

Original Research Article

A study on Assessment of Consumer Awareness Amongst Women of Deesa, Gujarat

ABSTRACT

Aims: The present study aims to assess the consumer awareness about eight consumer rights of Deesa and to correlate their awareness with their age, education and media exposure.

Study design: Descriptive research design was used for the study.

Place and Duration of Study: Two hundred women were selected randomly from different societies of Deesa Taluka of Gujarat State. Data was between from June to Decmeber, 2016.

Methodology: An interview schedule was developed to collect data on personal characteristics of the respondents, various sources of information for consumer education utilized by them and consumer problems faced by them. Teacher made test was used to assess the awareness level of women regarding consumers' rights. Awareness regarding their consumer responsibilities and consumer protection laws was also assessed. Data was analyzed by applying suitable descriptive types of statistical tools such as mean score, frequency, percentage and correlation and regression. Rank was given on the basis of mean scores.

Results: It was found in the present study that maximum respondents (69 %) were having moderate awareness level about their consumer rights. On comparing mean scores of awareness level of respondents regarding their consumer rights, they were highly aware about "Right to information (mean score-21.62)" followed by "Right to Redress(mean score-21.57)". . It is apparent from the regression model that Consumer Rights Awareness is significantly affected by education and media exposure of the respondents.

Conclusion: In the nutshell, consumers were moderately aware about their rights. Consumers were more aware about Right to information in comparison to other rights. Consumer protection was explored the vulnerable area which was needed to be taken care of. Education had a significant impact on consumer awareness.

Keywords: Consumer Rights, consumer problems, media exposure, consumer awareness

1. INTRODUCTION:

The understanding by an individual of their rights as a consumer concerning available products and services being marketed and sold is called consumer awareness. The need for empowerment of consumers is already well recognized all over the world. The level of awareness of the consumer can be taken as an indicator of the progress of a country. In developing countries like the India, where rights are sometimes ignored and taken for granted, it is hard to speculate how many people are aware of their rights as consumers. With liberalization and globalization and greater thrust towards privatization accompanied with heightened awareness on account of increased availability of information and media exposure today's consumer has changed radically. However, in spite of best efforts during the course of consumption a consumer may encounter many problems. In spite of various provisions providing protection to the consumer and providing for stringent action against adulterated and sub-standard articles in the different enactments, very little could be achieved in the field of Consumer Protection. There is an urgent and increasing necessity to educate and motivate the consumers with regard to quality of products. In short, the consumers should be empowered with respect to their rights as a consumer. They should be equipped to be vigilant with a discerning eye so as to enable to protect themselves from any malpractice on the part of the traders. This is indispensable to spread consumer education among women which are more vulnerable to be exploited by traders. This study focuses on women consumers' awareness level in Deesa city.

Objectives of study

- i. To assess awareness amongst women regarding consumers' rights and responsibilities

- ii. To probe the awareness of women regarding the consumer protection
- iii. To analyze the consumer problems faced/perceived by women
- iv. To identify various sources of information utilized by women consumers
- v. To identify factors affecting consumer awareness amongst selected women of Deesa city

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Location of study:

The research study was conducted in Deesa city.

2.2 Selection of Respondents:

Two hundred women were selected randomly from different societies of Deesa city.

2.3 Data collection tools:

An interview schedule was developed to collect data on personal characteristics of the respondents, various sources of information for consumer education utilized by them and consumer problems faced by them. Teacher made test was used to assess the awareness level of women regarding consumers' rights. Awareness regarding their consumer responsibilities and consumer protection laws was also assessed.

2.4 Analysis of data and presentation of Results:

After completing the work of data collection; data was analyzed by applying suitable descriptive types of statistical tools such as mean score, frequency, percentage and correlation. Rank was given on the basis of mean scores. Multiple regression analysis was done to know the effect of independent variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the findings of the study-

Table: 1 Distribution of respondents according to their age

S. No.	Age groups	Frequency	Percent
1	Young(18-40 yrs)	132	66.0
2	Adult(40-65 yrs)	66	33.0
3	Old (> 65 yrs)	2	01.0
	Total	200	100.0

Distribution of age shows that maximum respondents belonged to young age group followed by adult age group. Age group may have a vital association with consumer behavior and consumer awareness.

Table: 2 Distribution of respondents according to their education

S. No.	Education	Frequency	Percent
1	Primary	7	3.5
2	8 th	26	13.0
3	High school	15	7.5
4	Intermediate	81	40.5
5	Graduate	66	33.0
6	Post graduate	5	2.5
	Total	200	100.0

Table 2 envisages that maximum respondents were intermediate while 33 per cent were graduate also. Education is a personal factor which may influence consumers' knowledge.

Table: 3 Distribution of respondents according to their occupation

S. No.	Occupation	Frequency	Percent
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1	Students	32	16.0
2	Homemakers	107	53.5
3	Service	41	20.5
4	Business/Self employed	20	10.0
	Total	200	100.0

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61 Occupation of the respondents illustrates plenty of variation. More than half of the
62 respondents were housewives, while sixteen per cent were still studying. Almost thirty per
63 cent of respondents were earning also through their job or business.

64 **Table: 4 Distribution of respondents according to sources of information they use**

65 (n=200)

S. No.	Sources of information about new products	Frequency	Percent
1.	Newspaper	174	87.0
2.	Television	184	92.0
3.	Internet	174	87.0
4.	Friends	185	92.5
5.	Relatives	182	91.0
6.	Advertisement literature	117	58.5
7.	Posters, hoardings	160	80.0

66 Majority of the respondents were getting information about new products through television,
67 friends and relatives. Internet, news papers and posters or hoardings were also important
68 sources of information to know about new products in the market and other consumer
69 related information.

70 Krishnakumar and Sakthiventhan (2012) stated in their study that mass media like TV,
71 Radio and Newspaper were the most important sources for creating consumer protection
72 awareness, whereas Journals and Magazine were the least important sources for making
73 consumer protection awareness.

74

75 **Table: 5 Distribution of respondents according to their awareness level regarding**
76 **consumer rights** (n=200)

S. No.	Awareness level	Frequency	Percent
1.	Low	34	17.0
2.	Moderate	138	69.0
3.	High	28	14.0
	Total	200	100.0
$\bar{x} = 2.51$		SD= 0.931	

77 Consumers have different rights, which are formed to protect consumers from exploitation.
78 They can protect themselves from business malpractices only if they are well aware about
79 their consumer rights. It was found in the present study that maximum respondents were
80 having moderate awareness level about their consumer rights. Very few respondents were
81 highly aware about their consumer rights. This may be due to lack of exposure to consumer
82 education.

83 Results of a study conducted by Ibarra and Revilla showed that the overall degree of
84 awareness for Filipino consumers in Guam and in the Philippines were both "moderate".
85

Table: 6 Mean scores of awareness regarding different consumer rights (n=200)

S. No.	Consumer rights	Mean Score	Rank
1.	Right to basic needs	19.72	VI
2.	Right to safety	14.12	VII
3.	Right to information	21.62	I
4.	Right to choose	11.40	VIII
5.	Right to representation	20.41	V
6.	Right to redress	21.57	II
7.	Right to consumer education	20.69	IV
8.	Right to a healthy environment	20.83	III

On comparing mean scores of awareness level of respondents regarding their consumer rights, they were highly aware about "Right to information" followed by "Right to Redress". In other words, consumers were gathering information about the products before purchasing. They were also complaining about any problems if they had, to the shopkeepers or other concerned persons. Surprisingly, respondents were least aware about "Right to choose". This denotes that respondents' selection of products was influenced by salesman, advertisements or other factors. They do not make rationalized choice while purchasing products.

Table: 7 Distribution of consumers according to their awareness regarding consumer protection laws

S. No.	Awareness level	Frequency	Percent
1.	Aware about consumer protection laws	74	37.0
2.	Somewhat aware	116	58.0
3.	Not aware about consumer protection laws	10	05.0
Total		200	100.0

Further, consumers were asked whether they were aware about various consumer protection laws. Only 37 per cent respondents were aware about them. While, more than half of the respondents were having an idea about few consumer protection laws, though they were not sure.

Table: 8 Distribution of consumers according to their awareness regarding consumer courts for redressal of grievances of the consumers

S. No.	Awareness level	Frequency	Percent
1.	Aware about consumer courts	67	33.5
2.	Not aware about consumer courts	133	66.5
Total		200	100.0

Maximum respondents were not aware about the consumer courts. Consumer courts are made to deal with the consumer grievances only and consumers can get justice and compensation for their grievances if they will file a case in consumer courts. Hence, it is important to know about consumer rights as well as consumer redressal mechanism to protect ourselves from being subjugated by tradesmen's malpractices.

Table : 9 Distribution of consumers according to their willingness for joining consumer organizations to fight for the redressal of grievances

S. No.	Awareness level	Frequency	Percent
1.	Willing	191	95.5
2.	Not willing	09	4.5
3.	Total	200	100.0

Consumers can file complain alone or can join a consumer organization which may deal consumer related cases in the court. These consumer organizations help consumers to file their complaints and create awareness about their rights and responsibilities. Majority of the consumers (95.5 %) wanted to join consumer organizations/forums to be facilitated for getting information and filing their complaints.

Table: 10 Problems faced by consumers (n=200)

S. No.	Consumer problems	Faced problem		Rank
		Frequency	Percent	
1.	Adulterated food	105	52.5	11
2.	Imitated products	174	87.0	1
3.	Incorrect weights and measures	136	68.0	5
4.	Misleading advertisements	126	63.0	8
5.	incomplete information in label	119	59.5	9
6.	High prices of essential goods	140	70.0	4
7.	Sub standard quality goods	149	74.5	2
8.	Unfair warranties	134	67.0	6
9.	Sale gimmicks such as gifts, sale, promotional schemes etc.	107	53.5	10
10.	Cheated by any vendor	77	38.5	13
11.	Extra prices for the essential goods due to black marketing and hoarding	89	44.5	12
12.	Businessmen are not cordial	76	38.0	14
13.	High admission fees in private schools and colleges	141	70.5	3
14.	Problems while availing many community services such as –Cooking gas, communications, water and electricity supply, hospital services, municipal services	131	65.5	7

There are many consumer related problems, which offends people. Amongst all, the problem of getting imitated products in the market was faced by maximum consumers (87 %). There are many shopkeepers who sell imitated products which are not easily recognizable. Sub standard quality of the products was also found another major problem among the consumers (74.5 %). Many times, consumer purchases a product but due to its sub standard quality it becomes blemished rapidly. The third major problem quoted by consumers was high admission fees in private schools and colleges (70.5 %). There were many other problems faced by consumers such as high prices of essential goods, incorrect weights and measures, sale gimmicks etc. Aloof behavior of businessmen towards consumers was reported by the least respondents (38 %).

137 An informed consumer cannot be cheated or exploited, hence, to reduce these consumer
138 problems, product knowledge is very important. Consumers should use their rights and bear
139 their responsibilities to avoid such consumer problems.

140 **Table: 11 Distribution of respondents according to bearing their consumer**
141 **responsibilities** (n=200)

S. No.	STATEMENTS	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Examining the expiry date of the items	200	100	1
2.	Checking the MRP (Maximum Retail Price) before buying a product	194	97.0	2.5
3.	Charging the MRP or less than the MRP	120	60.0	11.5
4.	Checking the weight of the products mentioned on the items	187	93.5	4
5.	Complaining shopkeeper about adulteration, if find	131	65.5	10
6.	Realizing the need for forming some consumer clubs to fight for your rights	151	75.5	7
7.	Ready to join such forums for the redressal of your grievance	191	95.5	5
8.	Using consumer courts for redressal of grievances of the consumers	67	33.5	19
9.	Filing a case in the consumer court	67	33.5	19
10.	Collecting information about the product	194	97.0	2.5
11.	Obtaining and using information regarding all kinds of purchase	178	89.0	6
12.	Planning properly before purchasing any good	136	68.0	9
13.	Keeping the receipts and relevant documents safely for future reference	120	60.0	11.5
14.	Pointing out the seller's mistake at the same point itself	67	33.5	19
15.	Comparing prices at more than one store and taking advantage of the lowest priced item.	87	43.5	16
16.	Searching for bargains at seasonal sales auctions	102	51.0	14
17.	Reading consumer articles in newspapers and magazines	82	41.0	17
18.	Looking for a guarantee on expensive products before deciding on the purchase	141	70.5	8
19.	Sharing product information with friends and relatives	106	53.0	13
20.	Gaining product knowledge to protect from exploitation	100	50.0	15

142

143 As far as consumer rights are concerned, they are devised to protect consumers. Along with
144 these rights, there are some responsibilities which a consumer should abide cautiously.

145 It is evident from the Table 11 that respondents were very much conscientious about some
146 of their responsibilities as a consumer. All the respondents examined the expiry dates of
147 products before purchasing (100.0 %). Some of the consumer responsibilities were dealt by
148 majority of the respondents such as checking MRP (97 %) and collecting information before
149 purchasing products (97 %) followed by checking weight of the product mentioned (93.5 %).
150 It signifies that respondents were careful about these responsibilities while purchasing and
151 they checked products specifications before purchasing.

152 Respondents were feeling need to form consumer forums and they were also found
153 concerned for joining consumer forums to solve their grievances. Though, very few

respondents were using consumer courts for their grievances (33.5 %). Respondents were lacking to abide one of the significant responsibilities, i.e., pointing out the seller's mistake at the same point itself. If the consumers will point out seller's mistake at that very moment, it can make difference and warn sellers that consumers are well aware and informed about their rights and responsibilities.

Table : 12 Correlations of awareness regarding consumer rights with independent variables

Dependent variable	Age	Education	Media Exposure
Consumer rights awareness	-.166 [*]	.212 ^{**}	-.109 ^{ns}

Correlation analysis of consumer rights awareness of respondents with independent variables reflects that awareness of consumer rights has negatively significant correlation with their age and significant positive correlation with education.

It refers to the fact that young and more educated respondents were more aware about their consumer rights. This may be due to more exposure of educated and young consumers in comparison to the less educated ones.

Regression Analysis

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Consumer rights awareness	150.31	8.411
Age	34.37	8.635
Education	3.91	1.146
Occupation	2.23	.843
Media exposure	12.73	3.297

Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Media exposure , occupation, age, education ^a		. Enter

a. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.301 ^a	.091	.072	8.103	1.294

a. Predictors: (Constant), media exposure , occupation, age, education

b. Dependent Variable: Consumer rights awareness

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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1	Regression	1257.892	4	314.473	4.789	.001 ^a
	Residual	12606.596	192	65.659		
	Total	13864.487	196			

a. Predictors: (Constant), media exposure , occupation, age, education

b. Dependent Variable: Consumer rights awareness

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Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	153.442	4.219		36.365	.000
	Age	-.098	.072	-.101	-1.365	.174
	Education	1.810	.574	.247	3.155	.002
	Occupation	-.144	.696	-.014	-.207	.836
	Media exposure	-.512	.189	-.201	-2.714	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Rights Awareness

Residuals Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	143.19	155.19	150.31	2.533	197
Residual	-30.905	19.695	.000	8.020	197
Std. Predicted Value	-2.814	1.925	.000	1.000	197
Std. Residual	-3.814	2.431	.000	.990	197

A. Dependent Variable: Consumer Rights Awareness

174

175 Regression Model

176 $CRA = 153.442 - 0.098 \text{ Age} + 1.810^{**} \text{ Edu.} - 0.144 \text{ Occup.} - 0.512^{**} \text{ ME}$ ($R^2 = 0.091$)
177 (4.219) (0.072) (0.574) (0.696) (0.189)

178

179 Further, regression analysis was done to know the effect of independent variables on
180 Consumer rights awareness amongst respondents. ANOVA table demonstrates that one or
181 more than one independent variables have significant effect on consumer rights awareness.
182 It is apparent from the regression model that CRA is significantly affected by education and
183 media exposure of the respondents. Surprisingly media exposure has negative impact on
184 consumer rights awareness. The reason behind this may be that less content of consumer
185 rights and responsibilities is being covered on media or the consumers are not using media
186 for increasing their knowledge and awareness regarding consumer awareness while they
187 are using media for entertainment purpose only. The regression model found in the present
188 study is given as above.

189

190 4. CONCLUSION

191 ➤ In the nutshell, consumers were moderately aware about their rights. Consumers were
192 more aware about Right to information in comparison to other rights.

193 ➤ Consumer protection was explored the vulnerable area which was needed to be taken
 194 care of. Consumers were not aware about consumer protection laws and redressal
 195 mechanism for their grievances.
 196 ➤ Though, they were aware and wary about their responsibilities.
 197 ➤ Major sources of information for consumers were found Television, friends and relatives.
 198 ➤ Education had a significant impact on consumer awareness.
 199 Apparently, consumers are the king of market and they have influence in the marketplace
 200 yet they should be wary and vigilant. The best protection a consumer has is to be well
 201 informed about his rights and responsibilities. Consumers should be ready to secure,
 202 protect, and assert their rights in the marketplace while trading and transacting business to
 203 obtain fair value at all times. Alongside, consumers have the responsibility to obtain, assess
 204 and utilize available information on products and services that will help them make wise
 205 buying decision.

206 **Recommendation**

- 207 1. This study called for collaborative efforts of all sectors of society to highlight more
 208 programs on consumer awareness to build knowledge, competence, values, and
 209 skills geared towards the development of an aware and responsible consumer.
- 210 2. A consumer education program should be developed as a means to waken or re-
 211 awaken the consumers until they are fully aware about their basic rights.
- 212 3. A consumer forum should be built up to spread consumer knowledge and guide
 213 consumers to solve their problems easily.

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