikan lele dengan menunjukkan sertifikat pembudidaya ikan lele, dan izin dari BPOM.

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer education encompasses all investments of a company in improving customer expertise in relation to the products or services the company markets (Honebein & Cammarano cited in Meisters

2013). According to Bonfanti & Brunetti (2014), customer education is a process aimed at informing and training customers in order to increase their knowledge levels. In the hierarchy-of-effects model, marketing communication is used to improve the

* Corresponding author, email address: ² meidiahna@ciputra.ac.id.

knowledge of the audience (Kotler & Keller 2013: 503).

Customers have the same characteristics. For example, they want to pay for good quality of products or services. Therefore, manufacturers need to facilitate their customers with a well-informed product's benefits to encourage them to buy. Educating the market is a way to communicate the product to the market. Not just informing the product's benefit, but also educating the market to change their perception about the product.

No customer has the same behavior. This situation happens because consumer behavior is influenced by cultural, social, and personal factors (Kotler & Keller 2013: 173). The way the customers behave can reflect their perception about the products. Besides, consumer behavior is affected by the customers' need and benefits upon the products. It happens because the customers have different product knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial for a marketer to understand the consumer behavior to help firms find an effective way to communicate or educate the customers.

The cultivation of aquaculture commodities in Indonesia, especially the fish, is forecasted to surpass the marine capture fish due to overfishing of marine capture fish (Alam Tani 2016). It means, catfish also has a high growth potential in the future. However, the number of cultivation of catfish in Indonesia is still below other aquaculture commodities such as groupers, giant sea perch, and milkfish (Kementrian Kelautan dan Perikanan 2015). It might be due to the fact that less people are attracted to consume it. Based on the preliminary survey conducted to 50 people in Surabaya, it is found that there are three main reasons respondents reluctant to consume catfish, "catfish is an unhygienic fish", "catfish smells fishy", and "the appearance of catfish" (Table 1). Those opinions will create the image of catfish. In addition, the preliminary survey also concluded that people in Surabaya are already in the stage where they know or aware about catfish, but they still perceived catfish negatively.

The fact, catfish for the consumption purpose is properly cultivated by the breeder. Catfish is also consumed in Africa, Europe, and East-American Countries, aside from Asia. The quality and the taste of the catfish in every country can be different, but it is a fact that catfish contains a lot of nutrition, which is good for people's health.

As shown in Table 2, both Gourami and Catfish contain high amount of protein. Catfish even fulfill Angka Kecukupan Gizi (AKG) or Recom-

mended Dietary Allowances (RDA) more than that of the gourami, which is 6% more. AKG for adult people in Indonesia is at the average of 2,000 Cal (InfoPOM 2014). According to Adriani et al. (2015), catfish's nutrition is comparable with the other fishes. Catfish contains carotene about 12,070 mg and vitamin A about 210 IU (International Unit), which are good for babies.

Based on the fact above, catfish producers in Indonesia, specifically Surabaya, need to educate the market to change their perception about catfish and hence increase the level of the consumption. Education is a learning process from not knowing to knowing about several types of information and knowledge, and from not being able to solve problems to be independently solved the problem (Setiawati 2015). Few research can be found in regard to catfish in Indonesia (Jatnika et al. 2014; Sari et al. 2014) and none is found discussing about marketing communication of catfish to change people's negative perception on catfish. As such, this research will explore customer education activities that can be applied by catfish seller/breeder (hereinafter called as catfish producer) to change people's perception and, at the end, will increase the consumption level of catfish.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Perception

Perception is one of the factors influencing customer buying decision (Schiffman et al. 2013) since customer makes decisions based on what they perceive to be reality. Further, Kotler and Keller (2013) argued that perception is more important than reality. If a person has a negative perception toward specific product or service, he or she will be less likely buying that specific product/service. As such, marketers should be able to make customers have a positive perception toward its company/product. Shall

Customer Education


The existing studies found that a company can change people's perception through customer education (Jatmiko 2013; Bonfanti & Brunetti 2014). Customer education encompasses all investments of a company in improving customer expertise in relation to the products/services the company markets (Honebein & Cammarano cited in Meisters 2013). Education is a learning process from not knowing to knowing about several types of information and knowledge (Setiawati 2015). According to Clement (2013), customers need genuine and


Table 1
Preliminary Survey

Survey	Percentage
Catfish is an unhygienic fish	72%
Catfish smells fishy	14%
The appearance of catfish	14%

Table 2
Nutrition Fact of Gourami and Catfish

Information	Gourami	Catfish
Calorie	125 Cal	240 Cal
Fat	5.49 g	14.53 g
Carbohydrate	0 g	8.54 g
Protein	17.48 g	17.57 g
AKG (2,000 Cal)	6 % from AKG	12% from AKG





trust-worthy information on products/services to make a better decision in the market place.

According to Triyantoro (2015), promotion through education as part of brand communication to customers, is meant to provide information to customers so that the brand has a good reputation, consistent, and qualified. According to Kotler & Keller (2013), when audience has high involvement with a product category that perceived to have high differentiation, the hierarchy-of-effects model was used. If most of the target audience is unaware of the object, the communicator’s task is to build awareness. Knowledge as part of hierarchy- effects was used to give a better understanding to the audience.

Marketing Communication Mix

There are various activities that can be applied by firms to communicate with the markets, not forget to mention to educate the customers; namely advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of mouth, and personal selling (Kotler & Keller 2013). Different activities can be applied for different purposes, i.e. building customer awareness, brand image, brand response and brand relations.

Steps in designing the marketing communication itself are as follow (Kotler & Keller 2013): (1) Identifying ‘what to say’ (message strategy); (2) Identifying ‘how to say’ (creative strategy); (3) and identifying ‘who should say it’ (message source). However, before designing the communications, marketer should identify the knowledge level of

the customers (Bonfanti & Brunetti 2014), as such marketer can design the proper message to be communicated.

When products orservices have distinct image in the minds of customers, the customers may have a better understanding about the value that is being offered. Positive images can even create value for customers by adding meaning to products. A major way marketers can create positive and distinct images is through marketing communication (Peter & Donnelly 2013).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach by interviewing the respondents for collecting the data. Qualitative research focuses on social situations including the place, the actor, as well as the activities (Sugiyono 2013: 376). The place in this research is Surabaya, the actors are the respondents (the detail will be elaborate later), and the activities are marketing communication approach used by respondents in order to educate their customers. Typically, the objective of qualitative researches is very limited. However, this approach enables the researchers to explore more on the research object (Bungin 2013). The respondents of this research are: (1) Potential customers: People who might be willing to buy and try catfish’s product; (2) Business Experts: Professionals whom need to educate the market about their business, i.e. catfish breeder and marketing manager of insurance company; (3) Marketing expert. Respondents with different background are selected to help the researchers to validate the data gathered through triangulation

process.

There are several steps in analyzing the data of this research, which are:

1. Group the data based on the research indicators about the customer education activities.
2. Grouped data are compared to the theories and the previous research.
3. Make a conclusion from the data findings with the gathered data.
4. Design the customer education activities to change the people's perception (Kotler & Keller 2013: 504).

The indicators of this research are used to develop effective customer education activities. The indicators are:

1. Identifying the knowledge level of the market (Bonfanti & Brunetti 2014);
2. Identifying 'what to say' (message strategy) (Clement 2013, Kotler & Keller 2013);
3. Identifying 'how to say' (creative strategy) (Kotler & Keller 2013);
4. Identifying 'who should say it' (message source) (Kotler & Keller 2013).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge Level

As mentioned earlier, the researchers should identify the knowledge level of the market before designing the marketing communication activities (Bonfanti & Brunetti 2014) through perception test. If respondents with negative/wrong perception is more than that of customers with right/positive perception, the company can conclude that the customers are included as novice customers. It means that the way they think badly about catfish happens because they still have vague or wrong information about catfish.

As described previously (Table 1), the preliminary test conducted in this research concluded that people in Surabaya is considered as novice customers. They perceived catfish negatively, the cultivation system is unhygienic and the fish itself smelled fishy. It leads to their hesitation in buying and consuming catfish. As such, catfish producers need to communicate the basic information and data about catfish in order to change people's perception about catfish.

Message Strategy

Since the respondents on the preliminary survey indicated that Surabaya people is a novice customers, the result of the interview indicates that catfish breeder should prepare information or message that will be delivered to educate the market be-

cause people need genuine and trust-worthy information about the catfish. This finding is supported by Clement (2013). As such, catfish producer is suggested to inform the benefits or the nutrition of the catfish, the cultivation system, as well as the method for identifying hygienic catfish.

It will be better if the producer provides written evidence declared by third party, such as the certification of hygienic cultivation system by credible institution. The company is also suggested to make results-of-use experience for the buyers, so that they may feel satisfied after consuming catfish. Buyers expected one of four types of reward, namely product rational, sensory, rational, ego satisfaction as the rewards from results-of-use experience (Kotler & Keller 2013: 506). Thus, the information on the benefits or the nutrition of catfish and the certificate of hygienic cultivation system can be prepared in picture, video, and oral information.

Creative Strategy

From the interview, it was found that most of the producers have minimum resources for educating the market and they realize that it takes time to change people's perception about catfish. As such, nowadays, catfish producer uses digital marketing (such as face book, messenger, website), small scale exhibition as well as personal selling (especially for end user and retailers) to communicate with the market, in which some of the approaches are budget friendly. Such activities are considered to be effective. However, research also found that catfish producer should also consider the other marketing communication activities to educate the market, such as events and experiences, as well as public relations and publicity.

For the events and experiences, the producer can engage a direct education through company visit. The producer can educate people since young. In this company visit, the producer can invite, for instance, education institution like elementary school. The producer can explain how the catfish is being cultivated since a germ into a ready to consume catfish including the way the catfish being fed with proper food. The company also can provide processed catfish to be tried.

Another way to educate through events and experiences is by participating in exhibition. Most catfish producers have already done it by participating in small-scale exhibitions. For the short-term, the producer can still maintain the customer education through small-scale exhibitions especially exhibition for local participant. For the long-term, to enlarge the market share, the producer can

try to participate in a big-scale exhibition like Asian-Pacific Aquaculture exhibition. By doing so, there will be a chance for the company to be interviewed by press and media. From that exhibition, the producer can also introduce the catfish's product to the other countries.

For the public relations and publicity, the producer can make or join with catfish community. In this community, all the members can share their thought about catfish. To educate the customer, the producer cannot do it by itself. The producer can invite the other catfish breeders or the other parties, which are running their business in or along with catfish industry, to also use the hygienic cultivation system when educating the customers. This will be more effective, if the customer education is also conducted through the community marketing.

Message Source

It can be understood that catfish producer should find credible sources to educate the market. The sources can be a credible person, such as company's spokesperson, or credible resources, such as certification issued by credible related institutions. According to Kotler & Keller (2013: 506), for the message source, what important is the credibility. The credibility can be measure from the expertise, trustworthiness, and likability.

For the credible person, the company needs to train to improve the spokesperson's product knowledge in the hygienic cultivation process and nutrition fact since it will help the spokesperson to answer any question regarding the unhygienic catfish. It is important for the customer education team to have much information about the hygienic cultivation system. If the spokesperson can properly answer the questions from the market, it will increase the spokesperson's credibility as a catfish expert.

The producer also needs to prepare the data on catfish's nutrition and cultivation system. The producer cannot educate the customers with just a word. The customers also need some evidences to change their perception of catfish. The producer needs to get the nutrition facts of catfish and the certificate of catfish breeder from the related parties. The producer can also ensure if the catfish is safe to be consumed by holding permit from Dinas Kesehatan, the certificate of Halal MUI, and later the permission from BPOM called MD.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

There are some conclusions that can be asserted as the following: (1) Knowledge Level: people in Su-

rabaya are included as novice customers that still have negative perception of catfish; (2) Message Strategy: Catfish producer, therefore, is suggested to inform the benefits or the nutrition of the catfish, the cultivation system, as well as the method for identifying hygienic catfish; (3) Creative Strategy: aside from digital marketing, personal selling, the producer is also suggested to take part in small and big scale exhibitions and conduct company visit as part of the event and experiences. The producer is also suggested to become the member of catfish community. Together with the community, the producer can conduct events, so it will be reviewed by media as part of community marketing activities as well as and public relation and publicity; (4) Message Source: The producer is suggested to use credible spokesperson as well as other written documents published by credible institutions to educate the market on catfish as stated on the message strategy.

However, this study still has several limitations such as: (1) this research mainly focuses on building the awareness and people knowledge stage on catfish as current situation occurred in the market. Further studies are suggested to analyze strategy to increase the liking, the conviction, and the purchase stage of catfish when the market condition is changing. (2) In this research, the budget is not specifically explained because it is not used as the main indicator in designing the customer education activities. If the producer wants to apply the customer education program, it is suggested to take marketing budget into consideration.

REFERENCES

- Adriani, RD, Jumirah & Ernawati, 2015, 'Analisis Protein dan Energi pada MP-ASI Campuran Tepung Beras, Pisang Awak dan Ikan Lele'.
- Alam Tani, 2016, Retrieved from <www.alamtani.com/ikan-air-tawar>.
- Bonfanti, A & Brunetti, F 2014, 'Effects of Customer Education in Terms of Customer Perceived Value: The Role of Customer Evaluation Skills', *Sinergie Italian Journal of Management*, Vol. 33, No. 97, 219-238.
- Bungin, B 2011, *Penelitian Kualitatif: Komunikasi, Ekonomi, Kebijakan Publik, dan Ilmu Sosial Lainnya*, Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group.
- Clement, P 2013, 'Consumer Education in a Developing Country: The Use of a Stratified Random Sample Survey', *International Journal of Management*, Vol. 30, No. 2 Part 1, 434-450.
- FatSecret, 2016, 'Kalori gizi', Retrieved from FatSe-

- cret Web site, <www.fatsecret.co.id>.
- Jatnika, D, Sumantadinata, K & Pandjaitan, NH 2014, 'Pengembangan Usaha Budidaya Ikan Lele (*Clarias* sp.) di Lahan Kering di Kabupaten Gunung Kidul, Provinsi Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta', *Manajemen IKM: Jurnal Manajemen Pengembangan Industri Kecil Menengah*, 9 (1).
- Meisters, R 2013, 'Customer Education: Which Types to Use and When', *Journal School of Business and Economics*, 1.
- Kementrian Kelautan dan Perikanan, 2015, *Marine and Fisheries in Figure 2015*, Pusat Data, Statistik dan Informasi.
- Kepala Badan POM, 2014, July - August, 'Mengenal Angka Kecukupan Gizi (AKG) Bagi Bangsa Indonesia', *InfoPOM*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 1-12.
- Kotler, P & Keller, KL, 2013, *Marketing Management*, 14th Edition, Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Peter, JP & Donnelly, JH 2013, *Marketing Management: Knowledge and Skills*, 11th Edition, Mc Graw-Hill.
- Rangkuti, F 2011, *Riset Pemasaran*, Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Sagala, R 2013, 'The Impact of General Public Wine Education Courses on Consumer Perception', *AAWE Working Paper*, No. 132.
- Sari, SW, Nurmalina, R & Setiawan, B 2014, 'Efisiensi Kinerja Rantai Pasok Ikan Lele di Indramayu, Jawa Barat', *Journal of Management & Agribusiness*, 11 (1).
- Setiawati, I 2015, 'Pemanfaatan Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Edukasi Customers Cerdas pada Transaksi Perdagangan On Line Menghadapi MEA', *INFOKAM*, No 2, Th. XI, 126-131.
- Triyanto, H 2015, 'Analisis Community Marketing dan Edukasi Pelanggan terhadap Citra Merek serta dampaknya terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan', Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia.