

# **"Marinated shrimp as a dinner option - Consumer evaluations and use of a new convenience product"**

**av**

**Anne Katrine Sørensen**



**Mastergradsoppgave i fiskerifag,  
studieretning markedsføring**

**Institutt for samfunns- og markedsfag  
Norges fiskerihøgskole  
Universitetet i Tromsø**

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Anne Katrine Sørensen



## Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate consumer use and evaluations of a new shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*) product, Stella marinated shrimp, to increase knowledge about the perception and how this new product is used in the kitchen by consumers. The main objective is;

***”To examine how consumers evaluate and use a new convenience product, the case of Stella marinated shrimp”.***

To explore the main objective, the following sub-objectives were developed;

- Investigate the consumer expectations of Stella marinated shrimp prior to use.
- Investigate how the consumer used the product.
- Investigate the consumer experiences and potential satisfaction with the product.

18 panel participants were chosen as part of a qualitative method by the non probability sampling technique of quota sampling. The control categories used were; households with children, households without children and single households.

All participants were interviewed about their initial product expectations at the time of distribution of product samples from Stella marinated shrimp. After the trial period a second in depth interview took place to gather information and thoughts on product usage and consumer experiences of the marinated shrimp.

All of the participants were positive and eager to try the test product because it looked appetizing, tasty, exciting and easy to use. The expectations were generally high. The panel participants were positive to the test product and convenience products in general, mostly because they were interested in saving time when preparing dinner. After preparing the meals 89 % said the marinated shrimp were easy to use.

The meals made in this research were 83 % dinner entrees, 15 % snacks and 2 % lunch items. Product usage in the households showed little variety as 64 % of all meals were made as either a wok or tortilla dish. Both previous and first time users of the product showed very little variety in product usage when preparing and cooking the meals during the trial period.

Minimal differences were found between the three different control categories during the evaluation of the product. 72 % of the participants felt the product had met or exceeded their expectations during use and consumption. Further 83 % of panel participants said they were satisfied with the marinated shrimp after the trial period. Finally 89 % said they would purchase and recommend the product to others in the future.

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# 1.0 Background

## 1.1 Facts about shrimp

On a global scale cold water shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*) are considered a minor player in the shrimp industry. Even though there has been a rise in conventional landings in the North Atlantic over the last decade, the most important species of cold water shrimp account for no more than 10 % of the worlds total shrimp quantum of more than 5,3 million tons in 2003. Warm water shrimp (*Penaeus monodon* and *Penaeus vannamei*) are dominating the world market due to increased landings and production of farm raised species. The latter now account for more then 25 % of the worlds total shrimp production (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005).

In Norway cold water shrimp landings have been reduced by 50 % since 2000. The shrimp stock has declined due to a combination of weak year classes, increased fishing and predation by a large cod (*Gadhus morhua*) stock. As a result of this development, local Norwegian shrimp industry has been suffering big deficits the last four years after being one of the most profitable sectors in the fishery industry in 1996-2000 (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005).

Seafood has always been a popular item both for dinner and feast in Norway. The average Norwegian ate approximately 23,9 kg seafood in 2004, which was an increase of 0,5 kg from 2003 <sup>[1]</sup>. Home consumption of shrimp rose to more than 10,000 tons the same year, an increase of 7 % <sup>[2]</sup>.

## 1.2 Consumer trends and predictions

Food and eating habits change through the years because consumer needs and purchase patterns are slowly changing. Continuous changes to the socioeconomic and demographic landscape are seen due to more women included in the workforce and the increase in ethnic diversity (Senauer, 2001). Trends in the marketplace are a result of demographic and economic lifestyle factors in addition to increased focus on food safety, health and environmental aspects.

Consumer purchase patterns provide feedback to manufacturers and ultimately influence their product line. During the last few years seafood assortments have expanded with new fresh and frozen products. More seafood and fish products with new flavouring, taste varieties and packing sizes, so called value adding, are introduced alongside the more traditional products already on the shelves. These new products can be part of a trend towards more convenient seafood items. A food item is considered convenient if the consumer is inclined to save time and energy during meal preparation (Candel, 2001). These new and convenient products that only require little cooking or just heating before consumption give new usage areas and usage situations to the food. Convenience at production and marketing levels of foods are still increasing and becoming more important both in customer service and product relations (Grunert and Scholderer, 2005).

Food products can be utilized in various ways and at different times among consumers and what is considered a “feast” or “weekday dinner” varies between individuals. People today show a general census of wanting healthy and safe products with high nutritional values and delicate flavour (Monfort, 2004). In addition there is more emphasis put on production using ethical methods during farming and harvest, including environmentally friendly processes and economically acceptable behaviour by the paying customer than ever before. These ecological and organic views are shared by Senauer (2001), who has seen a growth in the organic area in the US over the last decades. Lately this trend has also been apparent in Norway. Food safety is a prerequisite for these new and convenient seafood products as it is for all food products.

Predictions show an increase in consumer consumption of seafood in Europe in the future (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005). Today safe handling and treatment of animals and all food products are more crucial than ever especially when we see the ramifications which can occur if for example a deadly virus, steroids or heavy metals are transferred from the animals to humans. It shows how important it is to keep a close eye on products in the marketplace and at the same time also be able to control the living environment for the farm raised animals and fish. The bad press of the meat and poultry industry has given seafood products an opportunity to position themselves as the healthy and safe alternative. At the same time the seafood industry looks within its own organizations to make sure production and products are made according to ethical

standards and regulations and follow all guidelines set to avoid negative publicity and harmful products.

Farming of shrimp can produce both organic and safe products. On the other hand, this demands full attention in order to avoid outbreaks of diseases. In this respect, cold water wild shrimp from the cold clear Atlantic waters may have an advantage to a farmed product. The consumer also looks for products having additional benefits like an attractive appearance and being easy to prepare, - a convenience product. Today many convenience products are made with farmed shrimp while the selection with cold water shrimp is limited.

An additional advantage of convenience products made by Norwegian seafood manufacturers includes traceability. This is information the demanding and mindful consumer wants. Traceability gives the producer the ability to trace the history, application or location of the specific product, through the origin of materials and parts, processing history and the distribution and location of the product after delivery (ISO, 2000). In this way a specific lot of the product can be withdrawn from the market if necessary.

### **1.3 Convenience food trends**

The United States has seen a dramatic change in food purchasing and preparation trends over the past decades and shows an increase in meals eaten away from home and a decrease in time spent preparing meals at home (Harnack et al., 2000). The same tendency is occurring in western countries (Senauer, 2001). In 1987, 43 % of all meals included at least one item which was made from scratch while the figure had dropped to 38 % in 1997. To keep up with consumer demands for convenience the supermarkets are increasing the selection of prepared foods. Alongside the frozen TV dinners the grocery stores also offer freshly prepared dinners ready for consumption. This concept saves the family money compared to eating at a restaurant and time compared to cooking the meal at home (Perman, 1998). In an American survey 55 % of the respondents said convenience was a very important food attribute when selecting and purchasing groceries (Senauer, 2001). Bjørklund and Bendiksen (2005) show

supporting evidence that the trend towards convenience foods have spread in Europe as well. They state processed seafood, which includes convenience products such as; processed fish filets, marinated products, smoked or salted fish, account for 75-80 % of seafood consumption in the UK and Germany. Mediterranean countries with strong traditions for consuming fresh seafood products also demand a bigger selection of convenience products. The consumption changes in the Mediterranean countries are related to an increase in women entering the work force, focus on health and change of lifestyles. Convenience foods are becoming more accepted and popular due to the expanded purchase and meal options they provide for consumers plus the fact they are no longer thought of as just unhealthy food items. A lot of products have improved their quality and nutritional values, which gives convenience and “ready to eat” foods more acceptance and shelf space because this is what the conscious consumer wants.

The introduction of the attractive single serving packaging are also viewed positively by consumers (Subasinghe, 2003). New developments in processing and packaging give the products a fresher appearance and longer shelf life in addition to drawing attention towards the product. Packaging also provides consumers with a cue regarding quality, product descriptions plus cooking and storage suggestions (Nevin, 2003).

### **1.3.1 Convenience food trends in Norway**

The Norwegian consumer has also developed a desire to use convenience products. It is common knowledge among the majority of consumers that seafood is both healthy and nutritious (Olsen, 1989). In Norway chicken and meat products are the biggest competitors to shrimp (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005). They have the biggest selection in pre-packed single serving products, many of them are seasoned, marinated, pre cut and ready to cook. Many local seafood processors and manufacturers work to satisfy these consumer needs by increasing their product selection (Berg, 2005). Fish and seafood products are catching up and cashing in on this new trend meeting demands of this consumer group.

Freshness and appearance are the most important quality factors followed by price when purchasing seafood products <sup>[3]</sup>. This gives the local Norwegian processors an advantage, being close to the resources. Quality can be meeting consumer specifications and selling a product fit for use (Juran, 1988). By offering fresh high quality convenience products the Norwegian producers have an advantage to be successful in the marketplace.

#### **1.4 Shrimp as a convenience product**

Shrimp is the seafood item which has the biggest product selection and variety through value-adding on the global market (Subasinghe, 2003). In France tropical shrimp consumption has increased sharply in recent years (twofold in 7 years) likely due to the new fresh and frozen value added products. France is now the second largest market in Europe for tropical shrimp after Spain (Monfort, 2004). The same development continues through the rest of Europe. Even Germany, a country with a modest consumption level of shrimp, has seen a boost in sales of the different convenient shrimp products. It is mostly frozen, modified atmosphere packaged (MAP) products, shrimp salad and self service options that have been successful in Germany (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005).

Fish and seafood are often consumed as dinner in Norway and the consumption is on the rise. Shrimp on the other hand is not a typical dinner option like they are in France. Shrimp are consumed year around and are mostly used as a topping on sandwiches and as finger foods <sup>[2]</sup>. Up until now there has been a distinction between warm and cold water shrimp in consumption. So far warm water shrimp is preferred in southern areas in Europe while cold water shrimp has been preferred in Northern Europe. In addition warm water shrimp has had the advantage of being used in warm dishes because they are distributed as uncooked and can withstand heat well. Now also a product made with marinated cold water shrimp can withstand heat and give the warm water shrimp competition in the dinner and warm food market (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005). In Norway the idea of using frozen marinated shrimp as a main dish and dinner entrée is new and gaining ground. In this area of consumption we can see an expansion in new usage areas due to the fact that the shrimp is being introduced and used in a different

and non traditional way. By combining convenience and shrimp, the consumer ends up with an easy to prepare and nutritious low fat meal option.

## **1.5 Marinated shrimp as a dinner preference**

According to Parade Magazine 69 % of Americans decide the same day what they are having for dinner <sup>[4]</sup>. Last minute decisions decrease spontaneity and change because it leaves little time to try and explore new ideas, therefore reinforcing repeated use of familiar dinner choices. Dinner is a meaningful and important daily ritual in Norway and nothing points in the direction that dinner will lose its status anytime soon. More than 90 % of Norwegians have dinner on a daily basis and gathering around the table is vital to family life (Eriksen, 2005). Studies by Senauer (2001) support these findings.

Dinner is a social meal with unwritten rules, such as the social and cultural traditions surrounding what you eat and when you eat it. Usually weekdays, Monday –Thursday, provide healthy meal options, while Friday and Saturday are evenings to experiment, often by cooking a gourmet meal for invited friends or family because it provides status especially if exclusive organic or niche products are used. Sunday focuses on family values and the traditional Sunday dinner. The traditional and conservative eating habits of many Norwegians are now changing slowly towards convenience products (Eriksen, 2005).

In Norway a new trend can be seen for the eating habits of salmon (*Salmo salar*), traditionally used as an exclusive high priced Sunday dinner. Now the salmon is used more as a midweek dinner option while the utilization of the traditional cod dinner which has been a household favorite for centuries is declining (Hage, 2005). Today we eat twice as much salmon per capita than we did in 1995, about 2,4 kg per person. A reason for this shift is probably lower prices on salmon, a better selection of convenient salmon products and media attention on the health benefits <sup>[5]</sup>.

Dinner preferences of Norwegians were surveyed by TNS-Gallup for the Norwegian Seafood Export Council in 2004. The research showed women's preferences for dinner were 23 % for seafood, 47 % for meat and 30 % for other main courses like pasta and pizza <sup>[1]</sup>. Little product variety and accessibility are the main reasons for this low consumption of fish (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005).

A barrier towards seafood at the kitchen table can be the housewives who generally are responsible for the grocery shopping and cooking, don't feel comfortable handling and preparing fish and seafood. They feel helpless and do not like fish that smells and contain skin and bones (Olsen, 2001a). As a result the household consumption of whole fresh fish is declining. At the same time there has been an increase in consumption of minced fish products such as fish patties, fish balls and breaded fish sticks which are ready for heating and consumption (Hage, 2005). The convenience of frozen and fresh pre cut and boneless fish slices and fillets are also evident by the increase in sales volumes <sup>[6]</sup>. Convenience proves to be a very important aspect of food choice (Olsen, 2001b). Seafood products have the potential to give variety and nutritional foods the whole family can enjoy (Olsen, 2001a).

A recent survey in France showed that French women complain that head on shell on shrimp is time consuming to clean and not very attractive to those who do not like to touch shellfish or see the whole animal on their plate (Monfort, 2004). A convenience food like frozen marinated shrimp product avoid these barriers because they have the advantage of being cooked, peeled, cleaned and ready to warm for consumption. 40 % of Norwegians asked said shrimp were their favourite type of seafood (Bjørklund and Bendiksen, 2005).

The introduction of marinated shrimp can benefit and gain ground in the changing dinner market as a new and innovative product. The shrimp's versatility makes it a great ingredient in dishes. Most Norwegians are aware of the different cooking options and exciting dishes suitable for shrimp. Still they often choose to use the traditional safe route when preparing the food (Olsen, 1989). Presently Norwegian food culture is influenced by Asian cuisine which uses shrimp widely. This may help increase the consumption and usage of shrimp in the Norwegian kitchen <sup>[2]</sup>. In addition the consumer



is influenced by numerous cooking shows, cook books, movies and commercials who tell you that cooking with quality foods is trendy (Eriksen, 2005).

A product line called Stella marinated shrimp is one of the new convenience products sold in Norway. It is produced by Stella Polaris who has their production facilities and main office located in Kårvikhamn in the northern part of Norway. Stella Polaris launched this new frozen product in an attempt to expand its product assortment of cooked and peeled cold water shrimp. Frozen marinated shrimp will likely have a different usage area than the well-known peeled shrimp. Stella marinated shrimp can be an ideal product for the convenience oriented consumer as a dinner option because it has minimal preparation time in the kitchen and offer a new trendy marinades.

## **1.6 Main objective**

The purpose of this thesis is to survey consumer use and evaluations of a new shrimp product, Stella marinated shrimp, to increase knowledge about the perception and how this new product is used in the kitchen by consumers. The main objective is;

*”To examine how consumers evaluate and use a new convenience product, the case of Stella marinated shrimp”.*

To explore the main objective, the following sub-objectives were developed;

- Investigate the consumer expectations of Stella marinated shrimp prior to use.
- Investigate how the consumers use the product.
- Investigate the consumer experiences and potential satisfaction with the product.

## **2.0 Background Theory**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The marketing research in this thesis lies in and around the models of product usage and customer satisfaction. The theories behind product usage and product evaluation are described by focusing on;

- How the consumer prepares and uses the test product.
- Why the consumer becomes satisfied or dissatisfied with the test product by investigating consumer expectations and experiences.

Zaichkowsky (1985) says that use of a product first and foremost happens because the consumers have a need or want they wish to fulfill. To satisfy this need the consumers acquire a specific product with a quality which can comply with the certain need during use and consumption. This is in accordance with another depiction of quality saying that quality is meeting the expectations of the consumer (van den Berg, 1993).

Product usage is an area of marketing and consumer behaviour which has often been neglected in marketing research and as a result there are limited amounts of qualified research information available. Previous research on product usage has been connected and measured on pre-purchase decision making, rather than the post-purchase consumption of the product (Ram and Jung, 1990). The manner in which a customer uses a product is interesting because it is likely to have an impact on the post-purchase evaluation process, e.g. satisfaction, which again impacts the decision of re-purchase (Ram and Jung, 1989).

## **2.2 Product packaging and design**

Product packaging and design and their ability to communicate are important contributors to product usage for the consumer. Preservation method, design of package and labelling are important because they represent the product on the shelves. The information on the package must attract customers, describe the product and at the same time explain to the consumer how the product is best utilized (Kotler et al., 1999). If the consumer does not receive adequate information about a product via its packaging and label, user frequency and variety can be reduced. Today cooking instructions, nutritional values and suggested recipes are present on most food items to facilitate usage by the consumer. Product design and communication through packaging are important and can contribute to product usage, both positive and negative. An increase in usage and areas of application can result in increased satisfaction regarding the product, while an inability to utilize and understand the product, to its full potential, with its features and functions can lead to frustrations and dissatisfaction (Ram and Jung, 1990).

## **2.3 Adopter categories**

Adopter categories describe and separate people in society into different categories depending on their purchase patterns of new products and innovations (Rogers, 1995). He divides society into five groups consisting of innovators (2,5 %), early adopters (13,5 %), early majority (34 %), late majority (34 %) and laggards (16 %). Innovators are described as venturesome risk takers, early adopters are recognized and respected opinion leaders, early majority are careful and deliberate but still curious to try something new, late majority can be described as sceptical, and laggards are traditionalists and resistant to change.

A study from Ram and Jung (1994) gave indications that usage variety was higher for the more innovative early adopters compared to the early majority consisting of reluctant consumers who rely on recommendations often from early adopters before utilizing a product. The same study showed little or no significant difference in usage frequency between the early adopters and the early majority. This discovery of higher

usage variety among the first customers to adopt and use a product is interesting and will be looked at and explored.

## **2.4 Disconfirmation theory**

*“The confirmation/disconfirmation, (CS/D), paradigm is widely accepted as a view of the process by which consumers develop feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction”* (Cadotte et al., 1987:305).

There are numerous proposed theories in the customer confirmation/disconfirmation literature, but one of the most important and widely accepted theories belong to Oliver (1980) and is called the expectation-disconfirmation model (Niedrich et al., 2005). The expectancy disconfirmation model of customer satisfaction compare purchase and actual performance levels to expectation levels using a better-than, worse-than standard of comparison (Oliver et al., 1997, Oliver, 1997). Consumer satisfaction becomes a function of the product’s performance-specific expectation and expectancy disconfirmation all happening prior to product usage. A worse than expected performance brings negative disconfirmation while a better than expected performance reveal positive disconfirmation, and a simple confirmation is achieved if the performance is as expected. This discrepancy and defined confirmation is defined as disconfirmation (Niedrich et al., 2005). Satisfaction can be explained as a function of an individual initial standard and at a later time some perceived discrepancy from the initial reference point. The comparisons made of the two stages are subjective. The customers’ expectations are important to identify because they are the standard the consumer compares the product to (Oliver, 1980).

Prior to use the consumer has an expectation to the attributes of the product. A norm of “what the product will do for me” based on expectations influenced by the brand itself through a mix of prior experiences, brand recognition, social references, recommendations, influence and misrepresentation of the product. During product consumption or rendering of product services the consumer compare the actual performance to the standards set prior to utilization (Oliver and Swan, 1989). These expectations can be met, exceeded, or fall short after consumption of the product which

will lead to zero, positive or negative disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980). If the performance is better than the set standard the disconfirmation is positive while a performance below par provides negative disconfirmation. There is a direct connection and function between disconfirmation and satisfaction. Positive disconfirmation leads to satisfaction and negative disconfirmation results in dissatisfaction (Oliver and Swan, 1989). Satisfaction increases when the ratio between expectation and experiences increase (Oliver, 1980).

Ultimately a satisfied consumer can and often will change both attitude and purchase intentions toward the product previously consumed (Oliver, 1980). A happy and satisfied consumer is the ideal consumer because they have an increased chance of re-purchasing the product plus they are also likely to share their positive attitude towards the product with friends and family.

Oliver (1997) uses Figure 2.1 to describe the links between expectation, disconfirmation and ultimately degree of satisfaction. The two way link between expectation and disconfirmation can either give a negative C, positive C or C equalling zero.

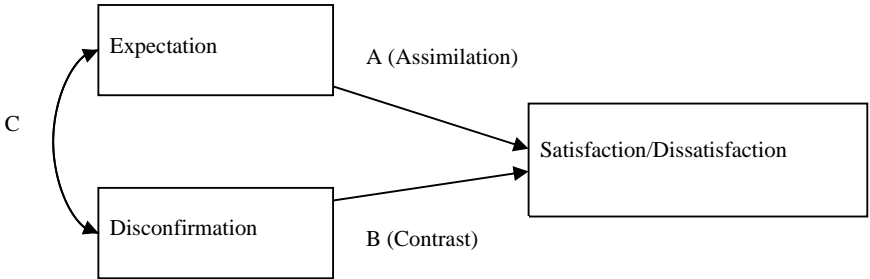


Figure 2.1: A Simplified Expectancy Disconfirmation Framework (Oliver, 1997).

These three disconfirmation categories have been investigated further by Oliver, Rust & Varki (1997), and the research is now supported by scholars and satisfaction literature. According to Oliver, (1980, 1997) the three possible outcomes of disconfirmation conditions are;

Negative Disconfirmation: A low probability undesirable event occur or high probability events do not.

Positive Disconfirmation: A low probability desirable event occur or high probability undesirable events do not.

Confirmation: A low and high probability desirable and undesirable event occur or do not as expected.

To measure disconfirmation which is an antecedent strongly related to consumer satisfaction, direct measures and a better understanding of the underlying standards measured has been proposed. The most commonly used standards to measure disconfirmation today are; goals, expectations and norms (Niedrich et al., 2005). The consumers can use one or more of these constructs to generate disconfirmation judgments through comparing consumption experiences with the perceived standard for the consumption.

### 2.4.1 Disconfirmation and product performance

Disconfirmation explores the comparison standard of performance and the difference in actual consumer consumption experience. A perception of how well the product should perform is made at the time of judgment.

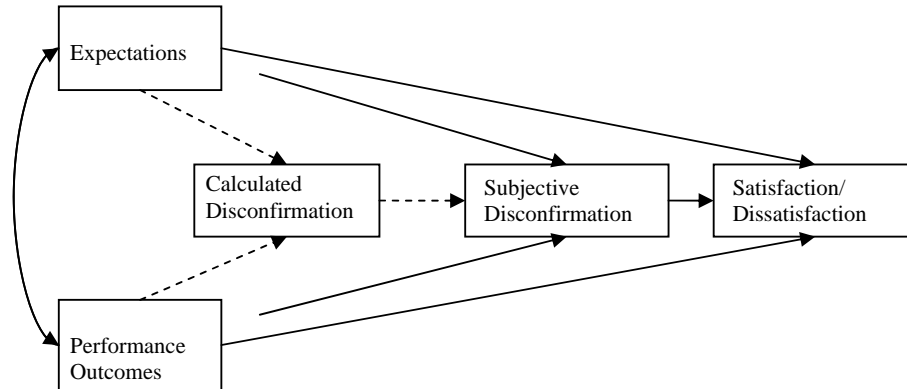


Figure 2.2: The Complete Expectancy Disconfirmation with Performance Model (Oliver 1997).

The Complete Expectancy Disconfirmation with Performance Model is a more complex version of Figure 2.1, because it includes the factor of performance. It illustrates the most complete and recent version of the disconfirmation theory by demonstrating the link between the two exogenous variables, expectations and performance. Together they combine and form the objective disconfirmation level which provides the foundation for subjective interpretation of the expectation-performance gap. The subjective disconfirmation is directly antecedent to satisfaction (Oliver, 1997).

### 2.4.2 Disconfirmation and product usage

Marketing researchers have revealed a possibility of consumers using other factors, besides product performance, when they rated products in the “Performance expectations-performance-disconfirmation-satisfaction” paradigm proposed by Oliver (1980) and Tse and Wilton (1988).

One factor with limited research but suspected to have a connection in consumer satisfaction for consumer durables was “product usage”. The four dimensions of usage were examined by Ram and Jung (1991) to establish a possible connection between the dimensions and consumer satisfaction for consumer durables. The research suggested product usage through the usage dimensions of usage frequency, usage variety, usage function and usage situation can influence usage disconfirmation dimensions and ultimately product satisfaction. This relationship between usage disconfirmation and satisfaction suggests usage expectation among customers when the product is purchased (Ram and Jung, 1991). These findings were independent from the effect of performance disconfirmation on satisfaction. The usage dimensions and ultimately the usage disconfirmation varied with product categories (Ram and Jung, 1991).

It is difficult to measure satisfaction because the satisfaction processes differ across and with different products. Consumers are also individually different and are likely to have different experiences and prerequisites with products and therefore are likely to attach subjective feelings and their own level of importance being in the same usage situation (Cadotte et al., 1987).

### **2.4.3 Disconfirmation and pleasure**

Consumer confirmation or disconfirmation has a direct and positive effect on pleasure which again have a direct and positive effect on satisfaction. A study showed consumers experienced pleasure during consumption when they perceived positive disconfirmation while they experienced displeasure when they perceived negative disconfirmation (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). Pleasure was driven by disconfirmation.

There is a connection between the satisfaction experienced while eating the product and the satisfaction felt after the product is consumed. A high rate of enjoyment and pleasure experienced during the consumption process results in a higher level of satisfaction. Prior use and knowledge of the product can also influence the consumers expectations and satisfaction ratings (Wirtz and Bateson, 1999). Even how the consumer use the product, product usage, will possibly influence the consumer satisfaction with the product (Ram and Jung, 1991).



An interesting point noted by Tse and Wilton (1998) discusses the pre-experience comparison standard and disconfirmation during consumption of new products. In this case the consumer has no experience or learning curve with the product and nothing to compare it with. In such a case, will the consumer always be satisfied with a new product as long as it performs well due to positive disconfirmation and low pre-experience standard?

## **2.5 Product usage perspectives**

In the marketing literature the question concerning how consumers utilize and perceive their products has been examined from three different and distinct perspectives. According to Ram and Jung (1990) these three perspectives cover all aspects of products and product use;

*The social interaction perspective* describes the symbolic aspect of product usage. It looks at the products intangible attributes and the social status connected to the acquirement and consumption of them. Automobiles and houses are examples of socially conspicuous products.

*The experiential consumption perspective* describes the consumer's experiences and gained knowledge related to a product through experiences such as "fantasies, feelings and fun". This research has its focus on hedonic consumption of such products as entertainment and art.

*The functional utilization perspective* describes usage of product attributes in different situations. Durable products such as VCR's and personal computers are often the main focus of this perspective.

Due to the objective of this thesis and the problem which is to be addressed, both the experimental consumption perspective and functional utilization perspective theories seem to fit as a conceptual framework theory. They describe hedonic consumption and post-purchase functional usage of the product and its attributes.

The case of usage areas for marinated shrimp does not fit into the description of the socially intangible product attributes of the social interaction perspective. It describes felt status connected to the product and not the function of the product itself when used.

It is often assumed that the consumer will use and utilize the product and its attributes soon after the product has been acquired. As a result of this rapid consumption many scholars think there is little to learn from studies of post-purchase consumption. That may be the reason why prior research shows that the functional perspective has gotten little attention from marketing researchers. This assumption can be valid for non-durable goods who often tend to offer little variety in functional usage (Ram and Jung, 1990).

### **2.5.1 Usage dimensions**

Usage area for a product is a combination of the products attributes and usage situations. How to describe product use and usage is often discussed and there is no set definition on the matter. Ram and Jung (1990) have proposed and use the following definitions for the two first distinct and different dimensions of product usage in their literature;

Usage frequency refers to how often and the length of time the product is used, regardless of the different ways or applications the product may be used under.

Usage variety refers to the different applications and usage situations for product usage regardless of how frequent the product is used.

Usage frequency is often high right after a purchase when the item is still a novelty, while usage variety often increases with time as the consumer learn and acquire the knowledge and know-how needed to use the product features (Ram and Jung, 1990).

To illustrate this with an example, consider two individuals who both use the Internet one hour per day. The first person uses the internet only for job related work while the second person uses it for work, personal emails, browsing and online bill pay. Both

have the same usage rate and frequency, but the second person shows a greater usage variety due to the different tasks the machine is utilized for.

As the example demonstrates, the term usage variety both cover and describes two different aspects; which product attributes the consumer use and the different situations the product is used in. To distinguish and separate these two suggested aspects of product usage variety, Ram and Jung (1991) proposed two additional dimensions of product usage; usage function and usage situations. The four dimensions of product usage are all connected and describe different areas and levels of product usage.

Usage function refers to which product features and attributes are used by the consumer regardless of how often the product is used.

Usage situation refers to the different functions and situations the product is used under regardless of both usage function and usage frequency.

The dimensions look at product usage in past and present and can be generalized and used on different categories of durable products (Ram and Jung, 1990, 1991). Durable products are most often used in research and they are separated from the consumer goods category due to the fact that it is difficult to measure all the usage dimensions for consumer goods. They are disposable products that are used once and since they are consumed quickly researchers have shown the products little attention. As a result research measure consumer goods in the amount purchased and therefore the acquired amount equals product usage in many cases (Ram and Jung, 1994).

Even though there have been discussions and different perceptions among researchers regarding the dimensions as to if they accurately describe both durable and frequently purchased consumer goods, the dimensions proposed by Ram and Jung (1990, 1991, 1994) with emphasis on usage variety is investigated in this marketing research. Usage areas and how the food is prepared will show a degree of usage variety while discovering potential usage patterns.

### **2.5.2 Product usage, Zaichowsky's definition**

Another definition and theory of product is described by Zaichkowsky (1985) who studied the influence of product involvement and experience with products used. Her definitions of product usage differ slightly from the proposed conceptualizations from Ram and Jung (1990, 1991). Zaichkowsky uses the terms breath and depth of consumption, but the main theories are still close. The breath of consumption is defined as to the number of different types of products owned and used in a product class within a certain time frame compared to Ram and Jung (1990) who define the different types of uses for a product as usage variety. On the other hand the definition of depth of consumption is more similar and consistent with the theory Ram and Jung (1990) proposed for usage frequency.

Zaichkowsky (1985) also states that various products have different use patterns depending if they are consumer goods or high tech durable goods. A consumer's use of a computer is different compared to the consumption and use of for instance marinated shrimp. Hence product use cannot be directly compared across product categories.

As a result product use is measured in two separate product categories; packaged goods and durable goods. For the frequently purchased packaged goods her theory describes the depth of consumption as the number of occasions the product was bought over a time period. Durable goods could be measured as to how often the product was used within the same time period (Zaichkowsky, 1985).

### **2.5.3 New usage situations**

According to Shih and Venkatesh (2002) all people have different levels of needs to seek novelty in a mundane environment. This motivates consumers to be creative with everyday products and adopt them to create new consumption scenarios which lead to increased usage variety. It takes both ability and incentive from the consumer to be creative and curious enough to use the existing products in new and untraditional ways. An expansion and increase of usage areas for a product can have a positive influence on the development and marketing of a product (Ram and Jung, 1990). More potential

buyers will acquire the product and use it within its numerous usage areas. Another possibility for increased utilization and use is to expand and come up with new ways and areas to use both old and new products (Price and Ridgeway, 1983). Using a familiar product to suit a new purpose or adding more options show that product usage can be complex to monitor. At the same time it can be profitable for companies due to increased sales numbers. New usage areas give new opportunities which give better experiences and increased use and utility (Ram and Jung, 1991). Experience with a product can therefore lead to either specialization which refers to repetition of the same action over and over again, or a better understanding of a products different possibilities and give the user confidence in experimenting with new things (Shih and Venkatesh, 2002).

## **2.6 Customer satisfaction**

*“Satisfaction is the consumer’s fulfilment response. It is a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment, including levels of under- or overfulfillment.”*  
(Oliver, 1997:13).

This definition on satisfaction has been widely accepted among scholars even though existing literature indicate many different versions of the hard to define word. A generic definition has so far not gotten a consensual approval and it has been a challenge to agree on a generally accepted definition in the satisfaction literature due to the complexity and subjective feelings involved in the process described. Most of the definitions proposed by researchers nonetheless have a few common elements. The analogy are three basic components which describe a response pertaining to a certain focus determined at a specific time (Giese and Cote, 2002).

To elaborate further the concept of satisfaction includes both a theoretical and empirical framework working together. It is the end result of multiple processes made by an individual which are based on a complex combination of cognitive thinking and emotional feelings such as judgement and affect that results in the concept satisfaction (Oliver, 1997). The literature does not provide us with a clear conceptualization of

dissatisfaction either, but we will portray it as a bipolar opposite to satisfaction hence portray them as two different dimensions (Giese and Cote, 2002).

The lack of consensus around the concept of satisfaction leads to challenges for customer satisfaction research. Without a set definition it is hard to select a definition for a project, operationalize the definition, interpret and comparing results. The basic structure without one definition makes the theory testing and research comparisons problematic (Giese and Cote, 2002).

Whether a consumer is satisfied or dissatisfied with a product after consumption is very important to the producer of the particular product. This is especially true regarding new products in the marketplace. A customer's evaluation of a new product can provide important information regarding brand loyalty and further repeat purchasing. That information can also be used to expand markets and gain new potential customers if the consumer is satisfied. This understanding and insight into a first time buyer experiences is essential to build brand loyal customers and market share (Simintiras et al., 1997). This statement is supported by research done by Oliver et al., (1997) who also found a link between customer satisfaction and service quality. They stated this potential tie could lead to behavioural intentions such as loyal customers providing repeat purchasing and increased profits.

The satisfaction/dissatisfaction paradigm has a wide theoretical background, but most researchers seem to agree and often explain it as a comparison between the expectations and actual experiences after use or consumption of a product (Tse and Wilton, 1988, Wirtz and Bateson, 1999, Westbrook, 1980, Oliver, 1997, Oliver, 1980). The factor influencing consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a pre-experience comparison standard and the following disconfirmation. Through this pre-experience comparison standard the consumers have something to compare their experiences and actual performance with to see if the actions are disconfirmed (Tse and Wilton, 1988). Westbrook (1980) states that if a product meets or exceeds the prior expectations the result will lead to satisfaction, while dissatisfaction occurs when the prior expectations are not met. The degree of product usage can also influence the level of satisfaction the consumer connects to the product. If a consumer purchased a product expecting to use it

frequently or in several different ways, but actual usage fall short of the expectations, the resulting usage can result in dissatisfaction (Ram and Jung, 1990).

It is this satisfaction measured through expectations and actual experiences which will be investigated through this interview with the marinated shrimp product. We will try to uncover and measure any emotional response related to this proposed discrepancy. Will the pre-set standard of expectations to the shrimp prior to preparing them show a great disparity to the actual experience of consuming them? This includes the attributes of preparation, taste, function, and overall encounter with the product. This master thesis will look at satisfaction as a general term inclusive of all emotional markers, where satisfaction is a dual function of cognition/disconfirmation and affect (Oliver et al., 1997).

### **2.6.1 Satisfaction and attitudes**

Satisfaction is not just a cognitive phenomenon. It also includes an element of instinct or impression which leads to a good feeling with satisfaction and a bad feeling with dissatisfaction. In addition to impressions towards a product the element of satisfaction also consist of consumer character and willpower. Consumer character and attitude show that a strong attitude towards a product increase chances for repeat purchases compared to a weak attitude which gives weak correlations to repeat buys of the same products or brands (Westbrook, 1980).

Both feelings and attitude influence consumer expectations towards a product and if the consumer in the end will be satisfied with it. The more advanced and complicated the purchase is, the more factors will effect the overall satisfaction in the end. In addition mood and accidental environmental conditions will weigh in and sway the consumers judgement of product quality (Westbrook, 1980).

## **2.6.2 Satisfaction and product usage**

Product satisfaction is a result of several factors; product attributes, the motivation and expertise of the seller, the consumer's knowledge about how to use the product correctly or the circumstances around the consumption depending on the available information. Still research shows that consumers often blame the product or seller when they are dissatisfied with the product rather than checking to see if they themselves have done something wrong in the usage process. The result is customer complaints and requests for refunds or replacement products when the customer is dissatisfied (Westbrook, 1980).

An individual who show versatility and uses a product in different ways and at the same time in different situations is likely to also have a high usage frequency and use the product often. The investigation Ram and Jung (1991) launched resulted in a suggestion that the levels of product usage do influence disconfirmation judgements and ultimately satisfaction. They concluded this after a study showed an increased level of usage frequency, usage function and usage situations, resulting in reduced levels of performance disconfirmation and usage disconfirmation, which again increased the level of satisfaction in the end. An interesting finding was the difference found in satisfaction based on the dimensions of usage across the various durable goods investigated. Usage frequency played a significant role in the satisfaction regarding VCR's while usage situations played a role for satisfied home computer customers. The barrier and challenge for the commercial products are based on getting the consumer to buy the product first, but ultimately be able to understand and use the product easily even with no prior knowledge in the area of use.

## **2.7 Intention and re-purchase**

For a product to be successful in the marketplace it needs to have satisfied customers purchasing and using the product on a regular basis. The attitude of the consumer reflects the liking or disliking of the product (e.g., satisfaction/dissatisfaction). The ultimate intention of the product is to fulfill a consumer need on a continuous basis. If the customer has a positive attitude towards the product the possibility of re-purchase or recommendations are very likely (Oliver, 1997).



With repeat purchases the consumer builds a loyalty to the product and brand. At this time the consumer may be insensitive to shortcomings of the product. But repeated shortcomings and failures can quickly lead to consumer disappointments, sometimes only after a few occurrences. In the end this can lead to discontinuous use of the product. At this time negative disconfirmation has outweighed the previous positive experiences with the product and the consumer decides to stop purchasing the product and look elsewhere for a substitute (Oliver, 1997).

## **2.8 An applied research model**

This thesis will investigate and try to identify usage variety of marinated shrimp by completing a product evaluation of the products different attributes to see which attributes are important in regards to the usage areas.

Figure 2.3 shows the applied research model based on the theories disclosed in chapter 2. Product related antecedents and household related categories with adoption categories are described. Disconfirmation theory follows to explain consumer attitudes and expectations prior to product usage. Product usage theory includes the product usage perspectives, the usage dimensions; usage frequency, usage variety, usage function and usage situation. New usage situation theory is also described. Satisfaction theory describes why the consumer after using the product feels either satisfied or dissatisfied with the product. Based on intention theory, re-purchase and recommendation of the product to others will be based on satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product and product usage.

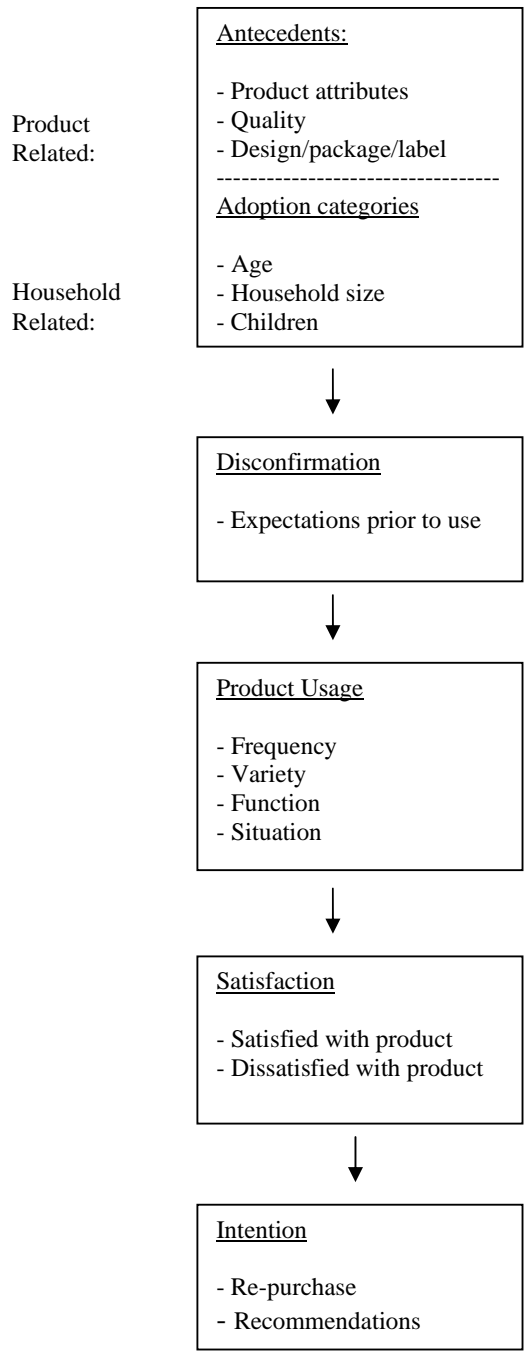


Figure 2.3 Research Model



## **3.0 Method of research**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The main objective of this thesis is to uncover product usage and evaluate the new product, Stella marinated shrimp. A selection of consumers was asked to share their expectations and overall thoughts prior to use, the meal options they prepared during product usage and experiences afterwards.

Before questions exploring the main objective of this research could be composed and issued to the participants, a decision on which school of method to use for this research was made. The challenge is to develop a reliable and valid research design which would help answer and measure the main objective by addressing, organizing and finally document the collected data material. A method is described by Halvorsen (1993:15) as “*a doctrine about the tools which can be used to collect information*”. Finding and using the right method helps the researcher investigate reality in a systematic way and at the same time unveil new knowledge.

### **3.2 Choice of design**

Which techniques and data sources to use in the marketing research are dependent on the choice of research method and design. It could be either;

- 1. Qualitative design** (few sample units) where the research is done through field observation or personal interviews or
- 2. Quantitative design** (many sample units) where the research is conducted through surveys or experiments (Ringdal, 2001).

In some cases a combination of the two designs can also be used to complement each other and help the researcher gain deeper insight into the issues addressed. Ringdal (2001) states using both methods may be ideal in many research situations. This is because the qualitative and quantitative methods are often described as complimentary rather than different.

A decision to engage the qualitative method was decided because it was best suited to explore the three sub-objectives, see chapter 1.6. In addition the researcher also decided to follow up by a short written questionnaire. The questionnaire can often work well as a compliment to the in depth interview. Together they “check and balance” each other.

The first sub-objective to investigate consumer expectations was achieved by conducting an in depth interview at the initial meeting where the 18 panel participants were provided with four samples each of Stella marinated shrimp for home use, two bags each of the flavours Garlic & Herb and Lime & Curry. A short questionnaire was also distributed to discover expectations and initial thoughts. The second sub-objective to reveal product usage was investigated by gathering information through an in depth interview conducted at a meeting after product usage and consumption of the marinated shrimp. At the same interview the third sub-objective was also investigated. Consumer experience after the trial period was explored and the participants shared their evaluation of the product. A second questionnaire was completed as a supplement to discover consumer experiences.

There is little or no available secondary data regarding consumer evaluation and use of this new convenience product. The main focus of this area of research will be based on the primary collected materials. Secondary sources (internal sources, public records, private sources) often provide valuable supplemental information surrounding the background and theme of the area of research (Namork, 1993).

### 3.2.1 Qualitative analysis

Ringdal (2001) says qualitative research in general describes a few units or entities on the basis of many variables and that its strength lies in its flexibility, a thorough understanding and the possibility of personal follow-up after the initial interview. The strength of the qualitative method is that it functions very well in exploratory studies and when new and unknown themes and areas are investigated. This is because the analysis is dynamic, has a high level of interactivity in addition to being both flexible and adaptable (Halvorsen, 1993). Qualitative method follows a different logic compared to quantitative methods because it goes deeper into the problem while using both personal in depth interview and observation while gathering information. It's an informal and unstructured research method with no standard setup or rules for structure or guidelines for how the marketing survey is executed. This provides great flexibility for the researcher. Even though this freedom provides many advantages for the researcher, a certain structure should be implicated to give the interview more depth and a better overview of the research (Kvale, 1997).

The objective of this research is to get the consumer to express their thoughts, expectations, views and experiences surrounding the product investigated. Through this research important information regarding the product and use of it may lead to new theories or development of an improved product. Feedback and dialogue is vital to understand the consumers thoughts and actions in this case.

The interview method has been criticized for focusing too much on individual opinion and ignoring social and material structures and frameworks. This is important to take into consideration when the information is being analyzed and interpreted (Repstad, 1996). In addition personal interviews has a reputation for great precision and flexibility but can often be both time consuming and expensive (Namork, 1993). The analysis is often suspected and prone to be subjective due to personal interpretations while the interviews are transcribed. Another weakness is the duplication and control effect which is limited because the observation in the field is seldom standardized which results in low reliability. These studies are best suited for small sample sizes because the possibility to generalize and document representative results to any other group in society is small (Halvorsen, 1993).

### **3.3 Data collection and interview guide**

The interview guide is the most important tool when conducting a marketing survey. Formulation of questions and response alternatives has to correlate with the investigative goal and the information sought in the data collection (Namork, 1993).

In this research a personal in depth interview was conducted at both the initial and final meeting with the participants. This revealed consumer thoughts, feelings and expectations towards the product prior to use and furthermore experiences, usage areas, preparation methods and meal options after use. Identical questionnaires was also issued and completed at both gatherings after the interview. The questionnaire recorded expectations prior to using the product at the first meeting, and consumer experiences after preparation and consumption at the second and final meeting.

To define the target population the non probability sampling technique of quota sampling was used. Non probability sampling does not use chance selection or procedures hence it relies on the researcher deciding which elements to include in the research (Malhotra, 1999). The goal of this research is not to obtain data which are statistically projectable to a population, but rather exploratory in form. The 18 panel participants were chosen without information or knowledge if the consumer had previous encounters with the product Stella marinated shrimp using quota sampling which is a two stage restricted judgemental sampling (Malhotra, 1999). The control categories or quotas used were single households, households with children and households without children.

Due to a variety in age, from 29-63 years of age, within the different categories adequate and varied information was expected along with different cooking skills and levels. The sample element, households, was selected based on judgement for the purpose of giving personal opinions, thoughts and sharing information. Quota sampling gives the interviewer an advantage in lower costs and greater convenience in selecting elements for each quota. Disadvantages are bias samplings, no assurance the sample is relevant, control characteristics are often omitted due to lack of control (Malhotra, 1999).

Due to the nature of the research and analysis the number of participants decided on was 18. Factors influencing the decision were restraints on resources such as time and money. With 18 participants the three quotas previously determined could be separated into groups with six participants per household category. Using a representative sample was not deemed necessary because the ability to generalize results was not the purpose of this research, but rather to discover and explore how consumers use and evaluate the product.

The research was conducted through personal interviews with an interview guide as the backbone and reference. The interview guide was used freely and adjustments were made to better suit the individuals in the panel and to make sure they understand the questions asked. A good interview demands a well prepared list of bullet points along with prior research made in the area so that the conversation is on point and as much information as possible can be obtained (Repstad, 1996). A semi-structured interview guide was used and all the participants were faced with the same questions listed. The person interviewed was the person in the household responsible for the cooking. It was important to speak to the same person at both occasions because they dealt with and experienced the product first hand. A few times there would also be information provided from a cohabitant if they felt they could contribute.

The sub-objectives were discussed with the respondents through a personal interview which was recorded to assist the researcher with the process. Use of a mini tape recorder made the conversation more fluent by taking away the necessity of relying on memory and by reducing interruptions and halts during the conversation due to taking notes (Repstad, 1996). There were no objections to use a mini tape recorder during this research. The mini tape recorder worked great in this case as more attention was focused on the participant, understanding their responses and getting the right information. As a result we had good communication and we were both engaged in the conversation. The interview situation was casual as I visited the participant's home at their leisure and the atmosphere was good and relaxed.



The interview guide was created and separated into two sections. Part one revolved around consumer expectations and part two consisted of questions regarding consumer experiences with the product and product usage. To gain insight in the consumers thoughts and anticipation prior to using the product general questions were asked to get as much information as possible surrounding the product itself, packaging and cooking ideas to name a few. The first question was; *“What are your initial thoughts and first impression of the product?”*

The next step was to ask more detailed about *“Was there something you immediately liked or disliked?”*

Lastly to investigate preconceived idea or thoughts on cooking and consuming the product the question asked was; *“How do you think the product will perform?”*

The second part of questions was more comprehensive with focus on details surrounding product use of the shrimp and their evaluation of the situations encountered.

To get information about the surroundings of the product use as to why, where, who and how the product was utilized the question asked was; *“When did you use the product?”*

To continue the conversation about experiences made during the preparation of the food itself; *“Were the marinated shrimp easy to use?”*

Further investigation looked at the participants opinion and perception of the product and its attributes; *“Did you enjoy eating the product?”* In this segment attributes such as taste, smell, appearance and size were included.

To conclude and wrap up the session, questions regarding the entire encounter, use and experience with the shrimp were discussed. Overall satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with the product was the main objective to discover here. The questions; *“Did you like the marinated shrimp?”* and *“Did the product do as well as you thought?”* were asked. The entire interview guide is listed under Appendix 1.

During an in depth survey there are some potential errors that need to be mentioned. The consumer may not be able to express and remember all of their experience. Feelings, likeability and satisfaction are emotions which people often forget quickly. Therefore it may be difficult to look back and share information about the situations in question. I tried to visit and talk to the participants as soon as possible after they were done with the shrimp preparations. Unfortunately, some were busy with work, sick children and travel so it was difficult to make it work every time, but the interviews were conducted within a three week period after sample distribution.

Remembering back to their initial cooking experience with the product, for the previous users, did not seem to be a problem. All six previous users remembered what they had prepared with the shrimp earlier.

The interviews were done as close to the trial period as possible because preferences may also change with time. Your preference to a product throughout the day and during the meal may change. The way the food is prepared and served may also influence the attitude towards the product. One may like one dish depending on the combination of items used, but may not like another meal because there may be items used the person not like or approve of. This may ruin the experience and leave a negative feeling and experience towards the product.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The data collected through the personal interviews are recommended transcribed word for word and further used to compare to get the individual thoughts and experiences with the product. Due to restraints on time and resources a data reduction was done to obtain an organized presentation of the data collected and to be able to draw conclusions. Data reduction was done by listening to the tapes and selecting the most important information through simplification, transformation of data while focusing on the core of the problem investigated. Interview quotes are used throughout the rapport to give a better impression of the dialogue and show the material the researchers analysis is based on (Kvale, 1997).

The in depth interview and questionnaire were both completed in Norwegian to avoid misunderstandings and errors as all the participants are Norwegians and had different levels of understanding English. Completing the research in Norwegian therefore assures and describes a more accurate situation. After all the information was gathered it was translated into English.

At the end of the marketing research all loose ends are tied up as conclusions and confirmations are made. Based on the main objective the results from the interviews should answer the questions we were set out to answer.

### **3.5 Reliability and validity of research analysis and results**

It is important that research can be viewed and evaluated. The terms validity and reliability are important criteria in establishing and assessing the quality and credibility of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The ability to generalize can also be used to measure quality and credibility of research, but is mostly used in quantitative data (Kvale, 1997).

#### **3.5.1 Validity**

The validity states if a survey or questionnaire really measures what it was set out to measure (Ringdal, 2001). Does the survey give satisfying answers to the main problem to be investigated? Validity says something about how the researcher got the answers to the questions asked. Did the respondent answer the question or did they misunderstand and answer something else. The goal is to tie the theoretical terms to the variables used in the research leading to a connection between the theory and empirical data.

The researcher is also responsible for making sure the participant have some general background or information in the area of questioning (Namork, 1993). Otherwise the questioning can result in reduced validity for the particular project due to the participant not knowing or understanding the questions asked.

To best measure what you intend to measure requires the methods of research to be as reliable as possible and the influence of errors, both accidental and systematic have to be at a minimum. During the research a lot of time was spent designing both the written questionnaire and preparing the in depth interview to make sure the respondents would understand the questions asked. Avoiding leading questions is also important so that the respondents can feel comfortable with their answers and sharing their information, and at the same time does not interfere with the validity of the research.

There was also a pre test of the interview guide and questionnaire conducted on two participants to make sure my bullet points, questions and interview technique were easy to understand and did not cause any confusion. No major weaknesses or flaws were uncovered, so revisions to the interview guide and questionnaire were considered unnecessary. Further responses and results from the test group was included as part of the 18 participants. Everyone picked to participate got the same introduction before answering questions. The experience with the in depth interview showed an acceptable degree of validity for this research. The panel participants were able to convey their thoughts and opinions on the product and their experiences without any prior preparations and thoughts on the matter.

### **3.5.2 Reliability**

Reliability tells if the survey is credible and valid. A reliable study should show the same or similar results if the research were to be replicated several times (Ringdal, 2001). During the survey the same questions and themes are brought up for the different panel participants for response. At the same time the researcher can make sure through the conversation that the participant genuinely understands the questions asked as well. This provides a high level of reliability during the research. Another matter influencing reliability is the participants themselves. The researcher wants to make sure they tell the truth, have a good memory and are honest, so they don't say the things they think the researcher wants to hear. This would decrease the reliability of the research.

The panel of 18 participants was picked out after asking if they were willing to participate and share their views and experiences. The ones who declined were not part of this research so there should not be a reason to cover things up and reliability should be increased. Analyzing the data and transcribing the interviews also influence reliability. To avoid influencing and contaminating the data during processing and try to remain objective at all times was important. The experience with the in depth interviews conducted showed an acceptable degree of reliability for this research.

## **4.0 Results of product use and evaluation**

### **4.1 Background consumer expectations**

The main objective of this thesis was to survey consumer use and evaluations of a new shrimp product, Stella marinated shrimp, to increase knowledge about the perception on how this new product is used in the kitchen by consumers. During the initial meeting with the 18 panel participants, an interview was conducted along with a written questionnaire to unveil consumer expectations and thought about the product.

### **4.2 General consumer expectations to Stella marinated shrimp**

The panellists were asked individually about their initial thoughts and first impressions when they were handed the product based on the interview guide. The overall answers received regarding the product were optimistic. There was a general consensus that the participants looked forward to using the product. 10 participants mentioned the product looked appetizing and tasty, while seven expressed excitement about the product and six had a positive attitude towards the product. A participant shared his view by saying;

*“I’m usually very traditional and boring when it comes to cooking....reluctant to try new products and recipes...so this is a great possibility to try and experience something new...it looks very exciting.”*

Regarding the product itself six respondents had a perception that the product would be easy to prepare. After viewing the product packaging and receiving the product two respondents made a remark as to the distinction of the product being convenient.

Product attributes were also brought up after looking at the packaging and design. Six respondents mentioned the shrimp being a healthy product as a positive attribute, and four participants described the product and shrimp as nutritious.

10 participants mentioned they had either seen the product in stores previously or recognized the brand “Stella”. There was also a mention by six participants that the product was brand new to them. They had never seen or noticed the product while shopping. One participant said he had noticed the product before but not seen it recently and had been wondering if it was still for sale. Social references and recommendations by other users were mentioned by six participants. No one had a negative attitude. The entire sample element had something positive to say about either the product or packaging.

**4.2.1 A graphical presentation of expectations by households**

A short written questionnaire was administered and completed while distributing the product at the initial meeting. The questionnaire provided information from the three sample elements revealing their expectations to the product itself.

Figure 4.1 shows the sample element expectations on product attributes and perceptions on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

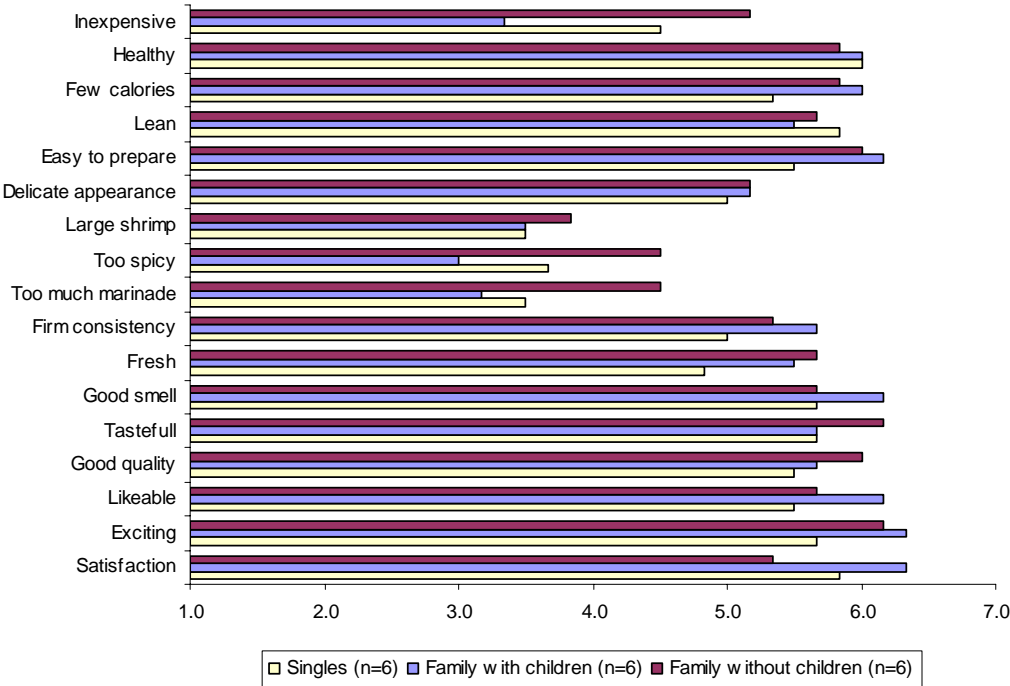


Figure 4.1 Consumer expectations before consumption (n=18).

Some general notables:

- Families without children perceive the product as the most affordable.
- Families with children remark the product as the most expensive.
- Families without children imagined a flavorful spicy product.
- Families with children believed the product to be the least spicy.
- Families without children imagined a lot of marinade in the product.
- Families with children believed the product to contain least amount of marinade.
- Families with children expected to be the most satisfied with the product.
- Singles and families with children thought the product was the most healthy.
- Singles perceived the product to be leaner than the other groups.

Families without children had consistently higher scores than the single households with exception of three categories (satisfaction, lean, healthy). The differences are small but still worth mentioning. The majority of categories had high average values (5+) on the scale. The lowest values were in the marinade, spice and shrimp size categories where all values were below (5-) for all sample households. Other mentions were the price category with an average under (5-) in the households with children and singles, and the fresh category with an average under (5-) for single households.

#### **4.2.2. Immediate reaction towards product**

The design and packaging in general were positively received. When asked if the participants could describe what they liked or disliked about the product a wide variety of answers were given. Since the product itself cannot be viewed inside the bag, the answers and responses made were all based on attitudes toward the packaging and design.

Seven of the respondents focused on the overall design of the packaging and said they liked the way the bags looked. Another three participants described the bags as attractive, nice and tempting. The colors on the bags were mentioned and got a positive response from four respondents, while one person didn't like the brown bag because the brown color gave it associations to meat. Three said the colors and the bags were boring.



Nice photos were the immediate reaction to four respondents, who focused on the photos more than the bag itself. Two respondents talked about and made it very clear that the Lime & Curry bag had the best photo. The photo on the Garlic & Herb bag got one mention as messy and unorganized. One respondent mentioned the bags looked expensive and that price was important and could be a barrier in the store if the price was too high. On the opposite end one respondent said the bags looked a little cheap, looking neither expensive nor exclusive. A comment which describes the overall reaction and response to the product was;

*“...the photos are nice, the colors are nice and the bags look overall delicate...”*

Further a number of details and distinct items were brought up by the participants. Two respondents said that they liked the way the expiration date was very visible. The remainder of participants did not mention the expiration date at all. Another two disliked the small text on the bag because it made the instructions and information hard to read. Another comment made by a couple of participants was that they perceived the bags could be difficult to open. To them easy access to the product was important.

Questions were asked by one respondent as to why the word “marinated” was written twice on the bag and why it was written in Swedish. Mentions to delete the word “marinated” and the EFF logo (Norwegian Seafood Export Council )was brought up along with difficulty to read text on a black background and too much info and text on the back making it hard to read and overall unorganized. The “1,4 % fat” announcement got four positive and one negative mention asking to have it deleted as “Most people know shrimp is healthy”.

Three respondents liked the recipes listed on the back and mentioned them during the conversation as a positive trait. The website address caught the eye of one participant who thought it was smart to have it posted on the bag. The logo on the bag was also brought up by a single participant and described as simple and nice.

The immediate dislikes with the packaging and perceived product were few and far between. One raised the question if it would be possible to use fresh shrimp instead of frozen shrimp. He feared there would be more water released and the shrimp would shrink more from a frozen state compared to fresh during warm up. Other issues brought up by one single respondent were a dislike of the heading which was associated to a spice rack, association of the bag to fried onions, and a request for a window to view the shrimp through.

### **4.2.3. Product performance**

When asked about perceived product performance nine respondents said they had already had experience with the product. They had either prepared the shrimp at home themselves or had the shrimp served to them by friends. The remaining 11 participants did not mention anything about prior experience with the product. Further three participants felt that because they like freshly cooked shell on shrimp they were confident they would like the marinated shrimp as well.

Uncertainty on how to use and prepare the product was pointed out by six participants. They said they would like to have additional serving tips and more focus on alternate serving suggestions after studying the packaging. Another thought shared was to maybe use illustrations instead of cooking directions. One participant stated his thought on the product's usage areas and possibility to be utilized in a broader range of recipes and meal options by saying;

*“I'm wondering if the Garlic & Herb kind has a wider more versatile usage area compared to the Lime & Curry kind...it has more versatile spices...more all-round, which can be used in a wider variety of recipes”*

Additional items brought up by one panellist were concerns the older generation may not be familiar with pitas & tortillas mentioned in the recipe section, that there would not be enough spices and flavoring in the product and worries that the shrimp may be small and become soggy, watery, chewy or soft after preparation.

### **4.3 Background consumer experiences**

During the second and final meeting with the 18 panel participants, an in depth interview was conducted separately with the participants along with a written questionnaire.

Questions from the interview guide were asked about consumer experiences and detailed inquiries on specific usage areas were made during the conversation. This chapter will reveal the results from the second interviews with the panel participants.

Results from the questionnaire will be described in Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3. In the end a brief comparison will be made between first time and experienced users to see if there were any major differences in how they prepared the food and if there is a disparity in usage situations and usage variety.

### **4.4 General usage information**

General questions regarding usage situations and surrounding elements were investigated. 10 of 18 participants responded they had prepared and consumed the entire product sample distributed. The remaining eight participants had either used one bag each of Lime & Curry shrimp and Garlic & Herb shrimp (4), used three bags of shrimp (3), or both bags of either the Lime & Curry shrimp (1) or Garlic & Herb shrimp (1). Only two participants used the product for a planned event, while the remaining fifteen participants did not plan in advance when to use the product. One participant utilized the product for both planned and not planned events.

When asked what meal the shrimp was prepared for, the majority said they prepared the shrimp for dinner. 16 participants said a dinner dish was the purpose when using the shrimp. Six participants also used the shrimp to make evening snacks and one made a meal for lunch. An interesting comment made was;

*“The shrimp were good to eat cold, they were perfect as leftovers”*

There were adults eating all the shrimp dishes prepared during this experiment and children consumed shrimp in five of the households. Family members were part of the meal in 12 of the households while friends were included to eat in five of the households.

The shrimp were prepared frozen by 14 participants while two prepared their dishes with thawed shrimp. Two participants tried using them both from frozen and thawed conditions. The participants said they used frying pans as their cooking equipment (11) times, wok (7), casserole (5), oven (3) and microwave (2) times.

#### **4.4 Prior knowledge and experience**

75 % of the group had prior knowledge to the product by seeing the product in the stores (7), work or acquaintances (3), through friends (2), or newspaper (1). Further, 10 participants had no prior knowledge of the brand name “Stella”, while eight participants said they had heard the name “Stella” before without having any particular association towards it.

After their experience with the product 17 said they are positive to trying other products from “Stella” depending on the product and if they like it. Only one opposed trying other products based on the experience in this experiment. A statement made about the possibility of extending the product line was;

*“I love seafood and shellfish and would love more of them as convenience foods...a bigger and better assortment and at the same time products that have not lost all nutritional values...”*

#### **4.5 The convenience aspect of marinated shrimp**

The simplicity and how easy they were to prepare was the first thing the majority of the participants brought up during the interview. 13 participants agreed that the product was easy to prepare and cook with. A couple described the product preparation as “super easy” and one said the shrimp were great because they were easy to prepare and made dinner a feast at the same time. A couple of participants did not agree and thought the product wasn’t easy to use until the second and third time around, when they had gotten some experience on how to use and utilize the product.

Some of the comments made were;

*“It was as easy as opening the bag, heating them and eating them...”*

*“Super easy to make something...I have used it previously...it’s not hard to find recipes either...we just used what we had available”*

*“It’s not a gourmet dinner...rather a quick solution...the sauces were ok, but I did not have a positive experience with the shrimp itself....they were chewy like rubber”*

During the conversation the word convenience product was brought up. 12 participants had an experience of an easy to use product and 13 participants called the shrimp a convenience product. They described it as a convenience product because it had the following attributes; no cutting or cleaning required (4), already marinated (3), cooked and ready to use right out of the bag (2), no cooking or frying required (1), no thawing required (1). All these qualities describe a product with very little if any preparation necessary before usage. One participant said it was a dinner prerequisite to use food products which could be prepared and ready to eat in 15 minutes. A comment made about convenience was;

*“Yes, I would call it a convenience product, but I do not save any time using it because I would use the shrimp as substitutes for other convenience products.....”*

There were three respondents who said the product did not save time because it was a challenge to figure out what to cook and serve with them and that experience with the product was needed for it to be easy to use.

*“The challenge is knowing what to make with this new product. You have to know how to use the product to save time....and it depends on what you make as side dishes...they take time to cook as well”*

## 4.6 Creativity and food preparation

The next area to handle was to see if the participants felt they were creative and curious when cooking and preparing meals at home. Seven respondents said they like to try new dishes and recipes, especially for planned events and weekends. 11 respondents answered they seldom try new recipes or ideas in their daily cooking. Even though they seldom use recipes three participants said they still have an idea they follow while cooking. The try and fail method was mentioned by five respondents as a way of trying and exploring new meals. Three said their creativity consists of using what they have available in the kitchen when they cook something for dinner or snacks. Here are some thoughts on the issue;

*“No, I don’t try or make a lot of new things, there is not enough time...I .make the same dishes because I know how to make them and how they will turn out”*

*“I’d say I’m somewhat creative, but I still make a lot of the same stuff...I use recipes for inspiration only so I kind of make my own version of the dish in question...”*

When asked where they find recipes and inspiration the following were mentioned. The most popular site for searching and locating recipes was the internet (10), cook books (9), friends (8), magazines (6), television (5), free info booklets (4), product packaging (1) and restaurants (1). Further, the interviews revealed 14 participants had not used a recipe for their dishes at all when preparing the marinated shrimp during the trial period research. Four participants said they both used and did not use recipes for the dishes they prepared. They got the recipes from a variety of places, such as the bag of shrimp (2), friend (1) and packet of tortillas (1). A couple of remarks made were;

*“I’m not a very good cook...so I’m dependent on recipes when I prepare food...if I’m not going to use the wok.... So it’s very important I think to have a web site you can go to and find additional recipes there.”*

*“I did not use a specific recipe...I used my own creativity....which again demands time and energy”*

## 4.7 Dishes prepared with the marinated shrimp

Below is a list of the meal options prepared by the participants and the number of times they were made.

### **Wok** **16 times**

Made with vegetables (14)

Served w/rice (11)

Served w/noodles (5)

### **Tortillas** **6 times**

Tortillas w/shrimp and vegetables (5)

Pinadias w/shrimp and vegetables (1)

### **Fish and seafood** **5 times**

Oven baked cod w/shrimp (2)

Redfish filet fried w/shrimp and vegetables (1)

Filet of saithe fried w/shrimp and vegetables (1)

Fish soup w/shrimp and rice (1)

### **Baked goods** **3 times**

Shrimp served on baguettes/bread (3)

### **Pasta** **2 times**

Tomato sauce w/shrimp and pasta (2)

### **Miscellaneous** **8 times**

Casserole w/ tomatoes, served w/ spaghetti, garlic bread (2)

Surf' n' Turf w/ pork, vegetables and shrimp (1)

Tacos w/shrimp (1)

Frozen pizza w/shrimp (1)

Side dish along w/ chicken breast and potatoes (1)

Paella w/shrimp (1)

Salad of mixed greens w/shrimp (1)

One participant did not remember the last dish made.

#### **4.7.1 Dishes prepared previously with marinated shrimp**

Participants who had used the product before were asked to share how they had prepared the shrimp at the previous occasions. A total of six participants said they had prepared the product before. Three participants stated they had previously used them in a wok for dinner, one used the shrimp in a wok for a late snack, one had made a cabaret with the shrimp and one served them with rice.

#### **4.8 General shrimp consumption**

To gain some knowledge about the participants experience and use of shrimp questions were asked about general shrimp consumption. 11 respondents said they buy and eat mostly fresh shell on shrimp in the summertime. Seven talked about sometimes using brine shrimp and scampi when cooking, three said they use fresh shell on shrimp often in meals while four said they seldom include shrimp in general when cooking.

The participants also shared information about what they usually prepare with the shrimp. Usage of scampi was mentioned by two participants and they prepared them in a wok. Usage of fresh shell on shrimp was prepared as part of the following meal options; with bread (8), seafood casseroles and soups (5), wok (3), as a topping (2), pasta (2), rice (1), risotto (1), pizza (1) and Thai foods (1). Brine and individually frozen shrimp were also mentioned as a substitute in these dishes if fresh shell on shrimp were unavailable. Four mentioned they use little frozen and brine shrimp because due to disappointments, they are consider them boring and having few usage areas. A couple of comments made to illustrate this were;

*“I don’t like to use frozen shrimp.....if I cannot get fresh shrimp I’ll cook without”.*

*“Shrimp are delicious and I really should use them more but I don’t have any good recipes...that makes me unsure on how to prepare them. Restaurants always have great shrimp dishes and wish I could prepare and incorporate them more at home too”*



*“I seldom eat shrimp because I cannot find a good usage area for brine shrimp and it’s hard to eat yourself full on the fresh shell on shrimp with bread...”*

## **4.9 Future use and meal options**

After using the marinated shrimp during this research and gaining experience preparing them, the participants were asked how they would use and prepare the product in future use. The majority of the participants answered they wanted to make an ethnic inspired dish, with a wok as the most popular option. A meal with the marinated shrimp in combination with fish or seafood was the second largest category for future use. One participant said she would not use the product again.

### **Ethnic dishes (Asia, Spain, Mexico) 24 times**

Wok (11), Thai/Chinese foods (4), Tapas (4), Taco (2), Enchiladas (2), Tortilla (1)

### **Fish and seafood 19 times**

Different fish or seafood (9), Fish balls (3), Sauces (5), Soup (2)

### **Pasta or rice dishes 11 times**

Pasta (6), Rice (4), Pasta salad (1)

### **Salads and appetizers 7 times**

Salads (5), Appetizer/toppings (2)

### **Baked goods 4 times**

Pita bread (2), Baguettes (2)

### **Miscellaneous 10 times**

Pizza (4), Casserole (3), Cabaret (1), Omelette (1), Quiche (1)

Below are some statements made on future meal options with the marinated shrimp;

*“I would use them in a warm dish, not a cold one....prefer to use fresh shrimp in cold dishes like a salad...”*

*“I would use them as a side dish or part of a side dish, not as a main course...there is not enough variety;”*

*“the number of dishes I could use the shrimp in are limited because the shrimp were so salty and there was so much marinade....there is no mention on the bag regarding the sauce...this limits the product usage. It is hard to find a dish to use the shrimp in because of the sauce. I will probably have to use the suggested recipes on the back and not be able to experiment”.*

Further the participants were asked about their attitude towards trying other flavours of marinade in the future. The response was very encouraging. 15 respondents said they were positive and would try other seasonings in the marinade. Only three respondents said they would not be interested. Even some suggestions on spices to use came up during the conversation where cilantro (3), chili (2), lime (2), pesto (1), lime/ginger (1), garlic/chili (1), tikka masla (1) and korma (1) were mentioned.

#### **4.10 Product attributes**

The product itself was studied by asking the participants about the overall experience eating and preparing the product. All 18 panel participants described the smell of the marinated shrimp as pleasant and good. The result on the taste experience for the marinated shrimp was more diverse. 12 participants said the shrimp tasted good, while four said they tasted ok and two did not like the taste of the shrimp at all.

A delicate appearance after preparation was the feedback from 13 participants. Four participants felt a delicate appearance only described the shrimp prior to cooking and two stated specifically that they were less delicate after preparation. Shrinkage was a

negative property for four people. A couple of comments made regarding the appearance were;

*“The shrimp had an even nice size...looked sorted by size...”*

*“The shrimp looked good for a frozen product”*

The consistency was described as nice and firm by 13 participants, while three said the shrimp were chewy. It was brought up by one participant that he noticed a difference in consistency between the frozen pack they used which had nice and firm shrimp (Lime & Curry kind) and the thawed pack with which resulted in soggy and chewy shrimp (Garlic & Herb kind). The other subject who used both a frozen and thawed packet did not mention any difference in consistency between the packs. Another participant stated the Lime & Curry shrimp was firmer than the Garlic & Herb shrimp, both used from a frozen state. One participant had this to say about the consistency of the product;

*“What surprised me was how fresh the marinated shrimp tasted, and that the consistency was firm, not chewy or soggy at all...”*

Next the participants gave their views and experience regarding the marinade itself. It was a divided view on the amount of marinade in the product. The amount of marinade was sufficient for nine participants where comments like this were common;

*“You can make a great sauce from the marinade, it was just right amount of marinade...gives you the possibility to remove and make a sauce if you want to...you can use it as a base....just add some sour cream, crème fraiche or cream and get a fantastic result”*

There was also a more negative attitude to the marinade. Eight participants felt there was too much marinade and instead of providing the shrimp with flavours, the marinade was more like an added sauce. A participant said;

*“It was like shrimp in a sauce, not with a marinade. The product was basically the shrimp accompanied by a very broth like sauce...”*

One participant had a hard time rating the amount of marinade because the only dish she made was a casserole, but she made the following statement;

*“It is difficult to rate the amount of marinade and spice because I tossed the shrimp in a ready made casserole...but it was very good...it was kind of bland without the shrimp and I could definitely taste the spice from the shrimp and marinade afterwards”*

Experiences on the spices in the marinade revealed a great span in personal preferences. For the Lime & Curry shrimp an opinion of too much spice (not too hot) was mentioned by six participants, five participants thought the spice was sufficient while one felt it was not spicy enough. For the Garlic & Herb shrimp five respondents felt the spice mix in the marinade was bland while 11 said they had adequate spice. One respondent said:

*“This is adult food...too much spice for the kids, I have to make dinners that the kids will eat...can’t make one for the adults and one for the kids”*

#### **4.11 Package design versus actual product**

The participants were also asked about their opinion regarding the design on the bag and the actual product inside. 12 respondents felt there was a correspondence between the bag and the product inside, everything looked fine and they were not disappointed, while three respondents felt there was no correlation at all and one was indifferent to the association. Some comments made on this issue were;

*“It does not necessarily have to be a relation between the appearance in the bag and the taste of the product...the product can taste much better than it looks on the packaging or the other way around..”*

*“...the packaging creates great expectations ...you expect big, fresh shrimp...and what you eventually get are rubber shrimp in a salty sauce....I was surprised by all the liquid that appeared when cooking...the packaging is definitely better than the product inside...and this creates a bad experience....”*

A question regarding consumer preferences for a window on the packaging was also brought up. Nine respondents said a window is not important to them when selecting a product. A window stripe on the back of the product would be ok for five respondents and four mentioned they like stripes but not on frozen products stating;

*“A frozen product seldom looks delicate and appetizing.....”*

The text and information on the bag was brought up next. 13 participants agreed there was sufficient information on the bag, while three admitted to not reading the information. All 13 said the information was easy to understand and one mentioned the bold text as a positive attribute. Two felt there was too much text on back.

14 respondents were positive to the instructions and eight said revealed not following the instructions at all. Three read the instructions during their second use of the product, one read the instructions afterwards, and one only read the instruction for microwaving. An interesting statement made was from the minority who did not read the information nor instruction on the bag;

*“Usage areas have to be clear cut for it to be a convenience product...there is no time to read all the text if you want an easy dinner solution”*

#### **4.12 Suggested improvements**

There were several suggestions made by the participants as to what could be done to make the product and usage variety and usage situations better.

Six respondents commented that the shrimp were smaller than expected while one said the shrimp were surprisingly large. The 200 gram bag size was mentioned as an appropriate size for one person by five participants while two mentioned the size was good because they had a small freezer, and one participant said the 200 gram bag was too big for a single person. Further four participants said they wanted a family size bag and three said a 250 gram bag could be a good option for them. One said a 1 kg bag could be smart. The bag was also described by a participant as perfect in size and environmentally friendly because it gave a small amount of trash after use. One

suggested selling the shrimp in box instead of bag because it would make it more attractive and easier to store in the freezer. A comment made regarding the product size was;

*“We used all four 200 gram bags for dinner, and we are a family of four with two children under the age of five. Maybe a family size or larger bag at a discounted price could be an option?”*

More recipes were requested on the bag by four participants, and a suggestion to put recipes as a sticker folded on the back which is common on meat products was made.

The ingredients list was difficult to understand for two participants when searching to see if there was flour or sugar added to the marinade. A desire for more natural additives even though it gives shorter shelf life was declared by one participant. Two participants had a hard time opening the bag and had to use a knife which they thought was a negative, while two thought having to use a knife was no problem at all.

*“I’d like more recipes on the packet so you have choice...especially when you’re not creative yourself...so all you have to do is pick one and you can move on..”*

Too much marinade was a negative aspect for two respondents when frying the shrimp, they were boiled instead of being fried and crispy. Three respondents commented that the shrimp lost a lot of water when heated which reduced size and increased amount of marinade. A suggestion of marinade on the side was mentioned after he said;

*“I tried to warm them quickly on high temperature the first time before I added the vegetables, but they released too much liquid, so the result was not good. Next time I did the vegetables first and added the shrimp right before they are done and the result was much better.”*

A taste of seawater and a salty product in general was an issue for three respondents, while one mentioned the Lime & Curry kind specifically. Three said there was not enough “taste of shrimp” in the product.

An industrial and bitter aftertaste in the shrimp in general were mentioned by two respondents, while three respondents singled out the Lime & Curry type and one pointed out the Garlic & Herb flavour had a few shrimp in the bag which left a bitter and unpleasant aftertaste. One respondent asked if there was sugar added to the Lime & Curry bag because they felt the shrimp and marinade was sweet. Two shared the idea of using fresh shrimp covered in marinade thinking the fresh shrimp would soak up more of the marinade so there isn't just a coating on the outside.

More marketing was cited and desired specifically by three respondents. Two participants pointed out never noticing it in the store and one said she had a hard time locating the product on occasions. A more visible internet address would be a plus for two respondents. One respondent felt it would be smart to remove the EFF logo (Norwegian Seafood Export Council) because he did not see the link between the Stella shrimp and EFF.

#### **4.13 Quality**

When asked about quality of the product I got the following answers and comments; Four thought the shrimp was a quality product. Positive mentions of single frozen shrimp (2), fresh looking shrimp (2), delicate appearance and surprisingly fresh taste (1) were made. One household said they noticed a difference in quality when they used frozen and thawed bags in their cooking. The frozen shrimp were firm while the thawed shrimp were more soggy and limp.

Negatives mentioned by a participant were variable shrimp size, variable shrimp quality shrimp due to some shrimp not tasting fresh, not great quality because the shrimp used are frozen brine shrimp, and a desire for a thicker marinade. Some comments made about the quality of the product were;

*“The product had good quality, but not the best because it is a frozen product. The shrimp were larger and better than expected...”*

*“Not a great quality product, but when you buy a frozen product you cannot expect a quality product either because it is a substitute for fresh products”*

*“I’m sceptical to salty products and products that have a lot of preservatives....are they really as healthy as they make themselves out to be?”*

#### **4.14 Consumer taste preferences**

The overall evaluation of a product was discussed when consumer preferences were brought up and I asked if they liked the product. There were 15 participants who said they liked the product in general. The remaining three participants said they did not like the taste or the experience with preparing and consuming the product.

During the conversation on how they liked the shrimp, 50 % of the participants declared they had a favourite marinade flavour preference. The Lime & Curry flavour was declared the best flavour by five participants, while another five participants liked the Garlic & Herb marinade best. The remaining half did not like one better than the other. One mentioned the Garlic & Herb flavour being below par, while two were positively surprised by the Lime & Curry seasoning.

*“I thought the product was great, we enjoyed it. It tasted and smelled good and was very easy to use..”*

*“The first experience was bad, the second was better...but at that time it was too late to change my mind and opinion about the product....”*

#### **4.15 Consumer expectations versus experience**

Towards the end I asked if their expectations were met after using the product. 72 % of the panellist said their expectations were met, where panellists 10 said the product was as good as expected and three said it was better than expected. Further five participants were disappointed by the product. On the subject of expectations versus experience some remarks were made;



*“Yes, yes, the product was as good as I thought it would be. I’m 100 % satisfied”*

*“I did not have great expectations since it is a frozen product and the product left me neither ecstatic nor disappointed, all in all I’m satisfied”.*

*“There was too big of a difference between the expectations and the end result after preparing and eating the shrimp....I was very disappointed”*

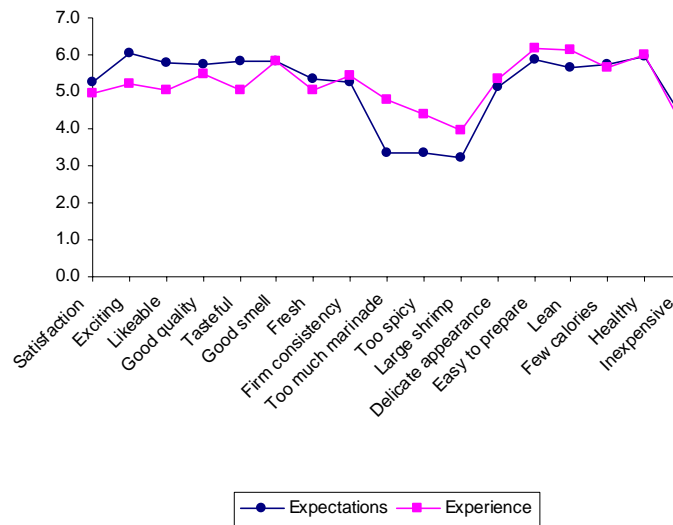


Figure 4.2: Comparison between panel expectations and experiences (n=18)

The first seven categories have a higher expectation rating, except the smell category which is identical with the experiences. The categories of satisfaction, excitement, likeability, quality, taste and freshness did not live up to the prior expectations. These categories received a lower rating after the product was used.

Next notability is the three categories of marinade amount, spice amount and shrimp size. These three have markedly lower expectation values compared to any other with average values of 3.3, 3.3 and 3.2. The panelists thought there would be small amounts of marinade and spice mixed with small shrimp. After the trial period there has been an

increase in values in all three categories. The panel increased their average values to 4.8, 4.4 and 3.9 giving the marinade and spice categories the two largest discrepancies between expectations and experience values in the questionnaire.

In the marinade category 11 of 18 panelists anticipated small or just right amounts of marinade in the bag. After the trial there was a sizeable change in the values. This group had the largest discrepancy between expectations to the product and the actual experience after use. After product use 15 of 18 panelists said there was either a right amount or too much marinade.

In the spice category the expectation by 50 % of the participants was there would be a small or just right amount of spice. The panelists stated after their experiences that the actual amount was higher than they had originally thought. In the experience survey 12 of 18 consumers stated the amount of spice was just right, not too bland nor too spicy. This is the largest compilation of answers, 12, in any category in either survey. This group had the second largest discrepancy between expectations and the actual experience.

In the shrimp size category the results are similar. Low values in the expectation category show assumption of small shrimp. After consumption the results show higher values as a result of larger shrimp than anticipated.

#### **4.16 Satisfaction**

As stated in chapter 4.15, 72 % of the participants said their expectations were met or exceeded, while 28 % said they were disappointed and their expectations were not met. At the same time when asked about satisfaction regarding the product the number of participants describing themselves as satisfied was higher, the level of overall satisfaction was 83 % (15 of 18 participants). A couple of statements made on the issue were;

*“It was a very good and really cheap product in my mind. The sauce is an extra surprise, in a positive way”*

*“A decent product I think I may buy again, but if another similar product hits the market I’d try them before I buy these shrimp again...”*

#### 4.17 Intention - repurchase

The majority, 13 panel participants, said they would use this product another time, three said maybe, and two were negative regarding using the product another time. The two who would not purchase or use the product again also stated they were dissatisfied with the product. The three saying maybe were a combination of dissatisfied (1) and satisfied (2) consumers. The remaining 14 participants who would repurchase the product all said they were satisfied with the experience and product.

Dinner was the number one occasion for future product use for 16 households while evening snack (5) and guests/weekend snacks (4) followed as potential events.

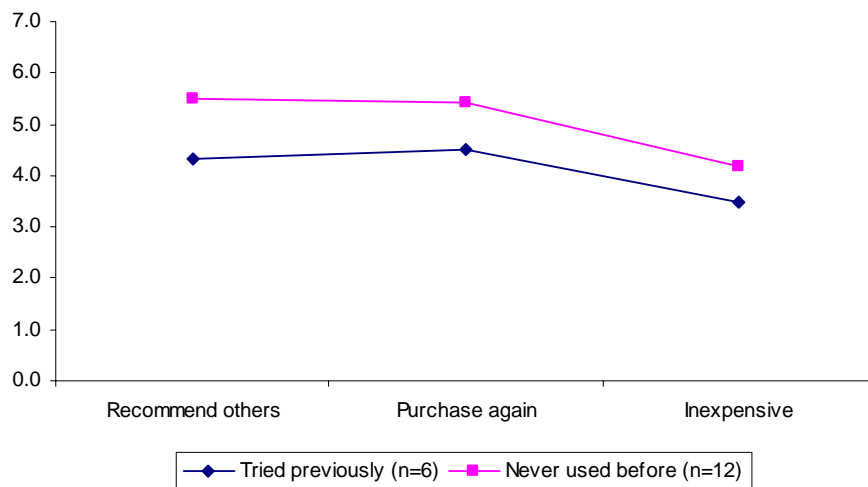


Figure 4.3: Recommendation, repurchase and price level for Stella marinated shrimp (n=18)

The average price suggested by the group who tried the product for the first time was 26,80 NOK. Two respondents did not answer the question. This correlates with the questionnaire where the group found the product less expensive than the respondents who had tried it before.

The average price suggested by the group who had used the product before suggested 24,90 NOK. They thought the product was more expensive. The experienced group also had lower values in the recommendation and purchase again categories, indicating less chance of recommendations and re-purchase compared to the first time users.

Some interesting statements made were;

*“Don’t think I’ll use just the shrimp as a main entrée for dinner...will use them in addition to something else...to give it something extra”*

*“Will not use another time...did not like them...either kind”*

*“I would not have tried the shrimp again if I did not have three additional packs to try out...the first trial and experience was not good...I think you have to learn how to use the product....”*



## **5.0 Discussion of results**

### **5.1 Background**

This chapter will discuss and analyze information the consumers provided through both the interview and questionnaire. The goal is to reveal the primary product usage areas, identify disconfirmation and evaluate the product.

After all the interviews and questionnaires were completed I could confirm that all the participants used at least two bags of the product samples during the trial period. More than half the participants used and consumed all four sample bags given to them.

### **5.2 Consumer expectations**

All of the participants, 100 %, had positive attitudes to the product sample of marinated shrimp given to them. They had high expectations and said the product looked appetizing, tasty, exciting and easy to prepare. The packaging and design were by the majority described as attractive or nice with positive mentions of the photos and instructions on the back.

Figure 4.2 graphically shows the participants answers from the written questionnaire. All the first five categories (satisfaction, exciting, likeable, good quality and tasteful) had high expectation ratings which all decreased in value after gaining experience through use and consumption of the product. This shows the product was not as likeable, tasteful, exciting or had the good quality the participants had hoped and expected. They were not as satisfied as they had predicted they would be before using the product either. This could be a result of expectations being too high or product performing poorly.

The three categories which got the lowest rating on Figure 4.2 were; shrimp size, marinade and spice. The participants thought the product would have a small or adequate amount of marinade and spice and small shrimp. After product use the ratings

for all three categories increased in value. The shrimp were larger than expected and the participants making note of this were positively surprised by this fact. The amount of marinade was described as sufficient for 50 % of the participants while 44 % said there was too much. The shrimp were hotter than originally anticipated with 2/3 of the participants agreeing the actual amount of spice was satisfactory. The marinade category had the biggest discrepancy between expectations and experience values in the questionnaire followed by the spice category in second.

### **5.3 Attitudes and family eating preferences**

The fondness of shrimp was evident during this research and shrimp was often mentioned as the favourite seafood species of all. This was also found in a study by Bjørklund and Bendiksen (2005). 11 participants mentioned a higher level of shrimp consumption during summer months due to fresh shell on shrimp, while about half of the participants mentioned using some fresh, frozen, brine shrimp, scampi or other seafood throughout the year. The recipes used were the same as the meals prepared with the marinated shrimp. It is likely the consumer can and will substitute the different shrimp products due to availability and preferences. The marinated shrimp were positively reviewed in this area because they add some variety and spice to the meals. They provide a delicate smell and good taste to the meal in which they are included.

The households with kids showed the children eating the shrimp along with their parents in five of the six cases. In these instances the food was made tailored towards the kids food preferences. At the same time the parents were content because the kids got something they liked to eat and the parents got a quick nutritious meal solution. This corresponds with findings from Olsen (2001a). Adults consumed the meals made in all the households. Family members took part in the meals in 12 households and friends were invited to eat in five households.

## 5.4 Associations on convenience

When asked about the aspect of convenience and ease of using the product 89 % of the participants agreed the marinated shrimp were easy to use and cook with. The product was described as a convenience product with no preparation necessary before heating. There is no thawing, cutting or most of all cleaning required with the product. It is already marinated and ready to use right out of the bag and the consumers liked these attributes. These statements coincide with Olsen (2001b) and statements that convenience proves to be a very important aspect of food choice.

Consumer use show very few participants planning ahead for the product usage variety and situation surrounding it. Instead they used the product as a last minute meal option. They seem most interested in saving time when choosing convenience products and deciding what's for dinner. According to this research the participants did not plan ahead for dinner often. Dinner was the number one choice when preparing and using the shrimp dinner. 83 % of all the dishes made were for dinner use, 15 % were snacks and 2 % were lunch options. This demonstrates little versatility and variety in usage situations and usage variety. Even though some consumers illustrated how the shrimp can be used in meals both for weekday dinners with the kids and as an entrée for dinner guests, the majority decided to use it mostly as part of a dinner entrée. Usage situation in this case is limited and does not show a lot of variation, as previously described by Ram and Jung (1990, 1991).

This is good news for the marinated shrimp. Since they are believed to be a convenience product, a potential increase in the areas of usage variety and usage situations could be evident. In the kitchen the choice could be shrimp as the main dish just as well as chicken or beef in most cases. But the obstacle for people is to obtain knowledge on how to use them and to be creative using the shrimp. The product and its attributes can be combined with almost any food and in a variety of combinations as seen in chapter 4.7. There are no limits to usage situations either, to use the product there are no needs for any special utensils, just a wok, frying pan or casserole. When they see how easy and versatile the shrimp are, consumers are providing very positive feedback regarding the product.



## **5.5 Creativity during food preparation**

61 % of participants felt they lacked creativity and seldom incorporated new and untraditional recipes which show little usage variety according to Shih and Venkatesh (2002). The sample of participants answered they would like to be more creative and try new recipes and dishes at home, but also say that they seldom do. Social gatherings and weekends seems to be the times when new ideas are tried out. Weekdays are mostly familiar dinner solutions where dinners are made on routine. There is not enough time, especially for the households with children, to experiment during the week to try out new meal solutions. They also need to consider the children's preferences and that limits the usage variety. The participant sample said they would like to be less conservative and traditional in their dinner options, but find it hard to change the pattern even though they say they would like more variety. These results are supported by Eriksen (2005) and Olsen (1989).

About 2/3 of the meal solutions made during this research were created without using any kind of recipe. The participants said they either used the shrimp as a substitute for chicken, pork or beef in dishes they had made before, combined the shrimp with what was available in the kitchen or just used their creative skills. The versatility of the shrimp is well known, but still a few said they tried brand new recipes or dinner solutions while using the shrimp. This was also evident in a study by Olsen (1989).

## **5.6 Usage area and prepared dishes**

The list and description of the meals made by the participants can give a pointer as to how the consumers evaluate the product and its usage areas. See complete list in chapter 4.7.

The meals made in this research were 83 % dinner entrees, 15 % snacks and 2 % lunch. The list of recipes and dishes suggested for future use is also interesting. Dinner was also the main objective for usage in the future. But an increased number of suggestions for shrimp usage in combinations with an evening snack, a side dish for dinner, or finger foods were evident after the participants had used and gained experience with the

product. Hence some participants saw the possibility to use the product outside of its proposed usage range as a dinner entrée and will try to expand usage variety next time they prepare the product. New usage areas, better experiences and increased use are discussed in a study by Ram and Jung (1991). Shih and Venkatesh (2002) support these theories also.

The most used and prepared dish during this research was wok. A total of 16 wok dishes were made with or without vegetables, pasta and rice. Feedback and reasoning for preparing this dish was ease and time. While the pasta or rice was cooking, vegetables were heated in the wok and the shrimp added to warm up the last few minutes. The second most prepared item was tortillas and shrimp. Six different meal versions were made with the same basic recipe. Fillings and sauces added varied, but all included different vegetables as well as the shrimp. The third most popular way to prepare the shrimp was along with fish. In these five instances the shrimp was not used as the primary dinner entrée but rather as a topping or side dish to the primary entrée which was fish or fish soup. Following next was a combination of shrimp and baguettes. The participants used plain or garlic baguettes with the shrimp as a topping. These options were made for dinner. Afterwards the participants said next time they will use this idea as more of an evening or weekend snack instead. Not enough food to feed a person or family for dinner. Two participants used the shrimp in a pasta sauce and consumed it with pasta for dinner. The rest of the meals were harder to categorize. Many participants also mentioned using baked goods as a side dish along with their dinner. Maybe it is a result of most Norwegians using fresh shrimp along with bread.

The wok and tortilla dishes are very convenient and quick to prepare dinner options. Both are ethnic inspired exotic recipes and are fairly modern in the Norwegian society. Looking at the list of prepared meals, it looks like the meal options containing fish were the most time consuming and the more traditional Norwegian dishes on the top of the list. These findings show little variety in functional usage for the non durable good, marinated shrimp, in the different usage situations. 64 % of all the dishes made were divided between the two most popular categories, wok and tortilla. Research done by Ram and Jung (1990) support these claims.

## 5.7 Experience from prior usage

Of the people in the panel six of them told me they had personally prepared and used the product previously. An additional six had heard about, seen the product in the stores or eaten it before but never actually tried it out themselves. For the last six participants the product was completely new experience. A suggestion to increase marketing to get product awareness was brought up at several occasions. They were surprised the product was available in the stores because they had never seen the product itself, any marketing ads or other promotional materials attracting attention to the product.

I tried to make a distinction between the early adopters (6) and early majority (12) in this experiment by asking if they had used the product earlier. The six consumers with prior product experience had made the following dishes previously; three wok's for dinner, one wok for a late snack, one cabaret and one shrimp with rice. After this product trial the results showed that three of the participants tried and made a new dish in addition to make the dish previously made with the shrimp. One participant experimented and tried four new dishes, while two tried out and experimented with two new dishes only. Shih and Venkatesh (2002) state consumers are motivated to seek novelty and to be creative on different levels in everyday life, but it takes creativity and curiosity to move away from traditional patterns. In this survey half of the experienced users broke away and tried only new dinner and snack solutions while the other half also tried something new but still made the same recipe they used the first time they tried the product. This result shows both the aspect of product specialization and user confidence that Shih and Venkatesh (2002) have proposed. Product specialization can lead to the same meal being prepared several times, while product experience can direct a better understanding of the product and it's usage areas so that the second and third time the product is used something new is made. Consumer product confidence can make experimenting easier. These experienced users did not show any major differences compared to the first time users in how they prepared the food and dishes made.

Of the group of six participants who had used the product before, three describes themselves as creative when cooking while the other half said they seldom tried new recipes and meal options. Of the self proclaimed creative cooks, all three made the same dish they had prepared during their previous encounter with the product in addition to

new meal combinations. Of the less creative group one participant prepared the same dish as she had made previously, one tried two new meal solutions while the last made at least three new dishes. She could not remember the 4<sup>th</sup> dinner option she made during the interview. The early adopters were not as creative as perceived by the theory from Ram and Jung (2004). Four of six participants, 66 %, chose to make a dish previously tried out before in addition to new recipes while the remaining two tried new ideas only. Based on these findings there was little variety in usage variety and usage situations between the early adopters and early majority.

## **5.8 Attitudes toward future product usage**

Suggestions for future use revealed some interesting facts. The participants mentioned using the marinated shrimp in mostly the same areas and dishes as already experienced. As seen in chapter 4.9 fish and seafood dishes and ethnic meal options were mentioned the most. Tortillas were just mentioned by one participant. It is hard to say why because the experiences with the tortillas were all positive and the participants expressed clearly that they liked it.

Also 14 participants said they would make at least one of the dishes made during this experiment again in the future in addition to other meal options. Three participants mentioned they would prepare the shrimp in a new way next time while the last participant said she would not use the product again and did not make any suggestions for future meal solutions. These responses coincide with previous theory discussed by Shih and Venkatesh (2002) as to people wanting to be more creative and curious but at the same time end up with making old recipes over again because it is familiar and the outcome known. Lastly I asked about other flavours and taste combinations possibilities for the marinade. The majority of the participants said they would, as a result of this experience, be positive to try other flavours and even other products from Stella. This shows an interest and desire to make an effort in sampling new food products. It corresponds with Shih and Venkatesh (2002) findings.

## 5.9 Product attributes

The product attributes are important properties for usage variety and usage situations. As Zaichkowsky (1985) wrote, there has to be a need or want by the consumer present for the consumer to be willing to use a product. The product attributes are the different areas of the product the consumer can experience and consume in this matter.

The participants all agreed that the shrimp smelled good and 16 of 18 participants agreed they liked the taste of them as well. The attribute relating to appearance was also well received except for a few consumers who felt the shrimp shrunk a lot in size during warm up and thereby lost some of its initial appeal. The same scenario can be seen in the attribute of consistency in the shrimp. Nice and firm were the overall answers there with a few exceptions of a soggy and chewy product. It is worth mentioning that one participant who used the same wok to prepare the shrimp noticed a difference in consistency between a frozen and a thawed pack. The frozen pack of Lime & Curry shrimp were nice and firm while the thawed packet of Garlic & Herb shrimp was soggy and chewy. The instructions on the package say the consumer can use the product from both a frozen and thawed state. Another participant stated they also mentioned the Lime & Curry shrimp was firmer than the Garlic & Herb shrimp. In this case they were both used from a frozen state and prepared in a frying pan. Since there were only two participants mentioning any significant difference in consistency it is hard to say if it could be a quality variance between the flavours or if it was the temperature of the shrimp when used that made an impact. The two participants who only used the products thawed did not have any negative remarks towards the consistency of the shrimp. They used both kinds of shrimp.

The shrimp had more marinade than originally perceived and thought, and the amount of marinade got a mixed review. 50 % of participants thought there was a sufficient and good amount of marinade, while 44 % were surprised and had a negative attitude towards what they meant was too much marinade. This was an attribute which was viewed as very negative because it was described as setting limits to product usage. Instead of the shrimp being soaked and flavoured by the marinade, participants felt the shrimp were just coated by the mixture and was after heating laying in a sauce which made the product hard to combine and use in the different meal options planned. Too much marinade is unfortunate and was described as making the shrimp soggy, the

shrimp being boiled in the sauce and also limiting the usage areas of the shrimp considerably. Marinade on the side or prepared separately could be an option.

The levels of spiciness of the shrimps were also influenced by very individual preferences and I got responses of too much spice, adequate spice and too little spice. The lime and curry flavour had people disagreeing the most among the two categories. A negative experience worth mentioning here was the amount of salt in the product encountered by some participants. This seemed to overshadowed other potential negative thoughts and feelings about the product. The salt was their main concern. With no expectations for the product being salty this was an attribute the consumer felt helpless encountering.

The spices were thought to have an impact on usage variety. The more familiar the consumer is with the spice the easier it is to incorporate the marinated shrimp in meals, or create meals around. Lime was thought to have more usage areas for example compared to the combo Lime & Curry. Curry was said to limit the usage areas and variety because curry has a very distinct taste and has a perceived usage area mainly in Indian cooking. Another reason lime could be popular is because lime is a more familiar flavouring and often associated usage of shrimp. This is because lemon frequent part of the traditional way of consuming shrimp in Norway, fresh shell on shrimp served with bread.

The consumer taste preferences were divided into three groups, 28 % favouring the Lime & Curry flavour, 28 % favouring the Garlic & Herb kind, while 44 % responded they did not have a preference on flavour.

## **5.10 Product packaging**

The packaging is the products face outward to the consumers. It is important there is a correlation between the product photograph and description outside the bag and the actual product inside. Consumers do not like to feel cheated or disappointed when they open the product packaging and are faced with the actual product inside. They want the product to look as good as the package and photo illustrates. In this research 66 % of the

respondents said they believed it was an association between the packaging and the actual product inside. A minority experienced no link between the two and were visibly disappointed and felt let down by the glossy photos. These frustrations can lead to a negative disconfirmation due to these expectations created by the packaging. This is in compliance with prior research by Oliver (1980), Niedrich et al., (2005) and Oliver and Swan (1989).

To reduce disappointments and frustrations among consumers 28 % of the participants mentioned having a window stripe on the back of the package to gain visibility of the product. They felt a window could be positive, reducing uncertainty regarding product appearance. It is a challenge that the product is frozen which can make the product appear less delicate. Ice in the bag is also a factor 22 % of the participants felt could hurt the product more than the window would help. The remaining 50 % of the participants said a window is of no importance to them before selecting and using a product.

The product is sold in a 200 gram bag and there were suggestions to increase the bag size due to a widely held belief that one bag would not be enough for two people as a dinner entrée. In addition households with children would need more than one bag as well. All in all a family size bag was suggested along with a 250 gram bag and a 1 kg bag of marinated shrimp.

To use a product and its attributes with success the consumer has to have knowledge of how the product can be best utilized and works. In this case it was interesting to see that while 78 % of the participants were positive to the cooking instructions written on the back of the bag only 44 % actually followed them during their first encounter preparing the shrimp.

Three participants did not bother to read the instructions until the second time around after feeling their initial cooking experience had not been as successful as they had hoped and liked it to be. This shows how important it is to use the product and its attributes in a way that leads to an enjoyable result and makes the participants have a positive experience with the product. This coincides with research conducted by Ram and Jung (1990).

Ram and Jung (1990) states that inadequate information on product packaging can lead to reduced usage frequency and usage variety because it creates an inability to understand and utilize the product to its full potential. This can lead to frustrations and dissatisfaction. 72 % of participants in this experiment felt the information on the bag was sufficient and easy to read and understand. Two thought it was too much information and thought it was hard to read. These two respondents also stated throughout the interview that they did not like the product, were disappointed by the shrimp and experience and in the end dissatisfied.

There was positive feedback on the recipes available on the product bag and a few participants said they would enjoy a few more if possible. Collecting recipes from the internet was discovered as the number one way to gather this information and gain inspiration. Maybe more emphasis or a more visible web site on the product packaging can be useful along with maybe adding recipes. This could be important knowledge worth taking into consideration and taking advantage of.

The packaging, label and design were issued little mention in this research, but the participants were eager and willing to talk about those issues. They were very preoccupied and concerned with the appearance, size, colour, photos and illustrations on the product bags.

## **5.11 Quality**

The participants thought it was hard to define quality. I asked what they thought overall about the quality of the product. Attributes mentioned were mostly related to appearance and taste. Only four participants said they considered the marinated shrimp a quality product. The remaining nine participants who also liked the shrimp said the product was good, but would not consider it a quality product because it was frozen. For them great quality was something they related to fresh products. This was also their opinion for vegetables, meat and other seafood. The overall quality includes the aspects of health and nutrition, which is important when selecting dinner options, was considered inferior to the fresh shell on shrimp. This is supported by Olsen (1989).



## **5.12 Product disconfirmation**

The link between expectations and experience was talked about by the participants. The overall experience with preparing and consuming the product compared to their initial expectations was also described in the questionnaire.

During the interview 72 % of the participants felt their expectations were either met or exceeded while using the product. The remaining 28 % of the panel mentioned they were overall disappointed with the product. They had high expectations due to the exciting and nice packaging which got a lot of positive feedback, but the shrimp did not quite rise to the same level and stand out like the wrapping did.

Even though 28 % of the participants said they were disappointed with the product and experience, the number for overall dissatisfaction was only 17 %. These numbers reveal that two of the consumers who stated they were dissatisfied with the product still felt satisfied and said it was a positive experience. 83 % of the participants felt satisfied with the product. There is a link between the expectations and experiences and the level of satisfaction. At the same time there seems to be a link between the participants who liked the shrimp and the ones who did not. Of the group participating in this experiment the same 83 % of participants who said they liked the product also said they were satisfied with the product. The same 17 % of participants that were dissatisfied with the product and experience stated they did not like it either. This corresponds to studies by Oliver (1980), Niedrich et al., (2005), Oliver et al., (1997). It also describes hedonic consumption of product use described by Ram and Jung (1990).

## **5.13 Intention, re-purchase and recommendation**

If the marinated shrimp shall succeed on the Norwegian dinner market it has to overcome and be able to penetrate the traditional dinner making modus of Norwegians. It has to be exciting and easy to use and at the same time be appealing to people so that they buy it and actually try it for the first time. Then after the initial consumption, the experience hopefully leads to a satisfied customer who will buy and consume the product again and implement it as part of a dinner routine.

72 % of the participants had a positive attitude and liked the product. They were also inclined to repeat usage and recommend the product to others. This was described by Westbrook (1980). The positive attitude and feelings towards the product also correlates to hedonic consumption of product use by Ram and Jung (1990).

When asked about the outlook for potential purchase and product usage 89 % of the participants answered yes or maybe. They were very confident in the product and would recommend the product to friends and family. Only two were pessimistic to future use, consumption and recommendation. There was a small difference in values between the first time and previous users of the product. The experienced group had lower values in the recommendation and purchase again categories, indicating less chance of recommendations and re-purchase compared to the first time users.

The number of participants positive towards re-purchase and recommendations, 89 %, is higher than the number of consumers, (83 %), which stated they were fully satisfied with the product and experience. This result shows that one dissatisfied participant still has a potential intention to purchase and use the product again. This corresponds to Oliver (1980, 1997).

## **5.14 Price**

Households with children perceived the product as most expensive, while households without children perceived the product as most affordable. In another comparison, previous users suggested a lower price for the product than first time user, 24,90 NOK to 26,80 NOK when they were asked to set their own price for the product. The general consensus was that the product was fairly priced at 29,50 NOK.



## **6.0 Conclusions and recommendations**

### **6.1 Theoretical implications**

All the participants were eager and positive to try the test product, Stella marinated shrimp. They said it looked exciting, appetizing, tasty and easy to use. The expectations were high.

There was little variety in product use as 64 % of the meals made with the marinated shrimp were either a wok or tortilla dish. The most used and prepared dish during this research was wok with a total of 16 dishes. The second most prepared item was tortillas and shrimp with six different meal versions made. The third most popular way to prepare the shrimp was along with fish and they were used in five dishes. In these instances the shrimp was not used as the primary dinner entrée but rather as a topping or side dish to the primary entrée which was fish or fish soup. Following next was a combination of shrimp and baguettes which made up three meals. 83 % of the meal options created was made for dinner use revealing little variety in usage situations. There was also little usage variety discovered between previous and first time users when preparing food.

The participants had a desire to try and be more creative, but few made an effort to change the usual dinner pattern. This was true for both previous and first time users. Participants were positive to convenience products in general, mostly because they were interested in saving time when preparing food. 89 % said the marinated shrimp were easy to use.

The product evaluation discovered that 83 % of panel participants were satisfied with the marinated shrimp after the trial period. In addition 89 % said they would purchase and recommend the product to others in the future. Minimal differences between the three different household groups selected to participate in the research were found in the evaluation of the product.

## 6.2 Practical implications

People often need inspiration to be creative and additional recipes and meal suggestions on the product packet can be very helpful. 64 % of the meal solutions made during this research were done without using any kind of recipe. With a visible recipe suggestion on the packaging the consumer can see which additional ingredients are needed for a meal and pick them up at the same time. This way the consumer does not have to think about cooking ideas and recipes, just the preparation of the food. More emphasis on a website, with additional product information and cooking suggestions, could be an advantage for the product packaging and sales.

The marinade category had the biggest discrepancy between expectations and experience values in the questionnaire followed by the spice category in second. After use there were comments of too much marinade. A solution could be keeping the marinade separate from the shrimp and let the consumer mix them. Including a sauce to serve on the side or an extra packet of spices could also be a suggestion to customize flavour. Instead of coating the shrimp while frozen the producer could use fresh shrimp, cover them in spices and then freezing them afterwards. This way the amount of water and liquid released may be reduced.

The participants were positive to new flavours of marinade and other convenient seafood products. The price was agreeable, but it would be an advantage if the price could be reduced. If there is an increase of availability throughout Norway, can production and cost be reduced? A steady supply of shrimp can provide good quality shrimp year around and help production costs. In addition reliable deliveries of shrimp can help the concern about variable quality on the shrimp. Quality differences were mentioned both between the flavour varieties and frozen and thawed state.

### **6.3 Limitations and suggestions to future research**

The results collected may be useful for future research and scientific development. The product can be improved and there is also opportunity for an expansion in usage variety and usage situations. A quantitative study with a representative and larger sample could be done in other cities to discover product usage, explore taste tests and product evaluations. The taste preferences could look at potential differences in product taste or quality when prepared thawed or frozen. Taste tests could also discover preferences if fresh shrimp were used in the marinade.

There are a few limitations to this research. The number and choice of participants are not representative and cannot be generalized due to time and money restraints. Another limitation is the participants themselves. They could have answered incompletely because they were bored, did not remember or were no longer interested in the investigation providing errors. Lastly the data reduction and collecting of information during the interviews were done by the researcher. There could be subjective factors and human errors influencing this process even though the researcher tried to work systematically and limit them.



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### Appendix 1

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# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Interview guide**

The main goal for this survey and investigation is to gain new insight into the product usage of Stella marinated shrimp through your experiences and thoughts after preparing, using and eating the product.

Your views and experiences of the overall product and also preparation of the Stella marinated shrimp will be looked at with interest. Product usage of a new product is important and how customers look at and use a product can help producers improve the product via this feedback.

There are no right or wrong answers and any information including advantages/disadvantages you can share about the product is appreciated.

To assist and help me during the further progression and sorting of the data I will ask your permission to approve use of a mini tape recorder to ease my work during the interviews.

Honesty and sincerity are important for the survey, so please feel free to ask questions if you have problems with anything or something makes you feel uncomfortable.

Your identity and all data will be confidentially handled at all times.

Best regards

Anne Katrine Sorensen

## Part I

## Consumer Expectations:

Questions asked at point of delivery of product.

- **What are your initial thoughts and first impression of the product?**

Exciting, easy to prepare, convenient, appetizing, healthy, nutritious, accessibility in the stores, brand recognition, social reference, recommended by others before, any influence and/or misrepresentation of the product, positive/negative attitude?

- **Was there something you immediately liked or disliked?**

What? Why?

- **How do you think the product will perform?**

Any questions or concerns prior to using the product?

Attributes of taste, function, preparation and overall encounter with the product.

Taste, healthy, texture, smell, size, appearances

## Questionnaire 1

The questionnaire will cover product expectations and initial thoughts and will be completed upon receiving the product.

Please use the evaluation scale and circle the appropriate number which you most accurately describes your feelings towards the product.

1a). How would you rate and describe

**Your expectations and thoughts of the product upon receipt:**

### EVALUATION SCALE

Will be dissatisfied	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Will be satisfied
Seems boring/dull	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Seems exciting
Will dislike	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Will like
Poor quality	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Good quality
Will taste bad	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Will taste good
Will smell bad	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Will smell good
Does not look fresh	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Looks fresh
Looks soggy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Looks firm
Not enough marinade	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Too much marinade
Not enough spice	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Too spicy
Small shrimp	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Large shrimp
Unappetizing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Appetizing
Hard to prepare	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Easy to prepare
Seems fatty	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Seems lean
Many calories	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Few calories
Seems unhealthy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Seems healthy
Looks expensive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Looks inexpensive

**Background information:**

Please complete the following questions with a cross in the box which describes you.

Sex:            Male             Female

Age:           

Marital Status:            Married             Single

Children in the household, yes if so how many

## Part II

## Consumer Experience:

Questions asked and discussed after use of product.

- **Did you use the marinated shrimp?**
- **Did you enjoy cooking with the marinated shrimp?**

Was it a positive experience?

- **When did you use the product?**

Was it a planned event? Lunch, dinner, snack?

Which usage areas did the shrimp get included in?

How did you use the shrimp? Frozen or thawed?

Which dishes?

Which ingredients were used/added?

(rice, pasta, tacos, tortillas, salads, stews, soups, sauces, dips or breads)

Heated in casserole or pan? Cooked or fried?

Did you use a recipe? Where did you get the recipe?

- **When you cook do you try new recipes or use mainly with old and/or traditional recipes?**

Do you consider yourself creative or curious when cooking? Try new combinations and items?

Where do you get inspiration for cooking....cook books, TV, magazines, friends?

Do you use a lot of shrimp when cooking? For what purpose. Experiences?

What other usage situations could you see the shrimp in or would you try in the future?

Do you think you would/could use the shrimp in other recipes?



Do you think they would be easy to mix/match into more traditional Norwegian recipes?

- **Were the marinated shrimp easy to use?**

Do you think you save time using the product?

Do you think you saved energy by using the product? (physical and mental)

Would you consider it a convenience product for meal preparation?

Ease of preparation, needs only 2-3 min reheating

- **Did you enjoy eating the product?**

Did they taste, smell good? Appear delicious? Were they soggy or firm? Too little/too much marinade? Too spicy/not enough spice?

Who ate the product? Adults/children...Family/friends?

- **Packaging/Design**

Design correlates to the product inside?

Size, easy to open, freshness, colour/picture, eye-catching

Is it a barrier that the consumers cannot see/view the product through the packaging?

Did the package give you all the information you needed? Easy to understand?

Did you follow the instructions? Why/why not?

Were they adequate?

If not, what was difficult to understand?

What could be improved?

Which experiences and thoughts were made during this process?

Will you use the product again? Maybe/yes/no? For dinner?? What would you make?

Why/why not?

**Brand/Label. “Stella”**

Have you heard about the product?

Does the label and brand name mean anything to you?

Via papers, seen in store, recommended friends?

Have you used the product previously?

If yes,

What occasion did you use the product in and what did you make with the shrimp?

Would you buy other products from “Stella”?

**Product satisfaction/dissatisfaction**

- **What do you associate with good quality?**

Did the product have these quality requirements?

What didn't you like?

Improvements....what was something missing?

Bag size? zip-locks? fresh shrimp? Flavours? Size? Quality?

- **Did you like the marinated shrimp?**

Yes/no? Why

- **Did the product do as well as you thought?**

Overall and final thought of the experiment and product.....

Are you satisfied?

## Questionnaire 2

Please complete it after preparation, use and consumption of the shrimp. It will be collected and an in depth interview regarding consumer experiences and evaluation will be conducted at the same time.

Please use the evaluation scale and circle the appropriate number which you most accurately describes your feelings towards the product.

1b). How would you rate and describe

**Your evaluations and experiences with the product after use and consumption:**

### EVALUATION SCALE

Dissatisfied	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Satisfied
Boring/dull	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Exciting
Disliked	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Liked
Poor quality	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Good quality
Tasted bad	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Tasted good?
Smelled bad	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Smelled good
Did not look fresh	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Looked fresh
Looked soggy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Looked firm
Not enough marinade	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Too much marinade
Not enough spice	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Too spicy
Small shrimp	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Large shrimp
Unappetizing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Appetizing
Hard to prepare	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Easy to prepare
Were fatty	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Were lean
Many calories	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Few calories
Seemed unhealthy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Seemed healthy
Looked expensive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Looked inexpensive

**Intensions**

2). Based on your experiences would you recommend the product to others?

EVALUATION SCALE

Would not recommend      1 2 3 4 5 6 7      Would definitely recommend

3). Based on you experiences would you purchase the product yourself?

EVALUATION SCALE

Will not buy the product      1 2 3 4 5 6 7      Will definitely buy the product

**Price**

4). One 200gram bag of The “Stella” frozen marinated shrimp cost 29.50 NOK at Coop OBS! How would you consider the price?

EVALUATION SCALE

Too expensive      1 2 3 4 5 6 7      Too inexpensive/cheap

5). Using your evaluation of the product, how would you price the product? \_\_\_\_kroner.

**Previous experience**

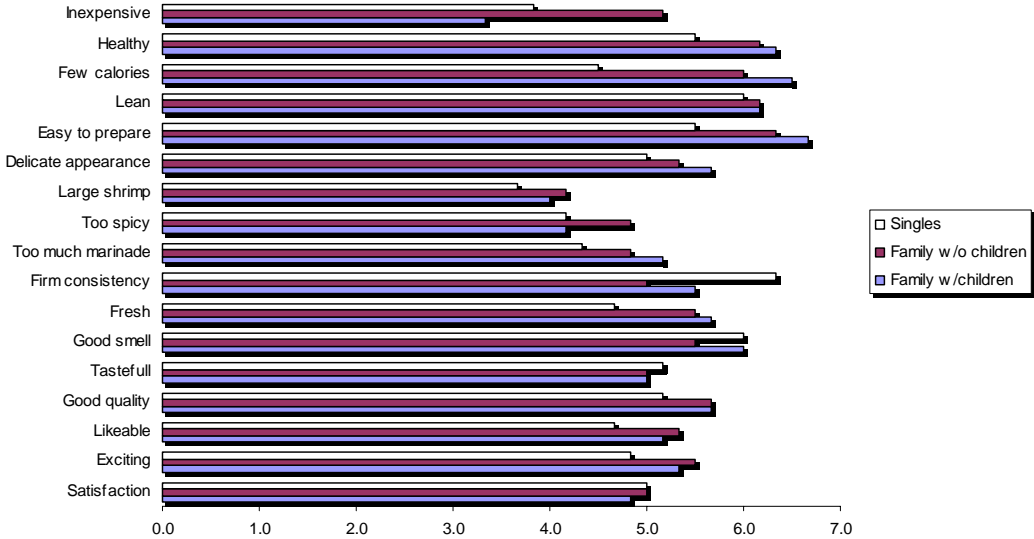
6). Had you used this specific product line before?

No, I have not used previously       Yes, I have used previously



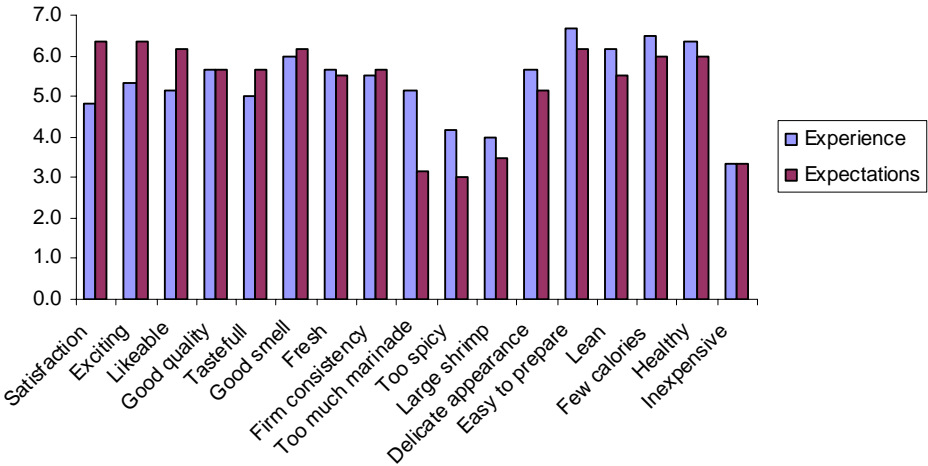
# APPENDIX 2

## A graphical presentation of experiences



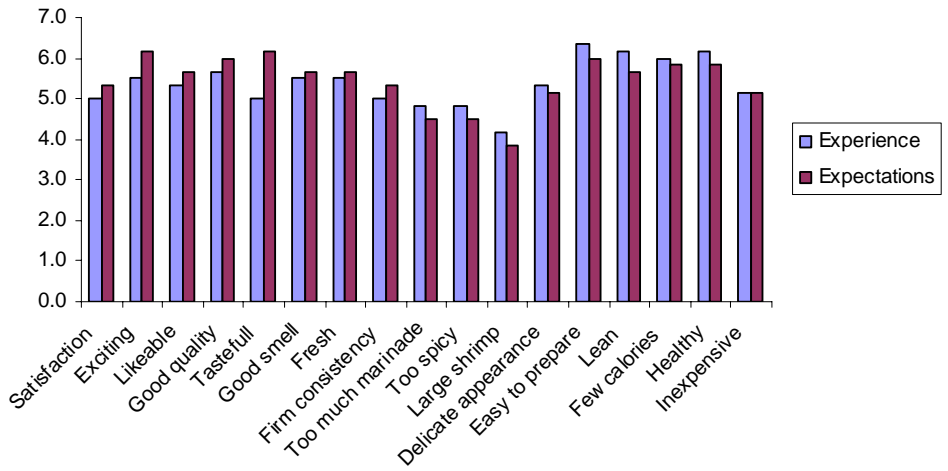
Consumer experiences after consumption (n=18)

## A graphical presentation of expectations versus experiences in households with children



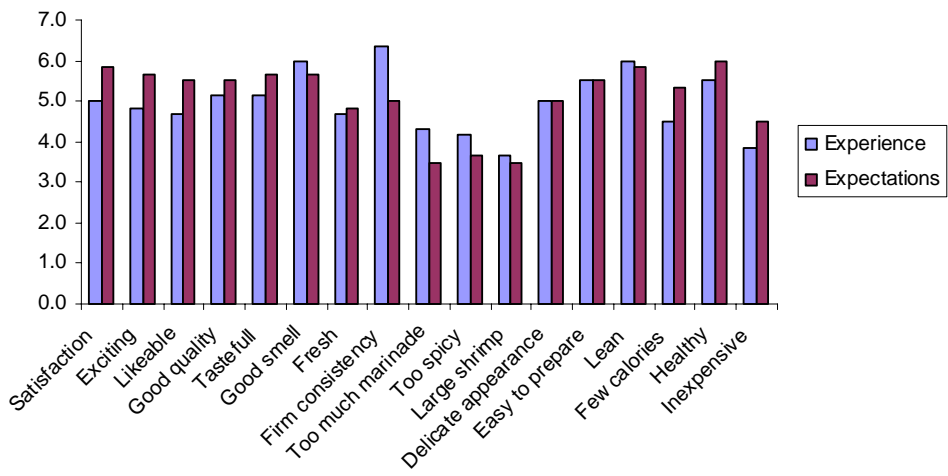
Expectations versus experiences in households with children

**A graphical presentation of expectations versus experiences in households without children**



*Expectations versus experiences in households without children*

**A graphical presentation of expectations versus experiences in single households**



*Expectations versus experiences in single households*

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Stella Polaris**

Stella Polaris AS was originally established in 1968 under the name Lenvik Fiskeindustri AS. At that time Lenvik Fiskrindustri's main business was fish processing, but from 1984 the production included shrimp as well. From 1989 all production was focused on cooked and peeled cold water shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*).

Lenvik Fiskeindustri AS changed its name to Stella Polaris AS on January 1, 2002. The production facilities are in Kårvikhamn, approximately 22 km north of Finnsnes in Troms county, Norway.

The sales office, Norway Prawns AS, has facilities located in Tromsø and Stockholm, and is responsible for client relations. Customers are retail and catering businesses in England, Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

Stella Polaris production facilities are of high standards and in compliance with product- and food safety rules and regulations.

Stella Polaris is certified by the quality standard of BRC (British Retail Consortium).

### **Stella marinated shrimp**

Stella marinated shrimp is a fairly new product and currently the only in its kind on the Norwegian market. Product development started in 2001 and by September 1, 2004 the finished product was ready for sale in COOP Obs! and COOP Mega stores in northern Norway. Stella marinated shrimp come in three varieties; Garlic & Herbs, Chili & Cilantro, Lime & Curry and Dill & Herbs. The shrimp are sold cooked and single frozen in 200 gram bags. Before consumption all they require is heating for 2-3 minutes.