

WHITE FISH AUTHORITY

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TECHNICAL REPORT 157

Interviews among Fish Friers selling Blue
Whiting and their Customers. Report by
Consultants, David Elliott & Associates.

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Foreward by White Fish Authority

This report, prepared on behalf of the White Fish Authority (WFA) by David Elliott & Associates, describes the reactions of five fish friers in Wigan, Peterborough and Chatteris (Cambridgeshire), and their customers to block filleted blue whiting.

It is the third report covering interviews held with fish friers selling blue whiting, and their customers. The first two reports, issued as TR 137 and TR 146 in 1976, dealt with a situation where frozen block filleted blue whiting was supplied to members of the Executive Council of the National Federation of Fish Friers who had volunteered to sell the fish on the WFA's behalf. Since these reports were issued, the WFA have continued to sell blue whiting on a low key, but regular and fully commercial, basis to a number of outlets - some 30 friers have now tried the fish.

The five friers whose reactions are detailed in this report, considered the blue whiting to be of good quality, but would prefer larger fillets with the dorsal fin removed.

Apparently it was not easy for the friers to persuade their customers to try the "new" fish, but once this obstacle was overcome, blue whiting was found to be acceptable and repeat sales were achieved.

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Interviews Among
Fish Friers Selling Blue Whiting
And Their Customers

prepared for the
WHITE FISH AUTHORITY
by
David Elliott & Associates

December 1977

INDEX

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
OBJECTIVES	1
RESEARCH METHOD	2
PARTICIPATING OUTLETS	2
CUSTOMER SAMPLE	3
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	4
MAIN FINDINGS	
Fish Friers	6
Customers	13
Appendix	
Fish friers' questionnaire	
Customers' questionnaire	

INTRODUCTION

As a result of experimental sales efforts by the White Fish Authority, a number of fish and chip shops added Blue Whiting to their commercial lines of fried fish. In an attempt to ascertain the reactions to, and acceptability of, this new species, five friers and their various customers were interviewed, on site, on pre-arranged dates.

The sales exercise was operated on a commercial basis whereby the friers purchased fillets direct from the WFA, packed in shatterpacks, and delivered upon order. Two sizes of fillets were available - 50 to 60g, and 60+g and all the shops had been supplied with Blue Whiting colour posters, window stickers and with leaflets describing the fish.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the in-depth research among the recruited fish friers and their customers were to determine:

Among fish friers:

1. Overall opinion of the Blue Whiting fillets purchased.
2. Ratings regarding size/appearance/texture/flavour, and comments on handling and preparation.
3. Statements on how Blue Whiting was selling and their interpretations of customers' reactions.

Among Blue Whiting customers:

1. General ratings of the fish including appearance/flavour/texture/colour.

D. BENTHAMS
56 Victoria Street,
Newtown, Wigan,
Greater Manchester

Mr. G. Bentham
Staff employed: 7
No restaurant area
Interview date: 4th November, 1977
Portion size purchased: 60+g

E. LES'S CHIPPY
26 Mesnes Avenue,
Worsley Mesnes,
Wigan

Mr. L. Speakman
Staff employed: 6
No restaurant area
Interview date: 4th November, 1977
Portion size purchased: 50-60g

CUSTOMER SAMPLE (55)

Sex:

Male	29
Female	<u>26</u>
	55

Age group:

16-24	9
25-34	18
35-44	12
45-54	9
55-64	4
65+	<u>3</u>
	55

Social class:

AB	0
C1	10
C2	20
DE	<u>25</u>
	55

5. Not all the friers found it easy to persuade customers to try/buy Blue Whiting, in spite of the publicity material which was considered helpful and necessary by three of them. The persuasion problems underlined the friers' conviction that customers were sceptical about trying something new.

6. Trade in general was not brisk in any of the outlets although one frier said his business was "average for the time of the year". Little interest in Blue Whiting was reported among fellow friers.

BLUE WHITING CUSTOMERS (55)

1. The majority of customers interviewed were C2DE's aged between 25 to 44, split fairly evenly between male and female. A majority had purchased Blue Whiting before because it was inexpensive, tasty, and because they liked it. A certain number had heard about the fish or had seen the poster and wanted to try it.

2. The fish looked appetizing and most customers said their overall opinion of Blue Whiting was very good. The taste was especially liked; also the texture and the price. A number of favourable comparisons to cod were made. Few comments on what customers disliked were stated - dislikes were mainly the skin and the colour. A very significant number said they would definitely or probably buy Blue Whiting again.

It seems evident that customers, once persuaded to try/buy Blue Whiting find it to be a very acceptable fish; undoubtedly the reasonable price is an incentive. Fish friers, however, seem reluctant to really promote the fish and in some cases think handling the fillets in their present state to be too much trouble.

Average portion size and price

Estimates of average Blue Whiting portion size ranged from 2 oz. to 4 oz., at a variety of prices.

Outlet A:	2½-3 oz. @ 15p	5-6p/oz.
Outlet B:	4 oz. @ 19p	4.8p/oz.
Outlet C:	2 oz. @ 17p	8.5p/oz.
Outlet D:	3 oz. @ 17p	5.7p/oz.
Outlet E:	2½ oz. at 17p	6.8p/oz.

When the friers were asked if they expected to raise the price per portion, and if they thought they could in fact charge more per portion, only one frier replied affirmatively.

Raise/get higher price:

Yes:

Outlet D

No:

Outlet A

Outlet B ("Could get higher price but wanted to appear competitive.")

Outlet C ("Not for this size.")

Outlet E

All the friers were unanimous in stating that their purchase price for supplies of Blue Whiting was just about right, at £4.20 per stone for outlets A & D (size 50-60g) and £5.00 per stone for outlets B, C & D (size 60+g).

Estimates of sales

Estimates of portions sold daily and weekly varied within reason in four of the shops; Outlet B was exceptionally low estimating only 2 portions per day and 12 per week.

Sales compared with other species

All five fish friers stated that Blue Whiting sold worse than cod. In one outlet Blue Whiting sold about the same as haddock, and in another the fish sold better than plaice.

Sales of Blue Whiting compared to:

	<u>Cod</u>	<u>Haddock</u>	<u>Plaice</u>	<u>Rock Salmon</u>
Outlet A	worse	n/s*	n/s	n/s
Outlet B	worse	worse	worse	worse
Outlet C	worse	same	worse	n/s
Outlet D	worse	n/s	better	n/s
Outlet E	worse	n/s	n/s	n/s

*not stocked

Customers' likes

Two of the friers said their Blue Whiting customers liked the fish a lot. Three friers said customers liked it only a little.

All the friers said they had had some repeat customers for Blue Whiting.

Repeat customers:

Outlet A	10
Outlet B	4
Outlet C	10-20
Outlet D	no estimate
Outlet E	6 per day

from other friers, and another said he had been approached by fellow members of the NFFF. One frier said his distributor would be interested in supplying Blue Whiting, two said theirs would not, and two said they did not know.

MAIN FINDINGS - CUSTOMERS

Bought Blue Whiting before and reasons for buying

Well over half the customers interviewed had bought Blue Whiting before.

Have bought before:

Yes	34
No	<u>21</u>
	55

The major reasons customers had decided to buy Blue Whiting instead of another type of fish were that it was cheaper, good value and economical, that they wanted to try it, and that it tasted good.

Decided to buy today: (multiple responses)

Cheaper/good value/economical	25
Wanted to try/heard about/saw poster	14
Tasty	8
Like it/bought before and liked	8
No difference between cod/not as dry as cod	5
As good as any other	5
Children like it/child-size portions/son cannot tell the difference	3
Other fish not ready/available	2
A change	1
Buy for grandmother	1
D/K	<u>8</u>
	80

Likes about Blue Whiting

The prominent likes about Blue Whiting were its nice taste, nice texture, cheapness and good value, and that it was like cod.

Likes: (multiple responses)

Nice taste	32
Stronger/strong taste	3
Not strong taste	1
Salty	1
Juicy	1
Nice texture	10
Tender	1
Crispiness	1
Cheapness/good value	9
Like cod	10
Stronger than cod	1
More flavour than cod	1
Softer than cod	1
Not greasy like cod	1
Tastes like any other fish	5
Nice colour	1
Had before and liked	1
Filling	1
Nothing in particular	<u>5</u>
	86

INTERVIEW WITH OWNER OF FISH & CHIP SHOP

NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED

OWNERS NAME: _____

(WRITE IN) _____

NAME OF SHOP: _____

IS THERE A RESTAURANT AREA?

ADDRESS OF SHOP: _____

Yes

1

No

2

DATE OF INTERVIEW _____ / _____ 1977.

INTERVIEWER'S NAME

1. What portion size of Blue Whiting Fillets are you using? (WRITE IN)

2. How do you find the quality of the fish?

3. Do you think anything can be done to improve the quality of the fish?

4. Are you selling a single fillet or are you marrying two together to make a larger portion?

Single fillet

1

Two together

2

5. What is the average portion size of Blue Whiting that you sell?

6. And at what price are you selling an _ _ _ (MENTION SIZE GIVEN AT Q.5) portion of Blue Whiting?

_____ p

7. Do you expect to raise the price of Blue Whiting? Do you think you could get a higher price for it?

ASK ALL

12. How is Blue Whiting selling compared to the other types of fish that you stock?

(ASK FOR EACH TYPE OF FISH STOCKED)

	Cod	Haddock	Plaice	Rock Salmon	Other
Better	1	1	1	1	1
Same	2	2	2	2	2
Worse	3	3	3	3	3
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Not stocked	4	4	4	4	4

13. Do you think that customers like Blue Whiting? (READ OUT)

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Yes, a lot | 1 |
| Only a little | 2 |
| No, dislike | 3 |
| Not interested | 4 |

14. What percentage of your customers are children - either who buy it themselves or have it bought for them by their parents?

15. Do you find that you are creating a certain number of repeat customers for Blue Whiting? IF YES - About how many?

16. Why do you think they buy Blue Whiting?

17. What type of customer do you think is most likely to buy Blue Whiting?

18. Have you had any difficulty convincing people to buy Blue Whiting?

19. Are you experiencing any problems in:-

(a) handling the Blue Whiting

(b) preparing the Blue Whiting

ASK ALL

25. Have any other fryers, fishmongers or distributors asked you about your supplies of Blue Whiting?

26. Do you think that your distributor(s) would be interested in supplying Blue Whiting direct?

Yes

No

Don't know

1
2
3

27. Finally could you tell me the name of your normal distributor?
(RECORD NAME AND ADDRESS BELOW)

CLOSE INTERVIEW AND THANK RESPONDENT

RAS 4841

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CUSTOMER INTERVIEW

Cols. 12345	6789
X4841	
	(10)
Male	V
Female	X
	(11)
16 - 24	1
25 - 34	2
35 - 44	3
45 - 54	4
55 - 64	5
65 +	6
	(12)
AB	1
C1	2
C2	3
DE	4
	(13)
← Yes	1
No	2

Mr/Mrs/Miss _____

SEX

RESPONDENTS ADDRESS _____

AGE GROUP

NAME OF SHOP: _____

ADDRESS OF SHOP: _____

SOCIAL CLASS

OCCUPATION OF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Position _____

Industry _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER

WRITE IN NUMBER: _____

INTERVIEWED BY

DATE OF INTERVIEW _____ / _____ 1977.

ASK ALL

Which of these phrases (SHOW CARD C) best describes your overall opinion of the Blue Whiting?

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Excellent | 1 |
| Very good | 2 |
| Quite good | 3 |
| Fair | 4 |
| Not very good | 5 |
| Poor | 6 |

(19)

What, if anything, do you like about Blue Whiting? PROBE: Flavour, texture, colour.

(20)

(21)

And is there anything you dislike about it? PROBE: Flavour, texture, colour.

(22)

(23)

And finally having tried the Blue Whiting how likely do you think you would be to buy it again at the same price as you have just paid? (SHOW CARD D;

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Would definitely buy again | 1 |
| Would probably buy again | 2 |
| Might or might not buy again | 3 |
| Would probably not buy again | 4 |
| Would definitely not buy again | 5 |

(24)

CLOSE INTERVIEW