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BUYING BEHAVIOR OF A CONSUMER USING GLUTEN FREE PRODUCTS IN FINLAND

– Case Company X

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BACHELOR´S THESIS | ABSTRACT
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Gluten free diet has been traditionally used for treatment of celiac disease but it has lately, especially in the last five to ten years, became very popular among people that do not suffer from this autoimmune disorder called celiac disease. Eating gluten free means giving up on all products that have even traces of wheat, barley or rye. This includes more or less all bread, pastas, pizzas and any deep fried products out there. These popular grains must be replaced with something and the most commonly used are naturally gluten free grains like rice, corn, buckwheat, millet, amaranth and quinoa. (Arla. 2016. Gluteeniton ruokavalio)

The objective of this study is to understand the buying behavior of a consumer that uses mostly gluten free products in daily bases and to help companies in this sector to serve their potential customer better.

The research was done by reviewing literature on relevant topics and applying quantitative method to collect data. The survey included 34 questions and was completed by 2 414 respondents buying gluten free products. Comparing the results of the survey with the literature part created the conclusions.

Consumers appreciate taste and quality above all. Price and shelf life is important as well. Over 70% of the respondents prefer fresh products and more than 60% favour naturally gluten free products. Three in four respondents were content with the size of the packages.

The research was done in cooperation with one Finnish company manufacturing gluten free products but any manufacturer of aforementioned products can apply the findings and practically any manufacturer of consumer foods that has their products available in retail stores can use parts of it.

KEYWORDS:

Gluten free, celiac, gluten free product, marketing, consumer behavior

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GLUTEENITTOMIA TUOTTEITA KÄYTTÄVÄN KULUTTAJAN OSTOKÄYTTÄYTYMINEN SUOMESSA

Gluteenitonta dieettiä on perinteisesti käytetty keliakian hoidossa mutta viime aikoina, erityisesti viimeisen 50 vuoden aikana siitä on tullut suosittu myös sellaisten ihmisten keskuudessa jotka eivät keliakiaa sairasta. Gluteeniton ruokavalio tarkoittaa luopumista kaikesta jossa on edes jäämiä vehnästä, ohrasta ja rukiista. Tähän sisältyy enemmän tai vähemmän kaikki leivät, pastat, pizzat ja leivitetyt sekä uppopaistetut tuotteet. Nämä allergisoivat viljat on korvattava jollain ja suosituimpia ovat luontaisesti gluteenittomat viljat kuten riisi, maissi, hirssi, tattari, amarantti ja kvinoa. (Arla. 2016. Gluteeniton ruokavalio)

Tämän tutkimuksen päämäärä on ymmärtää sellaisen kuluttajan ostokäyttämistä joka käyttää tai ostaa enimmäkseen gluteenittomia tuotteita ja auttaa alan teollisuutta palvelemaan potentiaalista asiakastaan paremmin.

Tutkimus tehtiin käymällä läpi alakohtaista kirjallisuutta ja artikkeleita eri lähteistä sekä keräämällä quantitatiivista dataa kyselyn avulla. Kyselyyn sisältyi 34 kysymystä ja siihen vastasi 2 414 gluteenittomia tuotteita ostavaa henkilöä. Johtopäätökset tehtiin kyselyn vastausten sekä kirjallisuusosion perusteella.

Kuluttajat arvostavat makua ja laatua ylitse muiden. Hinta ja säilyvyys ovat myös tärkeitä. Yli 70% vastaajista suosii tuoreita tuotteita ja yli 60% luontaisesti gluteenittomia. Kolme neljästä vastaajasta oli tyytyväinen pakkausten kokoihin.

Tutkimus tehtiin yhteistyössä suomalaisen yrityksen kanssa joka valmistaa gluteenittomia tuotteita mutta löydökset sopivat teoriassa myös minkä tahansa gluteenittomia tuotteita valmistavan ja myyvän yrityksen avuksi. Osaa tutkimuksesta voidaan käyttää myös käytännössä minkä tahansa yrityksen toimesta jolla on tuotteita vähittäismyynnissä kaupoissa.

ASIASANAT:

Gluteeniton, keliakia, gluteeniton tuote, markkinointi, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

AD	anno domini
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
TV	television

1 INTRODUCTION

Food and eating is part of both nature and culture and that is why the risks and danger involved are socially constructed and on the other hand biological facts. The increasing selection and different possibilities to eat outside of home make the choices increasingly complicated: consumers face the problem of choosing the food constantly. (Leskinen et al. 2005. 121.)

Grocery shopping becomes arduous with allergies. Finding suitable products takes time especially in the beginning and they might not even be in the selection of local market or the familiar convenience store. The selection in different store varies greatly but in general big markets have a good selection of products. Nowadays even the smaller convenience stores offer a selection of gluten free products. Bigger stores tend to have a lot better selection and lower prices. (Paganus and Voutilainen. 2001. 48.)

To understand gluten free food and its market potential, one must first understand the reason for its existence. In this first part of introduction I will briefly explain celiac disease with medical notations, followed by the gluten free food diet of today and the vast ever-growing markets of it.

Nowadays it has almost become a trend to eat gluten free food. Gluten free diet is one of the hottest diets at the moment and it seems to be getting even more supporters (Helsingin Sanomat. 2013). Food based reality TV shows are becoming more and more popular. TV is the source of trends for many of us and food trends are not any different. According to Mäki et al. (2006) and Braly and Hoggan (2002) celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder of the small intestine that occurs in genetically predisposed people of all ages. Usually this happens from middle infancy onward. Symptoms include pain and discomfort in the digestive tract, chronic constipation and diarrhea, anemia and fatigue. These may also be absent and there have been symptoms in other organ systems described as well. Vitamin deficiencies are quite often noted in people with celiac disease due to the reduced ability of the small intestine to properly absorb nutrients from food.

Mankind has cultivated grains around 10 000 years (Paganus and Voutilainen. 2009. 241; Iowa State University. 2002). It is very probable that celiac disease did not occur before this time. According to Mäki et al. (2006) the disease that gluten free food is first and foremost made for, celiac disease, has been around for few millennia. Gluten free food industry on the other hand is very young. Specified food for gluten free diet has only been around for few decades. As a diet gluten free diet is older than that. A person can follow it without any specially made products just by eating naturally gluten free products made of rice or corn for example.

A gluten-free diet is a diet that does not include a protein composite found in wheat and related grains such as barley and rye, called gluten. At the moment, for those diagnosed with celiac disease the only effective treatment is a lifelong and strict gluten-free diet. No medication exists that will prevent damage that gluten does to a celiac. (Keliakialiitto. 2008.)

For some time there has been an ongoing research and debate on non-celiac gluten sensitivity. Many people believe that there are health benefits to eating gluten-free food for the non-sick population, but there still is no published evidence to support these beliefs. (Helsingin Sanomat. 2013; NY Times. 2002.)

The gluten free food markets are already big and they are growing constantly (Food navigator-USA. 2015; The gluten-free agency. 2012; The Economist. 2014). This is the result of increasing screening and to the fact that medicine as a science is improving every day and more accurate means are developed to test for celiac disease and find those allergic to gluten. But perhaps even greater reason for this is the gluten free diet becoming a fad diet, “originally referred to idiosyncratic diet and eating pattern that promote short-term weight loss, usually with no concern for long-term weight maintenance, and enjoy temporary popularity” (Wikipedia. 2015. Food faddism). This phenomenon has really exploded the gluten free food markets in the past ten years and it seems to be continuing still.

1.1 Research motivation

I chose this topic for my bachelor’s thesis for the following reasons. I am a big fan of food but the biggest reason for this topic however is definitely the fact that it is my own personal interest to know the history and future of gluten free food and the reasons behind the whole industry as I am a celiac myself and have been since the mid-1990s. Most likely I have had the celiac disease my whole life but it was medically certified in 1996. Because of this I have a certain insight of the gluten free products market and its development in the past 20 years.

The change in the gluten free products and market has been enormous. There was a time when I could not eat bread, pastas, pizzas and many more products made out of wheat, barley, oatmeal and rye simply because there was no substitute for gluten free diet. Well there has been bread for me to eat always but it really did not taste like one. The difference in taste is interesting too, at least the change it has gone through in the past 20 years. In the 90s and early 2000 gluten free products did not taste much at all. At least not to a kid used to the sweet taste of wheat.

1.2 Research objectives

The objective of the research is to help the company X in its endeavor to grow its market share. This is accomplished by studying an average consumer and to understand the consumer buying behavior of a person that uses gluten free products. Also it can be applied to other diet to some extent.

This thesis is undertaken in collaboration of a company manufacturing gluten free products, the following are the research questions:

- What are the most significant criteria for the consumer using gluten free products when purchasing aforementioned goods?

- How to get the potential gluten free consumer pick company X's products over the competitors?

1.3 Research structure

To answer my research questions I intend to use following processes:

First I will introduce the reader to celiac disease with in-depth reviewing of the disease from medical, historical and economical points of views. Then I will continue to review literature on relevant topics such as marketing, consumer behavior and gluten free products markets.

After I explained what celiac disease is and the history of it I read about marketing and consumer behavior and got myself in the mind of a consumer. I also reviewed literature on gluten free product markets to understand them and the trend, as well as the disease, behind the massive growth of it. I examined the gluten free food industry and the markets for gluten free food, both yesterday's and tomorrow's market but concentrating on today's market.

This thesis was conducted with quantitative data and I used simple random sampling method in my data collection, which is done via survey. Respondents of he survey were all users of gluten free products.

After I collected the data I presented the findings I got from it and used the literature part to understand it better. Reviewing the literature part also helped me to decide whether the research was valid and usable or did it need some tuning or further investigation on some parts of it.

In the last chapter the data I gathered was discussed and compared to the findings and based on those I could answer the research questions. I presented my recommendations on how company X can improve their position in the gluten free market business. In the last part I gave suggestions on future research on the topic.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 **Celiac disease**

Mäki et al (2006) state that celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder of the small intestine. It is genetically predisposed and occurs from infancy forward. Symptoms include pain and discomfort in the intestine and stomach and diarrhea, anemia and fatigue, but these may be absent, and symptoms in other organ systems have been described. According to Mäki et al. (2006) and Paganus and Voutilainen (2009) celiac disease is caused by a reaction to gluten and especially protein called prolamin. Gliadin is the worst prolamin and it is found in wheat. Similar proteins are found in barley, oatmeal and rye as well but the protein found in oatmeal is not harmful. Proteins from wheat, barley and rye start an antibody reaction on small intestine. This causes inflammatory reaction, which harms the small intestine preventing it from absorbing nutrients from food. This causes deficiencies in many patients. Even though the disease is caused by a reaction to wheat proteins it differs from wheat allergy.

2.1.1 **History of celiac disease**

The first writings considering this disease are almost 2000 years old. In the second century AD a Greek-Roman scientist Aretaeus of Cappadocia, living in the same area, recorded a malabsorptive syndrome with chronic diarrhea, causing a debilitation of the whole body. He wrote the first medical description of the celiac disease, which he named “koiliakos”. This is ancient Greek and means intestine suffering or suffering from intestine. The modern name of the disease is based on this Greek name. (Mäki et al. 2006. 10.)

Aretaeus believed the problem was a lack of heat in the stomach necessary to digest the food and a reduced ability to distribute the digestive products throughout the body, this incomplete digestion resulting in the diarrhea. He regarded this as an affliction of the old and more commonly affecting women, explicitly excluding children. The cause, according to Aretaeus, was sometimes either another chronic disease or even consuming "a copious draught of cold water.” (Mäki et al. 2006.10.)

This disease gained the attention of Western medicine when Francis Adams presented a translation of Aretaeus's work at the Sydenham Society in 1856 (Wikipedia. 2015).

In the 1880 Patrick Manson, a Scottish physician has described celiac disease in his texts but at that time the disease was diarrhea like and connected to tropics and was thought to be found only from people that have visited such areas. He called it “tropical sprue”. It was noted that there is a disease that resembles tropical sprue but is found also on persons never visited any tropical zones. This was hence called “non-tropical sprue”. (Mäki et al. 2006. 11.)

In the 19th century Samuel Gee, an English pediatrician, described celiac disease in his writing in 1888 and was the first doctor ever to prescribe his patients “gluten free” diet. Back then it meant eating only first class Dutch seashells. It was not until 1950 when Dutch pediatrician W. K. Dicke established that gluten was the cause for the disease. (Mäki et al. 2006. 10-11.)

2.1.2 **Celiac disease in Finland**

Many of the early experts of celiac disease have been pediatricians because the disease was considered to be children disease, although Aretaeus did not agree. A pediatrician Wilhelm Pipping presented the first scientific description of the disease in Finland in 1923. He had a celiac patient in Helsinki children’s clinic in 1906. Margit Edgren made a presentation of the disease in the founding assembly of Finnish Pediatrician Association in 1930. Back then the word celiac was completely unknown and the disease was known as “intestinal infantilism” according to an American scientist C. A. Herter. (Mäki et al. 2006. 15.)

Herter and a German professor of childhood disease Otto Heubner were the best-known authorities in Finland at the time and the disease was known as Herter-Heubner disease until 1960s. (Mäki et al. 2006. 15.)

In the 1950s the effects of a gluten free diet were heard in Finland as well but due to doubts in international literature it was not taken too seriously. The difficulty of proper diagnosis was an obstacle as well. Biopsies started to be taken from infants in 1962, which proved that celiac disease was relatively common among children under two years old lead to the official instructions on infant feeding being changed in mid 1960s so that gluten was not supposed to be given under five moths old children. (Mäki et al. 2006. 15-16.)

After the sprue disease was diagnosed to be, in fact, celiac disease and that it was a lifelong disease diagnostics among adults were developed. In the end of 1970s intestine endoscopy became regular method of examination of intestine ailment and small intestine biopsy was routinely included in it. (Mäki et al. 2006. 16.)

2.1.3 Gluten intolerance

According to Braly and Hoggan (2002) celiac disease is only one part of gluten intolerance. Every time the immune system reacts on gluten it is called gluten intolerance. If the immune system recognizes and reacts abnormally to the proteins in gluten the food is potentially dangerous for the health. Human gene research shows that gluten intolerance or immune system reactions to gluten may appear in up to 90 million Americans. Gluten intolerance is much more common than celiac disease even though it is searched and diagnosed even more seldom than celiac disease. This results in huge proportion of the American population that is chronically ill and cannot be treated with conventional methods.

2.1.4 The controversy in nutritional recommendations

Media and the field of conventional nutrition have together with medical professionals created a problem with their old fashioned nutritional recommendation. Government sponsored directions for “healthy” diet maintains this problem like the food pyramid of USDA that recommends six to eleven portions of cereals for every day. In Finland the publicity department of baking industry, Leipätiedotus ry, recommends is six to nine slices of bread / two portions of porridge, pasta or rice. This is completely different than what research results of today imply. But as USDA concentrates mainly in marketing of agriculture and its products their credibility is very poor. In general nutritional recommendations are guided by common believes, political interests and food industry rather than scientists and researchers. (Braly and Hoggan. 2002. 31-32.)

2.2 Marketing

For most people not involved in the business world marketing equals advertising: commercials on TV and radio, advertisements in magazines and bus stops, web sites and mobile applications. According to Kotler et al. (2009) marketing is the decisions marketers make before a new product or service is introduced to the consumers, market research to help make the aforementioned decision and the actions after the introduction to keep that product or service in the market. A short definition of marketing is: it is identifying and meeting human and social needs profitably (Kotler et al. 2009. 6).

2.2.1 Creating customer value, satisfaction and loyalty

According to Schieffer (2005) creating loyal customers should be the center of attention in every business. Peppers and Rogers (2005) stated: “The only value your company will ever create is the value that comes from customers – the ones you have now and the ones you will have in the future. Businesses succeed by getting, keeping and growing customers. Without customers, you do not have business.”

Maintaining a profitable customer relationship requires two things: value for the customer and interaction with that customer (Anttila and Iltanen. 2001. 120). This eventually leads to customer loyalty.

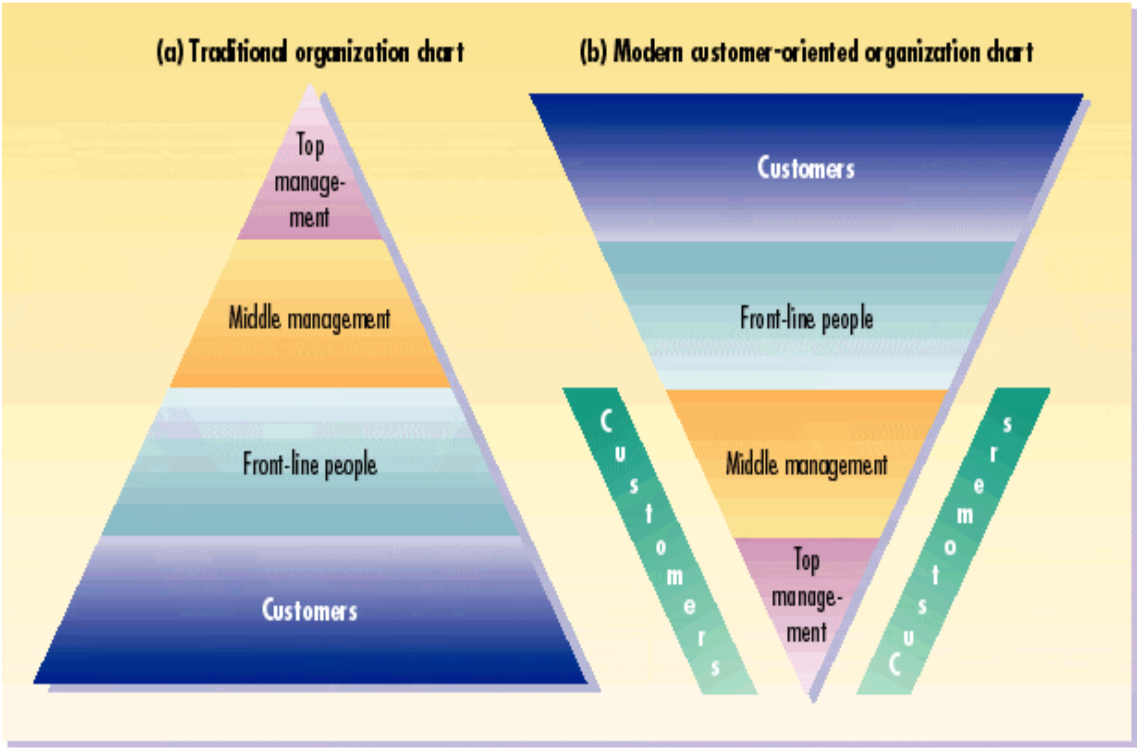

Figure 1. Traditional organization vs modern customer oriented organization (Kotler, P. et al. 2009. Marketing management. 380) http://lib.znate.ru/docs/index-106622.html?page=16

"Today, businesses around the world recognize that "the customer is king" (Blackwell et al. 2009. 10). One can say today's markets are buyer's markets. 100 years ago there were only so many companies and there was no real competition for customers even though marketing was already a well-known field of business. Even 50 years ago there was more than enough business to go around but companies wanted to sell more and advertising had spread from newspapers and radio to TV as the first TV advertisement was broadcasted in USA July 1st 1941. (New York Times. 1941)

Customer value

Nowadays when seller's markets are changing to buyer's markets the concept of customer-perceived value has become increasingly important. Suppliers have to offer buyers what they want in competitive markets if they are to generate profitable business. Customer-perceived value (CPV) is a concept that allows marketers to learn what customers want via market research.

“CPV is the difference between the prospective customer’s evaluation of all the benefits and all the costs of an offering and the perceived alternatives. Total customer benefit is the perceived monetary value of the bundle of economic, functional and psychological benefits customers expect from a given market offering because of the products, services, personnel and image involved. Total customer cost is the perceived bundle of costs customers expect to incur in evaluating, obtaining, using and disposing of the given market offering, including monetary, time, energy and psychological costs.” (Kotler et al. 2009. 381)

This means that company X’s products must have higher benefits for the customer compared to the costs. CPV value is the difference between these benefits and costs. Positive CPV indicates a good value of any given product.

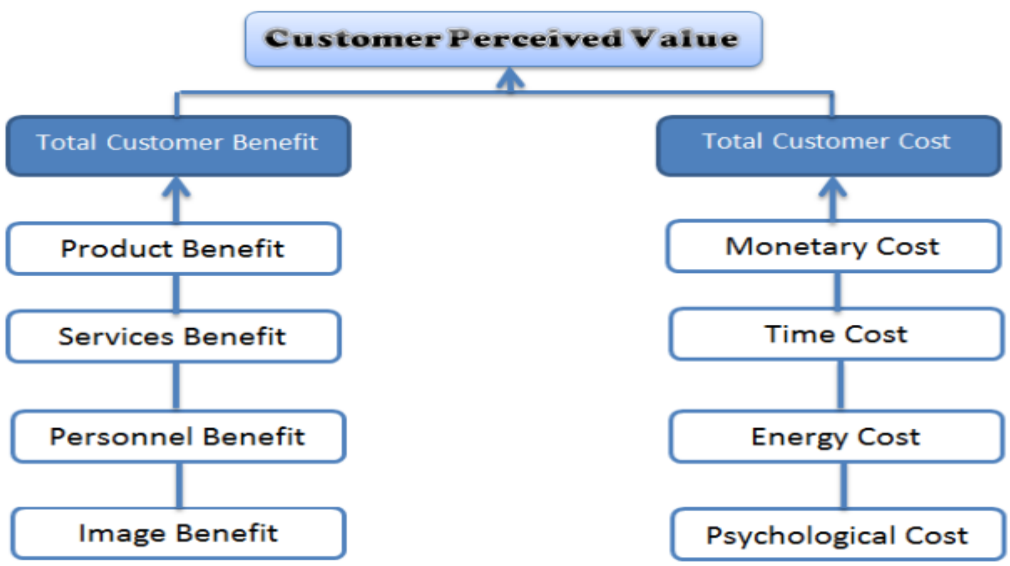

Figure 2. Determinants of customer-perceived value (Kotler, P. et al. 2009. Marketing management. 381)
https://milonimehta15.wordpress.com/2013/07/20/customer-perceived-value/

Customer satisfaction

"Whether the buyer is satisfied after purchase depends on the offer's performance in relationship to the buyer's expectations, and whether the buyer interprets any deviations between the two" (Kotler et al. 2009. 389). The customer is satisfied if the performance does match with expectations and highly satisfied if the performance surpasses expectations. The customer is dissatisfied if the performance is not what was expected.

"Customers are neither sheep nor fools. They can sense when companies are consistently more loyal to investors, employees and regulators than to the people who buy their products and services. They behave accordingly." (Kotler et al. 2009. 387).

I have to disagree with this on some level. In my experience when customers are in love with a brand it does not matter what they produce and to what price, they will buy it. This can be seen in the massive Apple Inc. fan groups. What ever Apple offers they want it. No matter the cost. Apple has made their die-hard fans fools in that sense.

Satisfied customers easily become loyal customers especially when the satisfaction is high and continual. However the link between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is not comparative. Assuming customer satisfaction is rated on a scale from one to five. At satisfaction level one a customer is probable to forsake the company and even criticize it. At levels two to four a customer is fairly pleased but still easily switches to competition for a better offer. At level five a customer is very likely to stay loyal to the company, purchase from them in the future and even promote them. (Kotler et al. 2009. 390.)

Customer loyalty

A strong connection with customers is the goal of any company and frequently the key to success in the long run. Many companies acknowledge the importance of satisfying their customers to develop the reputation of their brand, which can deliver sustainable competitive advantage. But mere satisfaction, unless of the highest level, does not necessarily guarantee a loyal customer.

Interacting with customers is one method of creating customer loyalty. Interaction can happen on many different ways:

Listening to the customer is extremely important to customer relationship. Companies should have a lines open for feedback and suggestions from customers 24/7. Websites with live help, email, applications and phone lines to name a few. Often a regular consumer will not give feedback unless specifically asked to.

Custom publishing is a fast growing industry and according to the International Customer Publishing Federation customer magazines are actually the fastest growing area of publishing, except the Internet. Even though publishing for special interest groups is nothing new businesses have discovered the allure of publications delivered directly to customer as relatively cheap way of marketing themselves in competitive media environment.

Loyalty programs are popular ways to interact with customers. Club marketing programs and frequency programs are two of the more popular ones. Club membership programs are usually open to everyone and most of the time for free. Open clubs are good for attracting lots of customers but limited membership clubs are more efficient in long-term loyalty building. Frequency programs provide rewards to customers that shop often and with large amounts. They help building long-term customer loyalty, creating cross-selling possibilities at the same time. (Kotler et al. 2009. 401-405.)

2.3 **Consumer behavior**

Before one can understand consumer behavior it is necessary to understand what consumption is. In philosophical sense, in the modern consumer society, we consume not only goods but human services as well and thus human relationships. It is also important to realize, and not to forget, that consumption is a class institution. There is inequality of objects in the economic way as the purchasing, choices and usage of objects are driven by purchasing power. In other words not everybody have the same objects or even chance to obtain them. In addition “there is a radical discrimination in the sense that only some people achieve mastery of an autonomous, rational logic of the elements of the environment (functional use, aesthetic organization, cultural accomplishment). Such people do not really deal with objects and do not, strictly speaking, ‘consume’, whilst the others are condemned to a magical economy, to the valorization of objects as such, and of all other things as objects (ideas, leisure, knowledge, culture): this fetishistic logic is, strictly, the ideology of consumption.” (Baudrillard 1998. 59.)

“Consumer behavior is defined as activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services.” (Blackwell et al. 2001. 6). In other words consumer behavior studies “why people buy”.

- *Obtaining* alludes to the activities before the purchase and the purchase itself. Searching for information, selecting the place of purchase and payment methods, why the consumer is choosing a certain brand, for who are they shopping for and how is the product delivered
- *Consuming* refers to why, how, when and where the product is used. Is the consumer using the product alone, at home, during the evening or in the park with friends in the middle of the day? Is the consumer content with the product and if not, why?
- *Disposing* is the phase where the product has come at the end of its life cycle and the consumer gets rid of the product and the packaging. How is the product disposed of? Traded for something else, given away, resold or recycled

Studying the behavior of a consumer helps marketers develop strategies to affect that consumer and understand why he favors some brands or products over the others. Recently the analysis of “why and how people consume” has become increasingly important in addition to more traditional “why and how people buy." (Blackwell et al. 2001. 6-7.) Consumption habits of consumer should be examined to achieve the highest rate of competitive advantage.

Consumer behavior helps analyze the increasing influence of a consumer. Consumers are the ones that eventually make or break a company by selecting where they spend their money. The companies that are able to attract most customers can see their stock prices rise making them attractive to investors for investment possibilities and acquisition for other companies. All this helps creating jobs and onwards to prosperity. (Blackwell et al. 2001. 9-10.)

2.3.1 Consumer psychology

Various factors affect consumer behavior. Whether psychological or social companies must know how and why consumers make the choices they do. Understanding this helps offering consumer what they want in a way they want it.

Perception

According to Salomon et al. (2006) perception is the process that selects, organizes and interprets stimuli received via our sensory receptors (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, skin). It can be divided into three stages: exposure, attention and interpretation.

Exposure is the degree to which people notice the stimuli received in form of vision, sound, scent, taste or touch. A person cannot pay attention to every stimulus he receives but he screens only the interesting ones. This is called selective exposure

Attention is the degree to which people focus on stimuli. Consumers are exposed to multiple stimuli all the time so advertising must be creative to get attention from consumers. Color and contrast are great ways to get attention.

Interpretation alludes to the purpose that people give to the stimuli. As everybody is different, two people can have very different interpretations on the same advertisement.

Learning and memory

Learning is the process where people acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes and values via study, experience or by modeling others' behavior (Baines et al. 2013. 72). Learning can be unintentional as well. This is called *incidental learning*. Incidental learning is often how consumers learn about new goods and services and their features. Especially in low involvement situations where information is not specifically searched this is the case.

Memory is the process of storing the acquired information so that it is available when needed. Advertisement needs to be repeated because consumers forget them over time due to limited memory capacity. Memorization can be enhanced by using symbols such as company logos. Logos can have notable meanings and are easier to remember.

Motivation

Motivation refers to the process that makes people act as they do. Motivation occurs when a need is recognized and consumer wishes to satisfy this need. The need can be utilitarian (functional or practical) or hedonic (experiential or emotional). The desired outcome of the satisfied need is the goal. The urgency the consumer has to satisfy this need is called s drive. (Salomon et al. 2006. 90-92)

For example a consumer is hungry. He would like to eat bread because of the simplicity of preparing it. The goal is to be full but the hunger is not severe so the drive is low.

Attitudes

Attitudes are "lasting, general evaluation of people, objects and issues" (Solomon et al. 2006. 238). According to Baines et al. (2013), as oppose to an opinion, they are linked to a person's emotional state with great degree of conviction, over long period of time and are likely to influence behavior.

People try to maintain harmony among their attitudes and will change factors to keep them consistent. If one attitude conflicts with another, one of them is changed to resemble the other.

Values

According to Solomon et al. (2006) values are beliefs on someone or something and they are one factor that guide consumer behavior. A person’s values are in very important role in his consumption activities as consumers often demonstrate their values via their purchase behavior. Baines et al. (2013) state that values are often linked to our conscience and are developed via the familial socialization, social class, cultures and subcultures, ethnicity religion geography. These factors create a set of core values for everyone and they are formed in early childhood. A person acquires more values, as he gets older.

The self-concept

Salomon et al. (2006) state that the self-concept refers to the beliefs a person has about his qualities and how he evaluates those. The self-concept affects strongly to the consumer behavior. A person has two different views of himself: an ideal self (how he would like to be) and an actual self (how he really is). Goods and services can help achieve this ideal self or maintain the actual self. A product can for example offer a remedy to low self-esteem. Diet food can help achieve the ideal, thinner self or heels can make one appear taller.

2.3.2 The consumer buying decision process

According to the model created by Professors Engel, Kollat and Blackwell in 1968 there are five steps in consumer buying decision making process purchasing being the only visible part of it. The complex decision process every consumer creates happens before and after the actual purchase.

The five steps in consumer buying decision process model are: need/problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives to meet the need/solve the problem, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior.

The five stages of the consumer buying decision process:

1. Need/Problem recognition

If there is not a need there cannot be a purchase. The need recognition is the first and the most important step in the process. This happens when the actual situation of the consumer is missing something to be an ideal situation. All the needs do not end up as buying behavior. The ideal situation needs to be important enough to justify a purchase. Also the means, such as price of the product and ease of acquisition, to achieve the ideal situation has to be perceived as reasonable by the consumer based on how important the need is.

A need may be due to a completely new factor or a change in the actual and/or ideal situations. For instance, the actual situation is the same but the ideal has changed. Or, the actual situation is changed but the ideal situation remains the same. The last option is that both of the situations have changed.

Consumer need recognition is caused in various ways and there are different classifications for it:

- There are internal stimuli that affect the needs of a consumer. These are physiological needs like thirst or fatigue. External stimuli are for instance visual and audible perception such as advertisement on TV.
- Functional need relates to feature of a good/service or solves a functional problem. For example a more fuel-efficient engine in a car to save in fuel expenses or a dishwasher to avoid washing dishes by hand. Social need answers to a want for social recognition or integration. An example would be buying similar sneakers that other kids have or a new boat. Need for change addresses the need for a consumer to change. Changing the color of the walls in your apartment for example. Often this need is artificial and made up by marketing teams to help sell more products.
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs is widely used classification. According to him an individual is guided by specific needs. The individual wants to

achieve them in a certain order: 1. Physiological needs 2. Safety needs 3. Belongingness and love needs 4. Esteem needs 5. Self-actualization needs (Solomon et al. 2006. 263-265.)

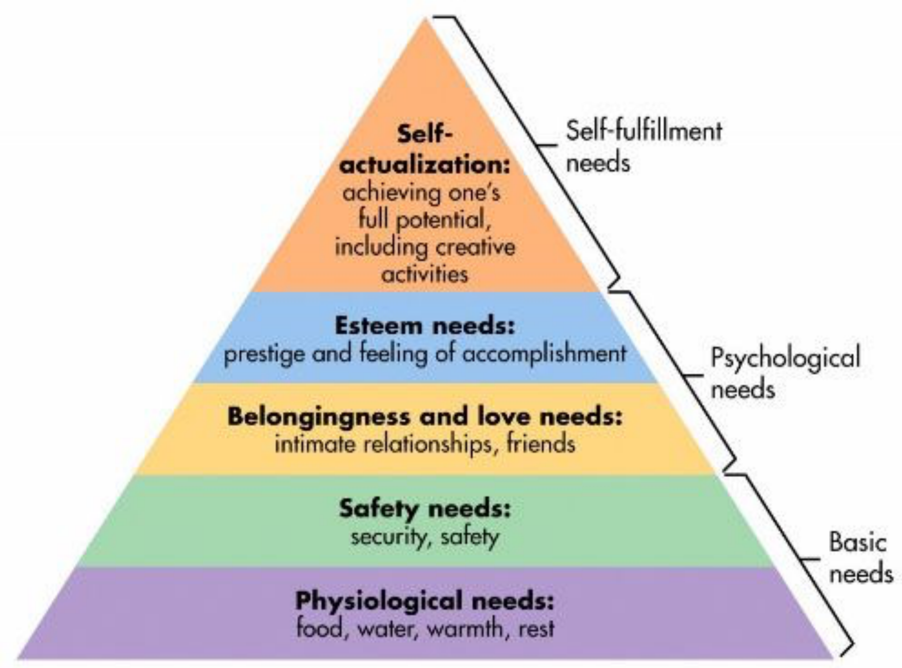

Figure 3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, A. H. 1970)
http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

2. Information search

After the need is identified the consumer seeks information about possible solutions to the problem. The search for information is more thorough when the choice to be made is complex but it depends also on his level of involvement state Blackwell et al. (2001) and Solomon et al. (2006).

The consumer will make the decision based on opinion he gathers from internal information and external information say Blackwell et al. (2001) and Solomon et al. (2006). Internal information is the previous experiences with the good or service and is already in consumer's memory. External information is needed with important purchases when the consumer is more involved or when the consumer simply does not have enough information. This information is received from family and friends, consumer reviews on magazines or websites and via official sources like an advertisement on TV or radio.

This stage is the one where the consumer uses most time on. Even so information should be accessible as easily as possible. Any and all information of a product must be at reach. This means that company X's website and customer service telephone number and email must be up to date and always available.

Blackwell et al. (2001) and Solomon et al. (2006) argue that the consumer pays more attention to the internal information and the information from family, friends and other consumers. Official advertisement will be perceived as more subjective. This means word-of-mouth and peer reviews online for example are the highest rated form of advertising. It is reliable because it usually cannot be bought.

3. Alternative evaluation

When enough information is gathered, it is possible for the consumer to assess the different options, estimate what would be the most suitable for him and choose the best one.

According to Blackwell et al. (2001) and Solomon et al. (2006) the consumer will evaluate the attributes of the options on two perspectives: objective and subjective characteristics. Objective characteristics are features and functionality of the product. Subjective characteristics are perceived value and perception of the brand or its reputation.

After that the consumer will use the collected information and his perception or opinion of a brand to create evaluation criteria, choose the wanted features, categorize the obtainable products and evaluate what alternative is the closest to the perfect option.

This process leads to something called *evoked set/consideration set*. It is a set of goods, services or brands, which have a probability of being purchased for their good image received from the consumer’s personal experience or if the collected information is favorable. The opposite of this is called *inept set,* which is a set of goods, services or brands that will not be purchased no matter what. This is due to a negative experience for the consumer in the past. *Inert set* is a set of goods, services or brands of which the consumer has no opinion on. (Solomon et al. 2006. 274.)

Solomon et al. (2006) argue that the number of solutions considered by the consumer is higher when the importance of the purchase is or the level of involvement of the consumer is high. On regular purchase/everyday product the number of solutions considered will be lower. Food for example does not have high involvement for it is an everyday item. Alternatives are therefore evaluated at the store. Because man’s most important sense is sight company X should give extra attention to the appearance of their product.

4. Purchase decision

When all the options have been evaluated the consumer is ready to choose the best good, service or brand that fits his needs. The decision depends on the information gathered and evaluated based on the features, perceived value and capabilities that are essential to him. According to Solomon et al. 2006 the buying decision might also be affected or depend by the quality of the store or web shop and conditions of the sale like return policy and other terms.

5. Post-purchase behavior

When the purchase has been made and the product used, the consumer will compare the applicability with the original needs and finds out whether he has made the right choice. He is either satisfied by his choice or either somewhat dissatisfied or completely disappointed.

If the consumer is happy with the choice he will minimize the information search and evaluation of alternatives when the time comes to buy the same product or brand. This is called customer loyalty. The other option is an average or bad experience with the product or brand. (Blackwell et al. (2001) and Solomon et al. (2006) argue that in this case the consumer will redo the five stages of the buying decision process during the next purchase but exclude that product or brand from the *evoked set*.

The post-purchase evaluation has important consequences for a brand. A content customer is very likely to become a loyal customer. This is especially true for everyday purchases with low level of involvement. If the purchased bread is good the customer will likely choose the same next time as well. This means loyalty for the manufacturer is created.

Positive or negative, consumers are also likely to share their opinion on the brand with other potential customers say Blackwell et al. (2001) and Solomon et al. (2006). Word-of-mouth, social media, products review websites etc. are just some examples of the channels consumers have. Especially Internet makes this post-purchase stage crucial for companies for an unhappy customer can reach potentially hundreds of thousands of consumer instantly and harm the brand severely. Quality control is therefore crucial and company X should make this a priority as one bad experience for a customer and it can be heard by possibly every customer the very next day.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research strategy

Deductive approach was used for this study. This involved developing a theory and hypothesis that is subject to a rigorous test (Saunders et al. 2009). According to Robson (2002) deductive research progresses through five stages: "1. Deducing a hypothesis from theory, 2. Expressing the hypothesis in operational terms, which propose a relationship between two specific concepts or variables, 3. Testing this operational hypothesis, 4. Examine the specific outcome of the inquiry 5. If necessary, modifying the theory in the light of the findings." (Saunders et al. 2009). Reviewing of literature to gather information is necessary for the creation of the theory.

It is imperative to choose a research method that provides the most accurate, suitable and valuable results on that specific topic. Quantitative data was chosen because of the wide sample group and the suitability of a questionnaire for it. According to Saunders (2009) quantitative data generates and uses numerical in general whereas qualitative gives non-numeric data collected through interviews and open questions. Single data collection technique (mono method) was used as all the data was collected with one questionnaire.

3.1.1 Data collection

Data collection is done via survey. According to Blackwell et al. (2001) "Surveys are an efficient way of gathering information from large sample of people by asking questions and recording responses." The survey strategy often is associated with the deductive approach and used for exploratory and descriptive research. Surveys allow big amounts of data to be collected from large population very cost efficiently. A survey enables the collection of quantitative data. The collected data can also be utilized in suggesting reasons for particular relationships between variables and for producing models of those relationships. More control over the research is obtained when using a survey as a strategy for data collection and it is possible to produce results that a specific portion of the population when using certain sampling methods. (Blackwell et al. 2001. 22)

There are many ways to conduct a survey such as mail, telephone or in person but I have chosen to use Internet for it. Internet surveys fast to complete, easy to answer as well as analyze the results. The only downside to a questionnaire done via Internet is that the responders might not represent the target group but possibly much wider group of people say Blackwell et al. (2001.). I tackled this possible problem by inviting only people that belong to the target group. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire template offered by Google. There were multiple options for it but Google was the only one that offered the needed features, mainly unlimited answers, for free. The survey was conducted in cooperation with the company X.

Sampling method used for the data collection was probability-sampling method called simple random sampling. It involves selecting the cases randomly that are the easiest to obtain for the sample. It was best suited for the needs of this study, as random people among the targeted group were needed for most valid results. The downside of this method of sampling is that it is prone to bias and influences that are beyond the conductors control. (Saunders et al. 2009. 241.)

The survey was sent to Finnish Celiac Organization (Keliakialiitto) and they sent it to their members via email. There are 22 000 members in the Finnish Celiac Organization. (Keliakiliitto. 2016). Additionally there are half a dozen groups in Facebook targeted for people with celiac disease or allergic to gluten/cereal and their family members and others just avoiding the use of gluten. The survey was posted in the wall of each group and a reminder of the survey was posted when one week was left of the five weeks the survey was online. Two of the groups are meant for people that actually have celiac disease. These two groups have approximately 5 000 members. Two groups are concentrating in gluten food recipes and have almost 17 000 members. One group is for gluten free lifestyle and it has over 6 000 members. The remaining two groups are for gluten free and dairy free people and they have over 16 000 members combined. It is impossible to say how many people are buying gluten free products but based on the users in multiple groups in Facebook and members of the Finnish Celiac Organization the total number of is over 50 000.

3.1.2 **Target group**

The target group needed for valid result was everyone buying gluten free products. It is estimated that one per cent of population (50 000) of the Finns has celiac disease. Number of people officially diagnosed with celiac disease is half of that, around 24000 in 2006. (Mäki et al. 2006. Keliakia. 7). In addition there are countless people testing or using gluten free products in regular bases for many reasons other than celiac disease or allergies (Helsingin Sanomat. 2013; NY Times. 2002).

3.1.3 **Reliability, validity and limitations of the research**

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of a research can be repeated. Validity measures the accuracy of the results and whether analysis procedures generate consistent findings. Validity indicates also if the research measured what it was meant to measure. (Saunders et al. 2012. 192-193; Easterby-Smith et al. 2008)

Pre-testing a survey is important to minimize any error in the results (Saunders et al. 2012. 430). The questions of the survey were written in cooperation with the company X's head of development, marketing manager and sales director. I added a few questions that were personally interesting for me but irrelevant for the company's needs.

The survey was conducted in Finnish, as the research was done for a Finnish company in Finland with mostly Finnish customers and it was not certain whether the respondents understood English well enough. More valid answers are always received when questions are given in the mother tongue of the respondent.

Reliability of this research is relatively high as respected and quality academic literature was used for the theoretical part of the research. The result of this research is as valid as possible within the limits of the number of respondents and with the respected criteria stated earlier.

However like in any research limitations come in the form of errors, which are impossible to rule out with 100 per cent certainty and the relatively small size of the sample in the survey. Also the possibility of dishonesty of the respondents must be taken under consideration. As the sample size was estimated to be fewer than five per cent with 2 414 respondents while total consumers using gluten free products is over 50 000 the validity of the result is only directional.

4 RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this section the findings from the collected data are presented and analyzed. The survey questions are presented and analyzed in the same order as they were in the survey.

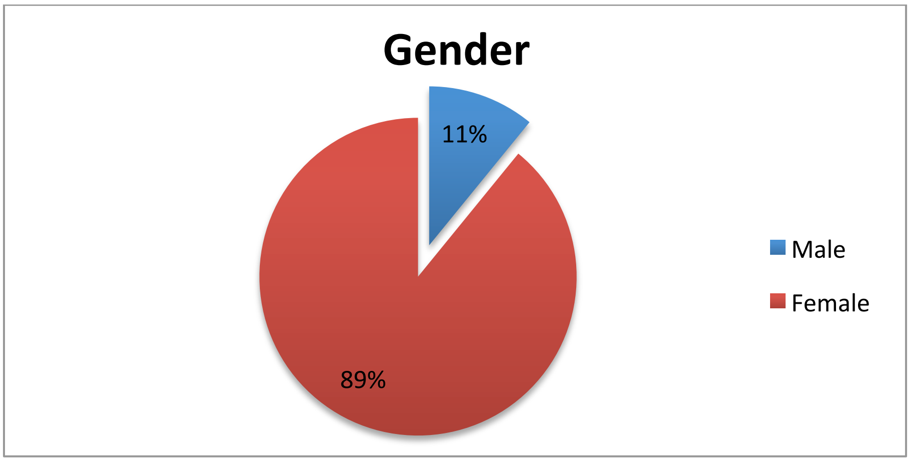

Figure 4. Question1. Gender

The first question was about the respondents' gender. As seen above, the vast majority, 89,1%, of the respondents were females while only 10,9% were males.

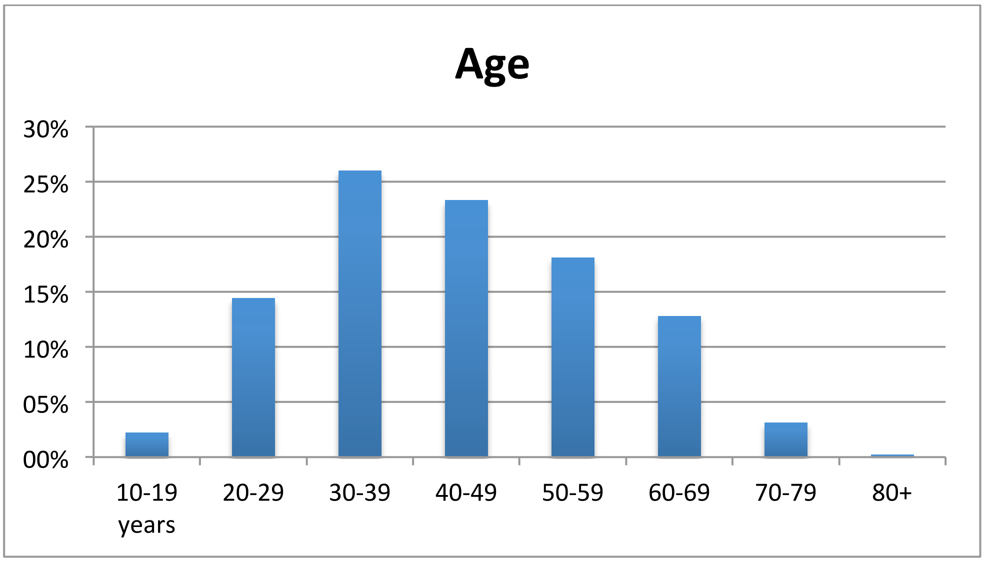

Figure 5. Question 2. Age

Figure 5 shows the age of the respondents when the survey was conducted (28.10-5.12). The age varies greatly which is good for the research as opinion of wider range of consumers is received. Majority of the respondents were between the ages 30 and 59 consisting 67,4% of the respondents (30-39 26%, 40-49 23,3% and 50-59 18,1%). This shows that middle-aged people are the ones doing the shopping. The rest of the numbers are 10-19 2,2%, 20-29 14,4%, 60-69 12,8%, 70-79 3,1% and 80+ 0,2%.

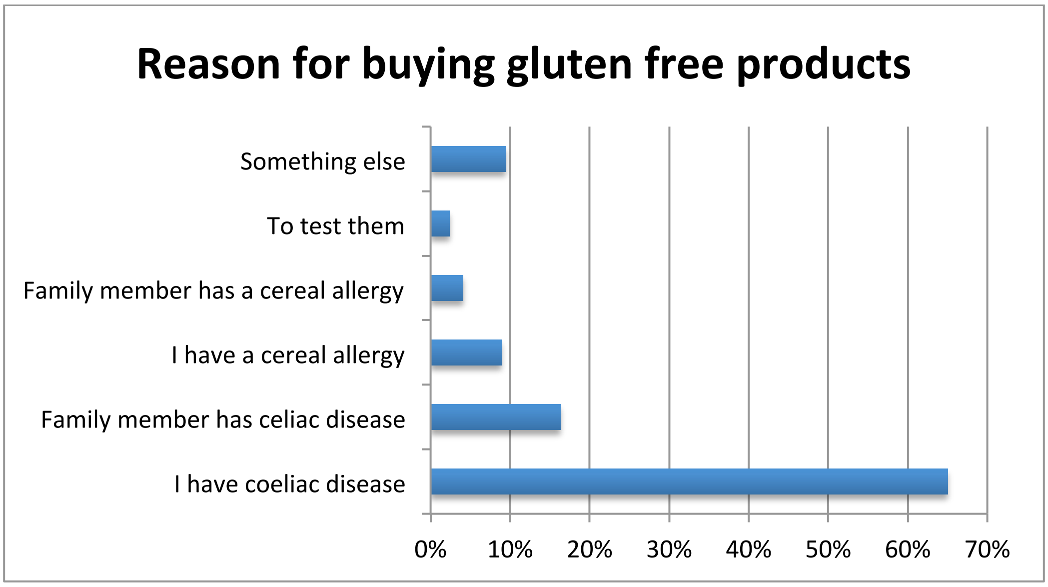

Figure 6. Question 3. Reason for buying gluten free products

The reasons for buying gluten free products were mostly for one reason only: 'I have celiac disease' gathered 65% of the answers. 'Family member has celiac disease' was the second most popular answer with 16,3%. Other answers were all under 10% each. Specific percentages in order from the top down are: 9,4%, 2,4%, 4,1% and 8,9%. Celiac disease or celiac disease in the family is the biggest reason for buying gluten free products.

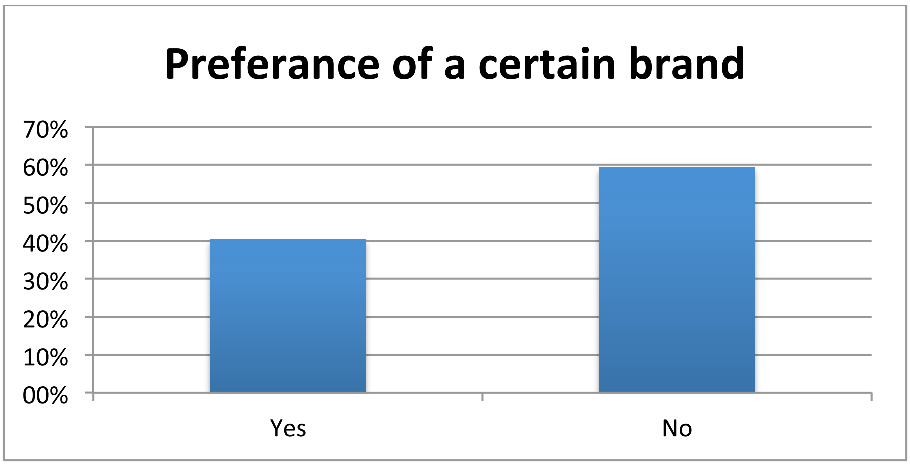

Figure 7. Question 5. Preference of a certain brand

Above is a diagram of brand preference. 59,5% does not prefer any brand while 40,5% has some preferences when it come in choosing the brand.

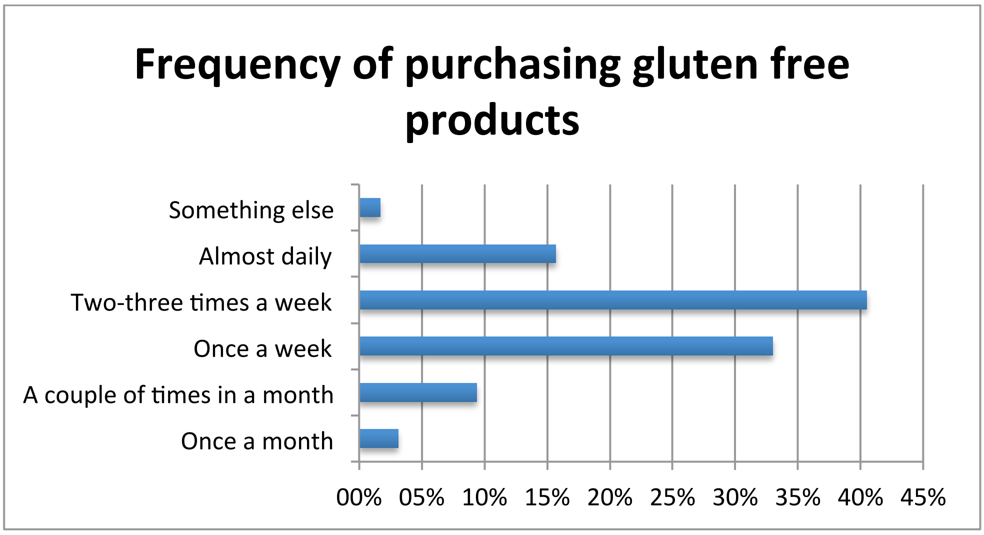

Figure 8. Question 6. Frequency of purchasing gluten free products

Question six was about the frequency of shopping gluten free products. Once or two to three time a week were the most popular answers with 40,5% and 33%. 15,7% of the respondents shop daily and 12,5% did their shopping once or twice a month. The rest (1,7%) do their shopping in some other way.

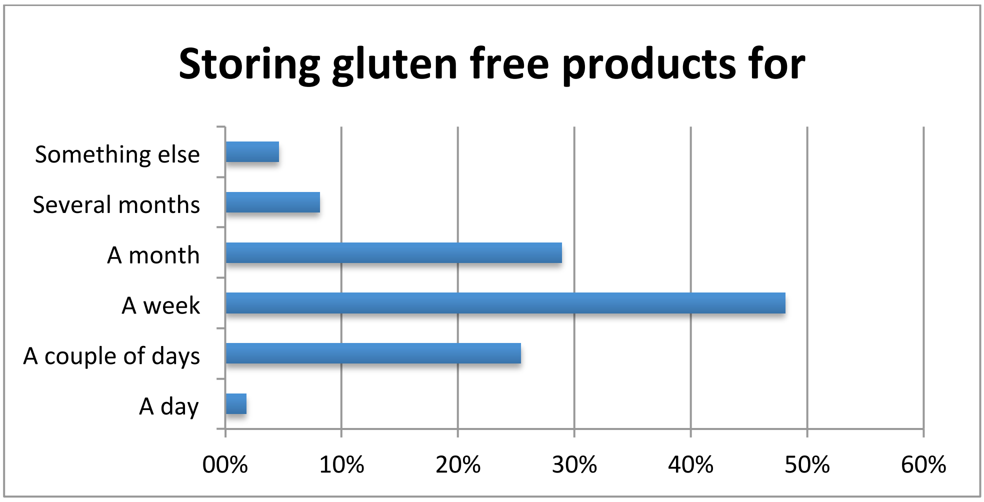

Figure 9. Question 7. Storing gluten free food

48,1% buys gluten free products to last a week at once, 28,9% for a month and 25,4% only for a couple of days. 8,1% stock up for months and only 1,8% for a day. 4,6% buy for some other period.

Figure 10. Question 8. Difficulty of finding gluten free products

Finding gluten free products was hard for 14,3% while 70,7% found it to be easy. 10,7% chose the option ‘other’. This means that over 2/3 have no trouble finding suitable products.

Figure 11. Question 9. Place for gluten free products in the store

We can see above how 72,4% of the respondents feel that all the gluten free products should be found in the same shelf. 23,1% would prefer them to be aside the normal products. 4,5% chose the option ‘other’.

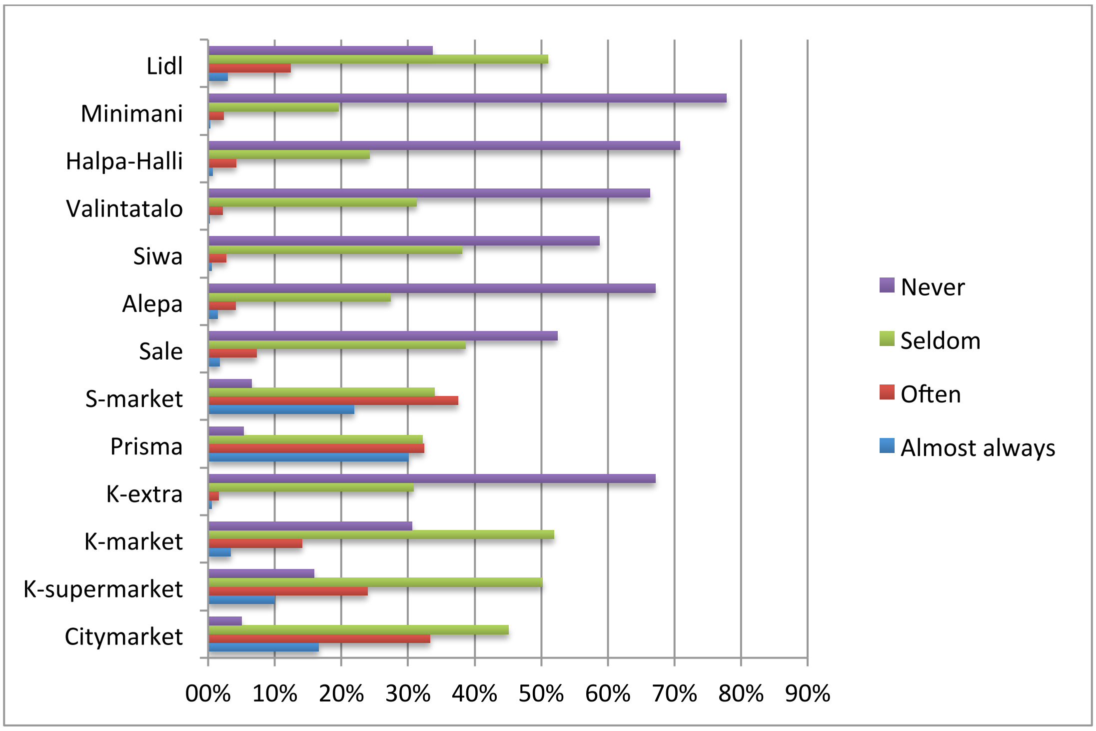

Figure 12. Question 10. Places and frequency to shop

This diagram illustrates where the respondents prefer to shop. Prisma and S-market got the most ‘almost always’ options with 30,1% for Prisma and 21,9% for S-market. Citymarket and K-market were the next popular at this option with 16,6% for Citymarket and 10% for K-market. The same store were the most popular when the respondents chose the option ‘often’ only the changes a bit: S-market was the most popular with 37,5% of the answers, Citymarket got exactly 1/3 of the answers (33,3%). Prisma got 32,4% and K-supermarket 14,1% of the answers.

On the other side of the curve we can see that Sale (52,4%), Siwa (58,7%), Valintatalo (66,3%), Alepa (67,1%), K-extra (67,1%), Halpa-Halli (70,8%) and Minimani (77,8%) respondents chose the option ‘never’ meaning they do not buy their products from small convenience stores.

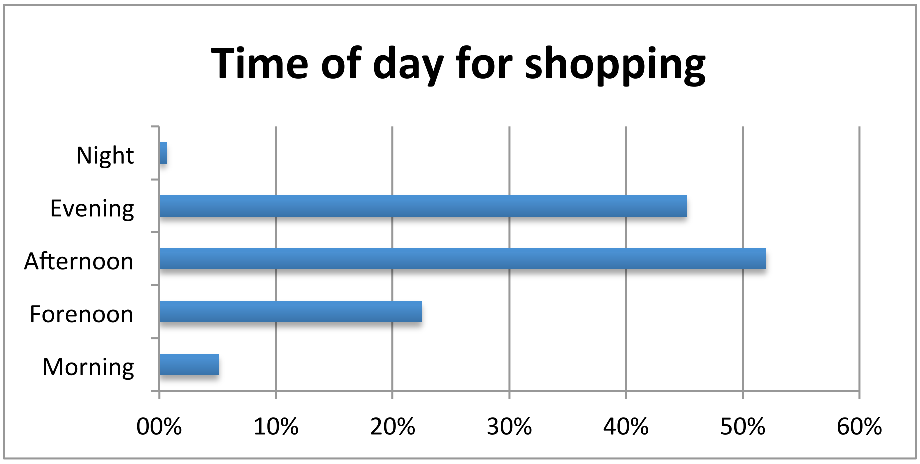

Figure 13. Question 11. Time of day for shopping

In figure 13 we can see when is the preferred time for shopping. Here the respondents could choose multiple answers. Afternoon (45,2%) and evening (52%) are clearly the most popular time to do shopping. 22,5% did shopping in forenoon as well. Morning (5,1%) and night (0,6%) were evidently not popular times.

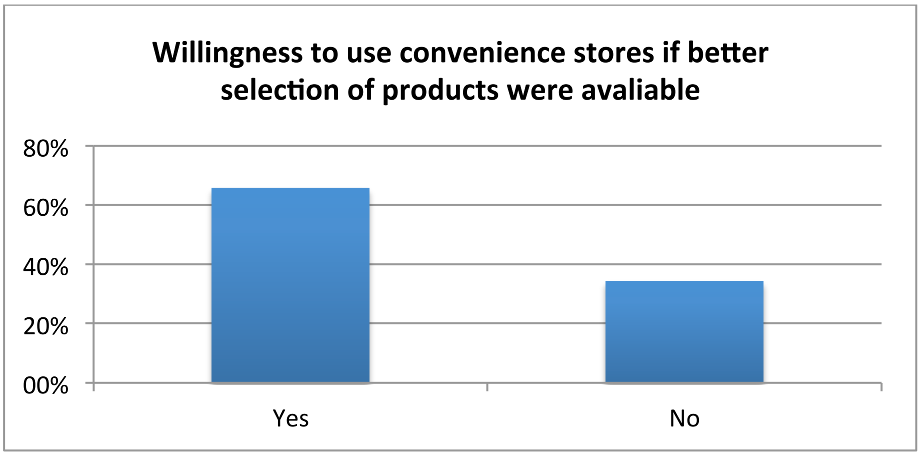

Figure 14. Question 12. Willingness to use convenience stores

65,7% would use smaller convenience stores if the selection of products were better. 34,3% would still prefer larger markets.

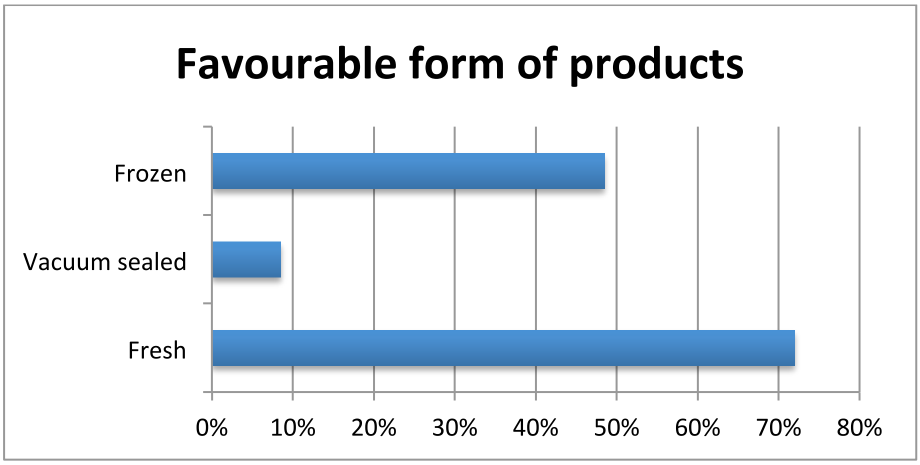

Figure 15. Question 13. Favourable form of products

In question 13 respondents could choose multiple answers. We can see that 72% prefer to buy fresh products and 48,5% frozen. Only 8,5% like to buy vacuum sealed products.

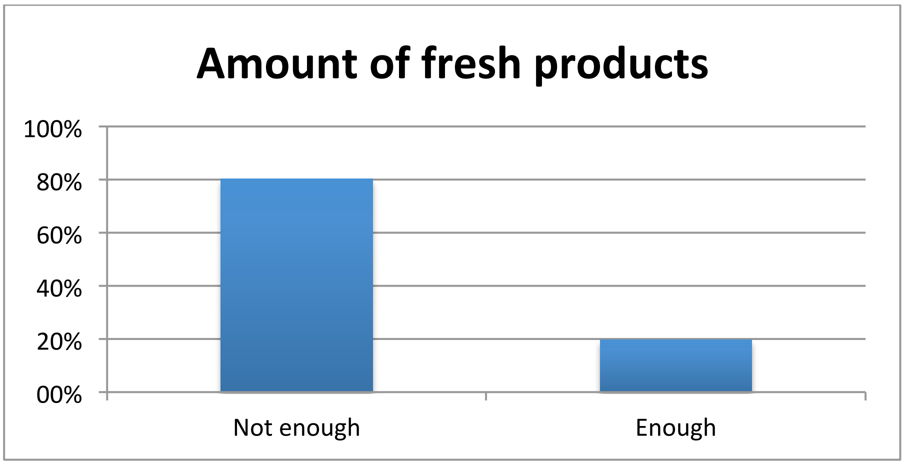

Figure 16. Question 14. Amount of fresh products

As can be seen from the chart above 80,3% of the respondents feel that the selection of fresh products is too small. The remaining 19,7% thinks that there are enough fresh products available.

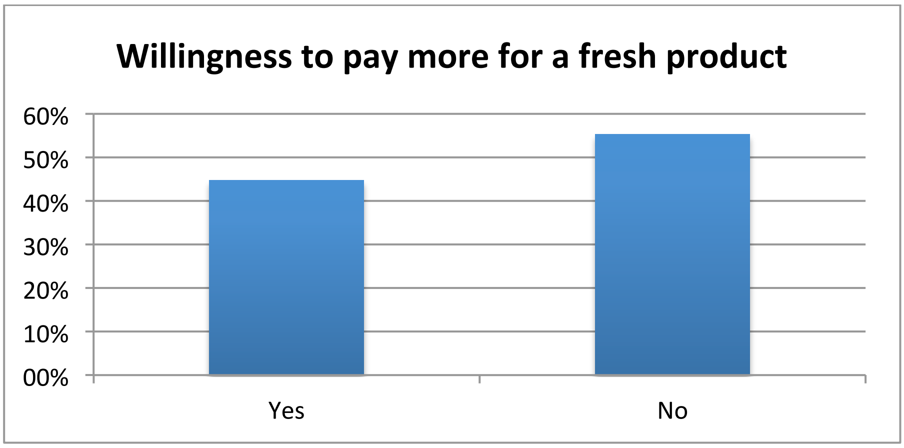

Figure 17. Question 15. Willingness to pay more for fresh product

Figure 17 shows that only 44,7% would be willing to pay extra for a fresh product. 55,3% would not do that.

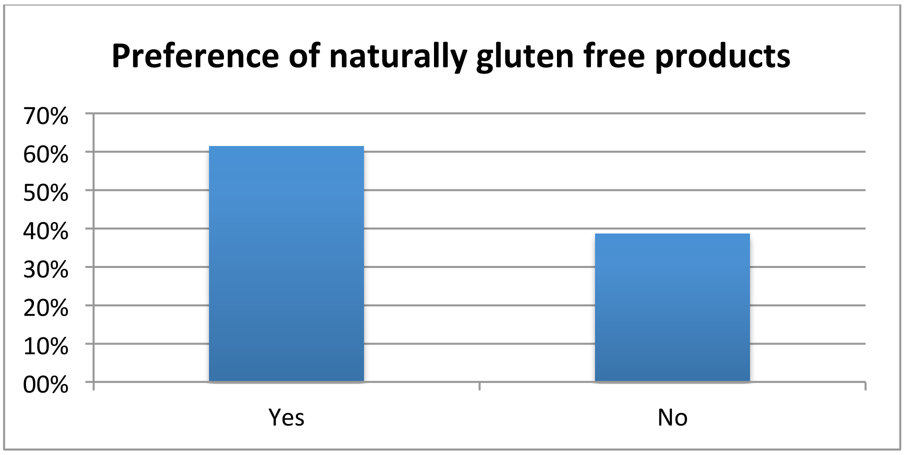

Figure 18. Question 16. Preference of naturally gluten free products

In this figure we can see that 61,4% of the respondents prefer naturally gluten free products while 38,6% do not.

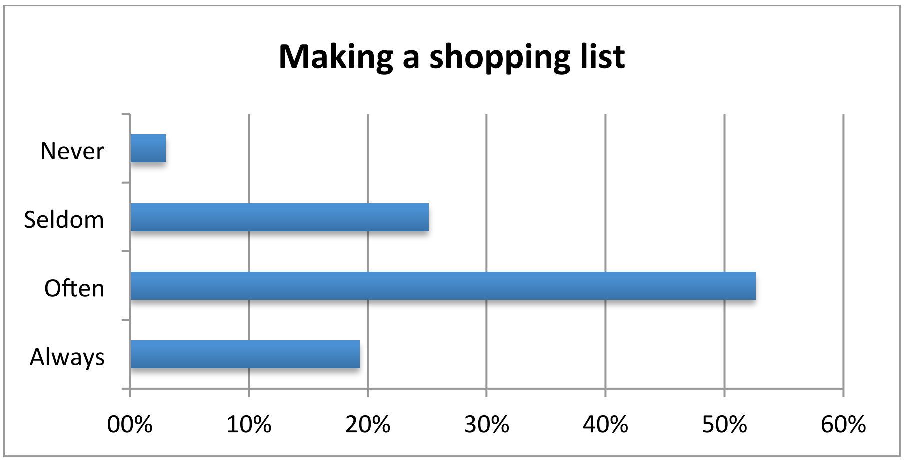

Figure 19. Question 18. Making a shopping list

Question 18 was about planning a shopping trip in advance i.e. making a shopping list. 52,6% does that often. A quarter (25,1%) of the respondents rarely make a list. 19,3% does it always and only 3% never.

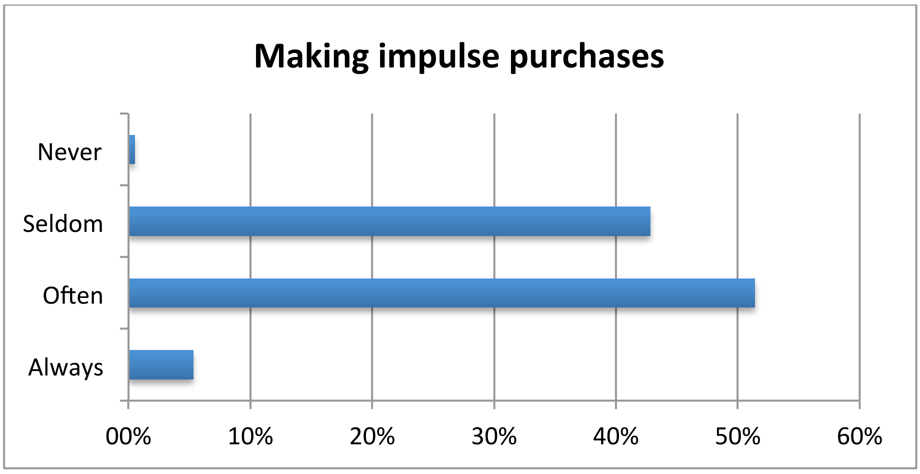

Figure 20. Question 19. Making impulse purchases

51,4% does impulse purchases while shopping as can be seen in the chart above. 42,8% does it rarely. 5,3% does them always and only 0,5% never.

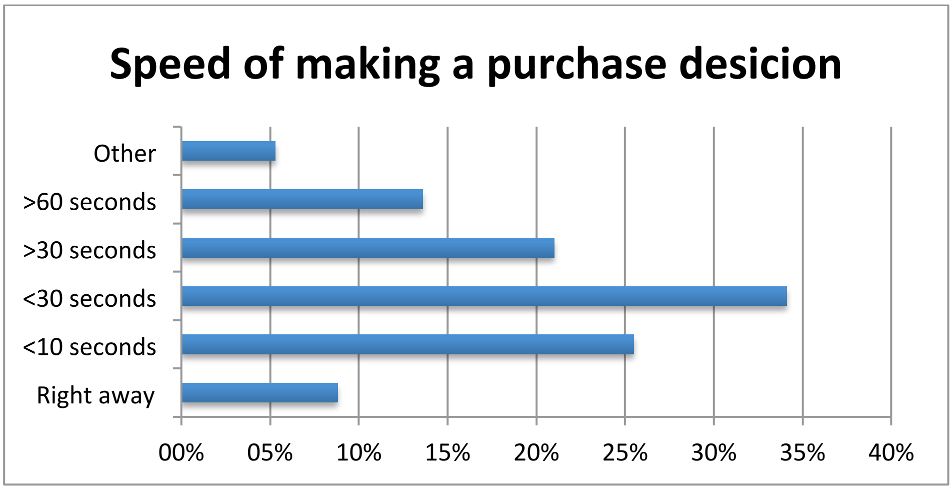

Figure 21. Question 20. Speed of making a purchase decision

Speed of making purchase was the question 20. Over one third (34,1%) does the buying decision in less than 30 seconds. 21% use more than 30 seconds but under a minute for it. A quarter (25,5%) of the respondents use less than 10 seconds and 8,8% does the decision right away. 13,6% uses more than a minute for their decision.

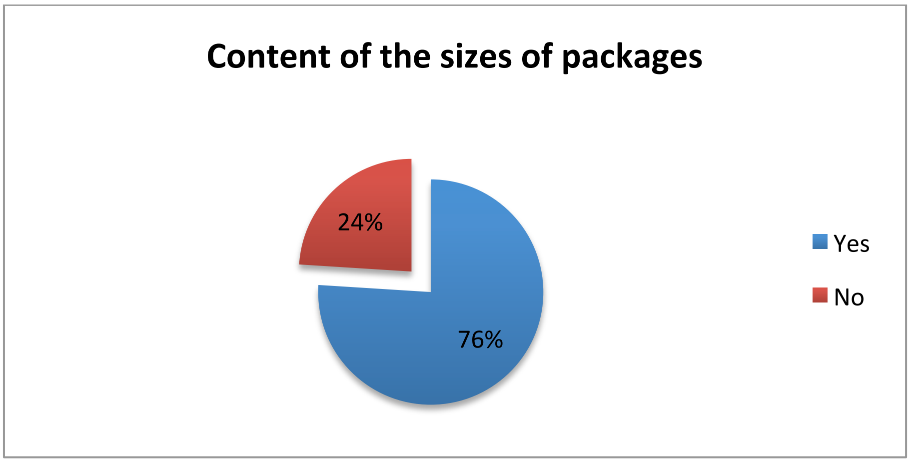

Figure 22. Question 21. Content of the sizes of packages

Over three quarters (76%) are happy with the sizes of the packages as the chart above shows. 24% of the respondents are not.

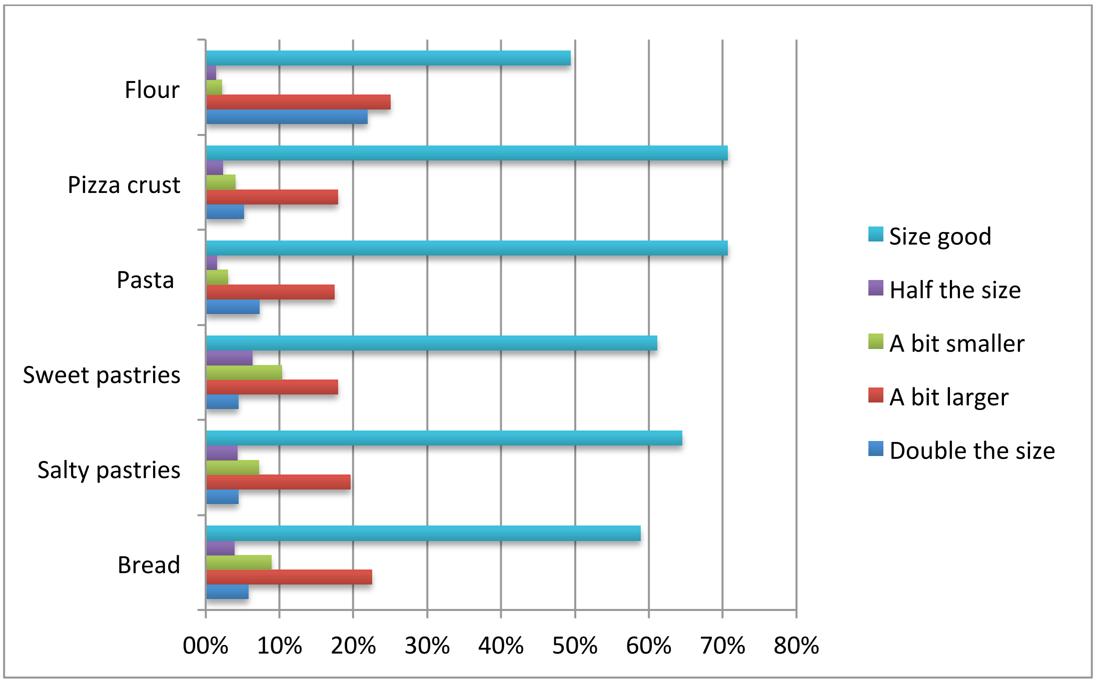

Figure 23. Question 22. Packaging sizes in various products

In question 22 were asked the packaging sizes of groceries from six different categories. As noted in the previous chart more than half were happy with the sizes of the packages in each category, flour being the only one with less than half (49,4%). Next most popular opinion in each category was that the package sizes should be a bit larger: 22,5% in bread, 19,6% in salty pastries, 17,9% in sweet pastries, 17,4% in pastas, 17,9% in pizza crusts and 25% in flour. 5,8% would double the size of bread packages, 4,4% salty and sweet pastries, 7,3% pastas, 5,2% pizza crusts. 21,9% would double the size of flour packages. 8,9% would make the packages a bit smaller in bread category, 7,2% in salty pastry, 10,3% in sweet pastry, 3% in pasta, 4% in pizza crust and 2,2% in flour. In bread category 3,9% of the respondents would cut the package size in half. 4,3% in salty pastry, 6,3% in sweet pastry, 1,5% in pasta, 2,3% in pizza crust and 1,4% in flour category would do the same.

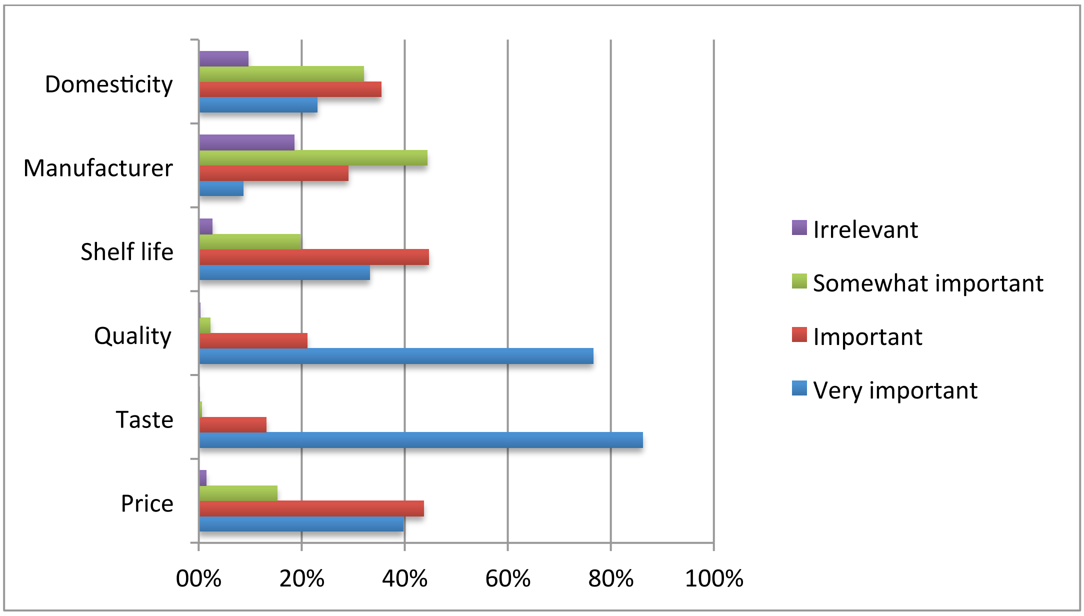

Figure 24. Question 23. Criterias choosing the product

Above is a chart of the criteria when choosing products. We can see that price was important for 43,6% and very important for 39,7% of the respondents while 15,2% thought it was somewhat important. Taste was very important for 86,1% and important for 13,1%. Quality was very important for 76,5% and important for 21%. Shelf life was important for 44,6% and very important for 33,2%. 19,7% thought it was somewhat important. Manufacturer was somewhat important for 44,3% of the respondents, important for 29% and very important for 8,3%. For 18,5% it made no difference at all. Domesticity was important for 35,4% and somewhat important for 32%. 23% thought it was very important and 9,6% did not care about it at all.

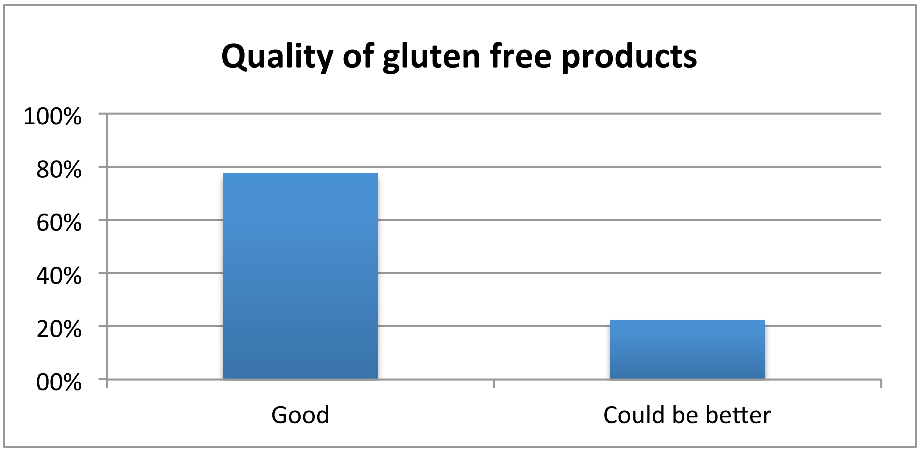

Figure 25. Question 24. Quality of gluten free products

In the figure above we can see that 77,6% are happy with the quality of gluten free products while 22,4% think it could be better.

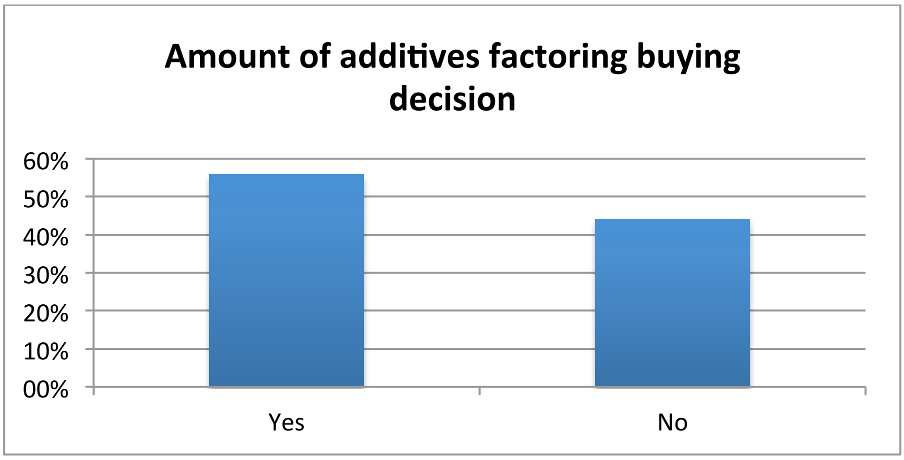

Figure 26. Question 26. Amount of additives factoring buying decision

Amount of additives in the product and the effect of that to the buying decision was the topic of question 26. For over half (55,9%) of the respondents it was a factor. For 44,1% it was not.

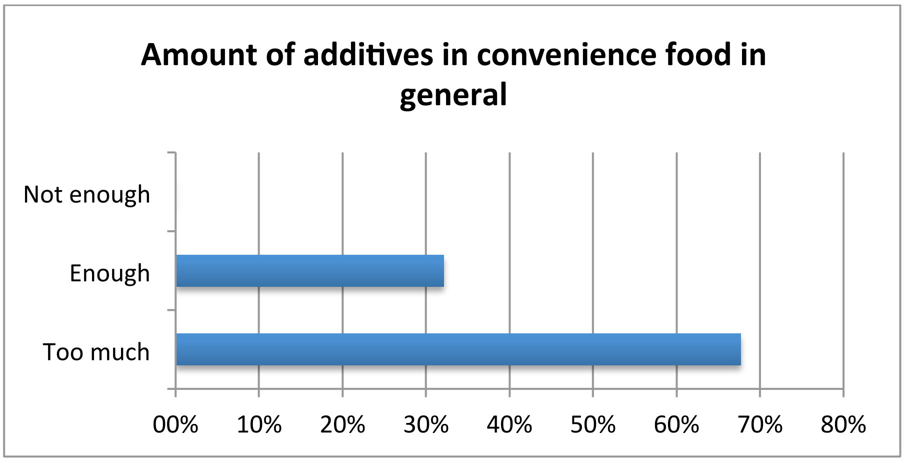

Figure 27. Question 27. Amount of additives in convenience food in general

In question 27 I asked what the respondent felt about the amount of additives in convenience food in general. 67,7% thought there was too much and 32,1% that there was enough of them. For 0,2% of the respondents there was not enough of additives in convenience food.

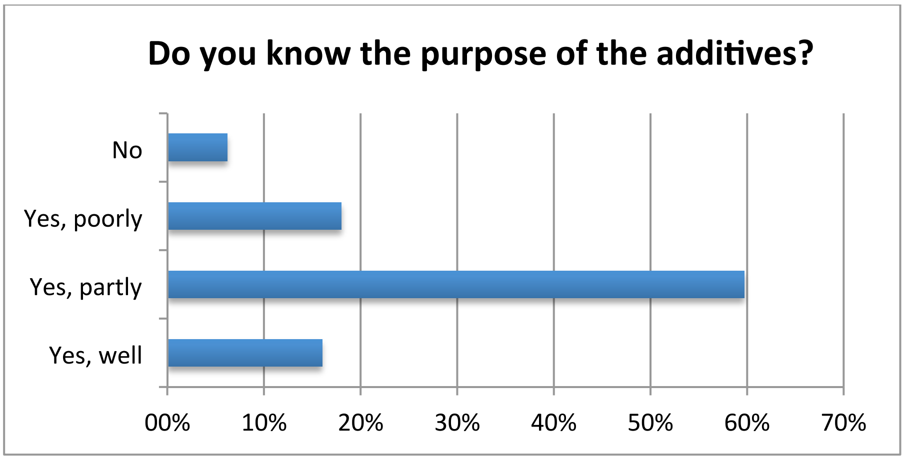

Figure 28. Question 28. Do you know the purpose of the additives?

In the chart above is stated that 59,7% know the purpose of additives partly. 18% of the respondents know it poorly and 16% well. For 6,2% of the respondents the purpose of additives was completely unknown.

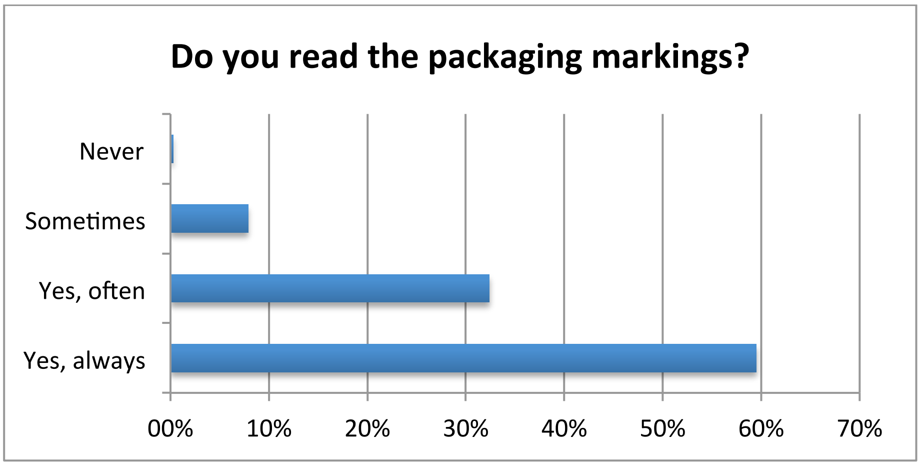

Figure 29. Question 29. Do you read the packaging markings?

Here we can see that 59,5% of the respondents read the packaging markings always, 32,4% often and 7,9% sometimes. 02% never read them.

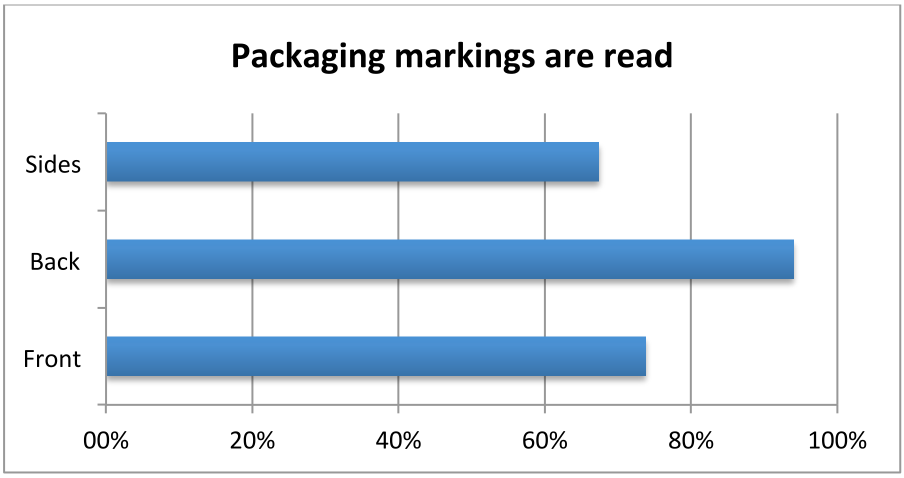

Figure 30. Question 30. Packaging markings are read

In question 30 respondents could choose multiple answers. This chart shows that 73,8% read the packaging marking from the front of the package, 94% from the back and 67,4% from the sides.

Figure 30. Question 32. Would you buy food online?

Figure 30 shows that 61,1% of the respondent would not buy food online. 38,9% would do it.

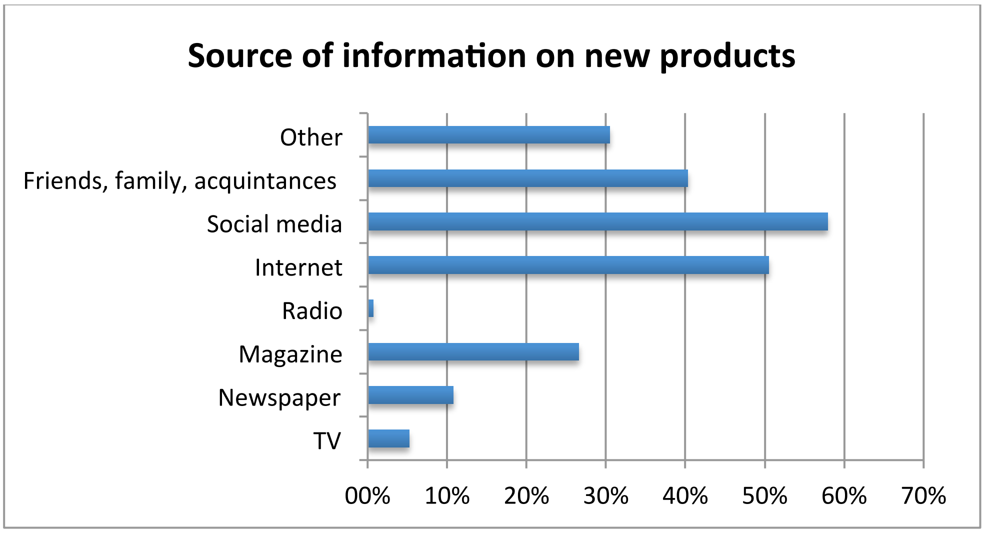

Figure 31. Question 33. Source of information on new products

In question 33 in inquired where the respondents get information on new products. They could choose multiple answers. Online was the most popular with social media 57,9% and Internet 50,5%. 40,3% of the respondents got information from friends, family and acquaintances too. Magazines were the source for 26,6% and newspaper for 10,8%. TV was for 5,2% and radio as a clear last for 0,7%. 30,5% got the information from other sources as well.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The potential of gluten free products markets is huge. Company X has recognized this potential and wants to gain customer insight in that market. The aim of this thesis was to find out how company X could gain competitive advantage to their competitors. That is possible to achieve by knowing the customers and their buying behavior, preferences and dislikes considering the products and shopping itself.

The research questions as presented in the introduction part are:

- What are the most significant criteria for the consumer using gluten free products when purchasing aforementioned goods?
- How to get the consumer pick company X’s goods over the competitors?

By the request of company X some of the answers were not disclosed in the analysis part. The possibility of concealing parts of the analysis was discussed in the beginning of the cooperation with the company.

As mentioned in chapter 2.2.1 creating customer satisfaction is crucial for ensuring that customers choose the same brand the next time. But satisfaction alone does not guarantee that. Loyalty can be achieved via interaction with the customer. This is why company X should listen their customers and create relationship with them. This will help creating loyalty and enhance their sales compared to the competitor.

Survey findings

From the data analyzed in previous chapter it can be concluded that:

89,1% of the respondents was females. It is common that females do the grocery shopping for the whole family. 67,4% was 30-59 years old. Any marketing and sales efforts of gluten free products should focus on these demographics.

Retailers should put all the gluten free products in the same shelf, as 72,4% preferred that over them being next to the normal products.

Gluten free products should be concentrated to Prisma, S-market, Citymarket and K-supermarket and widen product range in them as 78,6% of the respondents buys those products from the aforementioned stores but 65,7% would use smaller convenience stores if the selection of products were better.

Question 23 was one the more important questions in the survey as it answers to the first research question directly. The data indicates that the most significant criteria the consumer when choosing the gluten free product is taste. That is important or very important to 99,2% of the respondents. Quality is the second most significant criteria. 97,5% said it to be important or very important to them. Price was the third most important criteria. For 83,3% it is important or very important. Shelf life come next as 77,8% thinks it is important or very important. Domesticity is important or very important to 58,4% of the respondents. 37,3% said that the manufacturer of the product is important or very important. From these findings we can conclude that company X should focus on the taste and quality of their products mostly. In addition the price should be kept competitive to others. Much more expensive products than the competitors can be an obstacle as over 80% thinks that price is important. When these three factors are in good order with the product the possibility of it being purchased is very high.

72% of the respondents prefer to buy fresh products and 80,3% of the respondents feel that the selection of fresh products is too small. Company X could get sizable advantage to the competitors if they would produce more fresh products. However it is to be noted that 55,3% are not willing to pay extra for them. This is a tough problem to solve since products sold fresh have higher manufacturing expenses hence the retail price is higher too.

Naturally gluten free products are preferred by 61,4% of the respondents. If a person is very sensitive to gluten he uses naturally gluten free products (Celiac disease foundation. 2016). Company X should have a wide selection of these products to meet the needs of those consumers.

Sizes of the packages are good according to 76% of the respondents. Under more close examination of the packages sizes the opinion of the respondents was inquired in six different categories. Only an average of 20,1% would like them to be a bit larger. These results indicate that changing them might not be economically viable. On the other hand larger packages have lower price per kilogram and price was a factor for 83,3% of the respondents as was noted earlier.

91,9 % of the respondents often or always read the packaging markings and 94% read them from the back of the packages. That means that most of the consumers know what they are buying. This trend seems to be growing as for example Mats-Eric Nilssons books Den hemlige kocken and Äkta vara, which addresses processing food and additives in food have been sold 400 000 copies. Swedish food industry has had to leave many additives out of their products. (Nilsson. 2010. 11.) While ingredients are the main packaging markings, for 55,9% the amount of additives in the product is a factor. Thus the product should have additives as little as possible and the packaging markings should be clear and informative and be placed in the backside of the packaging.

5.1 Suggestions for future research

This study concentrates to the consumer buying behavior in Finland. The same study could be conducted in other countries, as the buying behavior of consumer using gluten free products is probably different depending on the culture among other factors. The results could then be compared what would give a good overview of the differences between consumers in different countries.

Future study could be conducted based on this one that can answer the following question:

- How does the buying behavior of a consumer that uses gluten free products differ from a consumer that uses normal ones?
- Why is the buying behavior different between these two groups?

Some of the questions in the survey could be broadened giving more options for the respondents. Open answer inquiry could be a part of the future study. That can give more precise answer that help in forming sales and marketing strategies. The amount of respondents should be greater than in this study. If 25% of potential customers could get to answer to the questionnaire the value of the research would be much higher whereas this study reached only an estimated 5% of the potential customer base.

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Survey

1. Sex

- Male
- Female

2. Age

- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80+

3. Why do you buy gluten free products?

- I have celiac disease
- Family member has celiac disease
- I have a cereal allergy
- Family member has a cereal allergy
- To test them
- Something else

4. What brand manufacturing gluten free products you can remember first?

5. Do you favour certain brand that manufactures gluten free products?

- Yes
- No

Which one and why?

6. How often do you buy gluten free products?

- Once a month
- A couple of times in a month
- Once a week
- 2-3 times a week
- Almost daily
- Something else

7. Do you buy gluten free products to last for..

- a day?
- a couple of days?
- a week?
- a month?
- several months?
- Something else

8. Is it hard to find gluten free products?

- Yes
- No
- Something else

9. Gluten free products in the store should be found..

- all in the same shelf.
- next to the normal products.
- Something else

10. Where do you buy gluten free products?

Almost always Often Seldom Never

- Citymarket

- K-supermarket
- K-market
- K-extra
- Prisma
- S-market
- Sale
- Alepa
- Siwa
- Valintatalo
- Halpa-Halli
- Minimani
- Lidl

11. When do you normally go to the store?

- In the morning
- Forenoon
- Afternoon
- Evening
- Night

12. Would you use convenience stores more if they would have a better selection?

- Yes
- No

13. Do you prefer to buy the products..

- fresh?
- packed in vacuum?
- frozen?

Why?

14. Should there be more fresh gluten free of products?

- Yes
- No

15. Would you be ready to pay extra for a fresh product as oppose to a frozen or vacuum shield one?

- Yes
- No

16. Do you prefer naturally gluten free products where no wheat starch is used in the manufacturing process?

- Yes
- No

17. What new gluten free products would you like to find in the stores?

18. Do you plan your purchases up front i.e. do you make a list before going to the store?

- Always
- Often
- Seldom
- Never

19. Do you make impulse purchases?

- Always
- Often
- Seldom
- Never

20. How fast do you make the buying decision in average?

- Right away
- < 10 seconds
- < 30 seconds
- > 30 seconds

- > 60 seconds
- Something else

21. Are you content with the packaging sizes of the gluten free products?

- Yes
- No

22. How would you change the packaging sizes?

Double the size A bit larger

A bit smaller Half the size Size is good

- Bread
- Salty pastries
- Sweet pastries
- Pasta
- Pizza crust
- Flour

23. Criteria choosing the product

Very important Important

Somewhat important Irrelevant

- Price
- Taste
- Quality
- Shelf life
- Manufacturer
- Domesticity

24. Are gluten free products good in quality?

- Yes
- No

25. What could be improved in the quality?

26. Does the amount of additives affect your buying decision?

- Yes
- No

27. How much groceries have additives in your opinion?

- Too much
- Enough
- Not enough

28. Do you know the purpose of additives in groceries?

- Yes, well
- Yes, partly
- Yes, poorly
- No

29. Do you read the packaging markings?

- Yes, always
- Yes, often
- Sometimes
- Never

30. Do you read the markings..

- in front of the product?
- from back of the product?
- From the sides of the product?

31. Which manufacturer has the best markings in the packages?

- Fria
- Semper
- Moilas
- Vuohela
- Proven

- Schär
- Pirkka
- Barilla
- Some else

Why?

32. Would buy food online?

- Yes
- No

Why?

33. Where do you find information on gluten free products?

- TV
- Newspaper
- Magazine
- Radio
- Internet
- Social media
- Friends, family, acquaintances
- Somewhere else

34. Where would you like to get information on new products?