

organized by SEAFDEC/TD. Under the training course, practical work on the organization of a training program or plans for the conduct of a training program integrating all experiences learned should be given more emphasis and that workshop on audio-visual equipments should also be given more focus considering that use of audio-visual aids is very crucial for the effective the implementation of program trainings.

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Analyzing the Use of Advanced Information Technology to Boost the Sale of Fishery Products in Japan

Satana Duangsawasdi

An analysis of the Konbu Owner's Website was made during the training of the author under the project of Prof. Dr. Akira Nagano at the Future University of Hakodate in Hokkaido, Japan in November 2009. The result indicated that using advanced information technology such as the Konbu Owner's Website introduced here, there would be a possibility to increase the income of fishers and constantly supply fish products to the consumers.

Value adding of fishery products by fishers and direct selling through the use of information technology can raise the income of fishers as well as reduce the purchasing costs on the part of consumers because no middlemen are involved in this form of marketing system. In Japan, the young fishers group at Minamikayabe, Hakodate City, Hokkaido has been efficiently promoting the direct sale of fishery products by establishing a website. Known as the "Konbu Owner's Website", the main objective of this website is to increase the sale of Konbu.

Kelp or "Konbu" in Japanese is the edible seaweed *Saccharina japonica* (*Laminaria japonica*) of the family *Laminariaceae* which is widely eaten in East Asia. Konbu is usually cultivated on ropes in the seas of China, Japan and Korea. In Japan, Konbu from Hakkodate is very well known to be the best in terms of quality and taste.

Introduced via various types of promotional materials, the "Konbu Owner's Website" (**Box 1**) has been used and utilized by many fishers to advertise their products, facilitate



Drying, processing, and packaging of Konbu in Japan (clockwise)



Box 1. The Konbu Owner's Website



The URL of the "Konbu Owner's Website" (above) is <http://www.konbu-info.com>. The CMS (content management system) program is used to manage the contents in the website. CMS is the software developed to manage the contents of any website. The contents could be in the form of texts or documents, photos, music, video and other media. The major advantage of using the CMS is on the fact that it does not require technical skills and knowledge to develop a website.



Prof. Dr. Akira Nagano (right) of Future University provides guidance on the analysis of the Konbu Owner's Website to trainee Satana Duangsawasdi (left)

customers registration system and provide information on production procedures to give the target audience and consumers general information about Konbu. After paying certain fees to the Konbu owners, customers can access the website and can track via the website the progress of their Konbu especially on how the kelps are grown.

In the study conducted at the Future University of Hakodate, Hokkaido, Japan under the project of Prof. Dr. Akira

Box 2. Indicators of accesses to the Konbu Owner's Website

Using internet tools such as Google Analytics and Alexa, the number of accesses to the website can be estimated and analyzed. While Google Analytics track the number of the accesses, Alexa could rank how popular the website is. In addition, these tools can also be used to analyze the interest of the people who access the internet specifically on the issues which they are most interested in. In addition, the factors which might help in increasing the number of accesses especially to the Konbu Owner Website had been identified.

Nagano, the Konbu Owner's Website was analyzed. The result showed that the most important factor that increased the sale of Konbu is the increasing number of accesses to the Website (Box 2). Formal launching of promotional materials and intensified advertisement of Konbu products in fishery related events also contribute to the increasing number of accesses to the website as well. In fact, there is a probability that the number of accesses would further increase if the Konbu site is linked with other popular websites in Japan. Another interesting concern observed during the training is the management of IT in Japan when harmful rumors occurred. When there is a rumor in Japan that a certain virus has contaminated some fishery products, such rumor largely affects the Japanese fishers because their fishery products could no longer be sold. The consumers are afraid to eat fishery products that are alleged to be contaminated with certain virus.

It is a fact that more people are now likely to read the news on the internet than in newspapers and other media. This is because the internet can provide much updated information to the target audience. Specifically in Japan, it has been reported that the number of accesses to most popular websites is usually very high whenever unfavorable rumors on fishery products occur. For example, when Japanese consumers learned about a news or rumor, they are likely to find the facts through the internet and access to the various relevant websites. Therefore, the most effective IT management in Japan to prevent the spread of harmful rumors about any fishery products is to provide correct information through the popular and reliable websites.

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