

## Comparative Study of Consumer Awareness among Males and Females of Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh

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**ABSTRACT** The study was conducted on 120 respondents comprising 60 males and 60 females in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh to ascertain awareness level of both the categories for consumer terminologies, legal laws and organizations. Mean scores on consumer awareness statements depicted that nearly fifty percent respondents were having low level of awareness. Majority of respondents were aware about existence of legal laws and various consumer terminologies. Most commonly used source of consumer information was television followed by radio and least common were journals. Eighty percent males and 50 percent females were aware of consumer organization but only 40 percent males and 25 percent females showed interest in joining it. Awareness level of both males and females showed significant difference.

### INTRODUCTION

Majority of Indian consumers are ignorant and do not know the role of consumption viz-a viz economic system. The entire marketing operation is aimed at profit maximization at the expense of consuming people. Malpractices like adulteration, short weights and measures, high prices, false and deceitful advertisement and packaging are pervading the market even when government of India claim to have passed maximum legal laws protecting consumers than any other country in the world.

Indian consumers are cheated through defective weights and measures to the tune of Rs. 1600 crores a year. Though government has passed several acts and laws to protect consumers and seek redressal of their grievances they are not in a position to utilize their knowledge or are simply ignorant of these (John 1974, Gupta and Ogale, 1988). Laws are not popular because they are framed in highly technical terminologies that it would not be possible to comprehend by a layman (Anonymous, 1976).

Few institutions such as I.I.M. Ahmedabad and sporadic researches at individual level have been conducted (John, 1974; Bhatia, 1973; Bhatt, 1977). The problem is multidimensional and multi action is needed where incorporation of research institution and academician is required. Therefore, the current investigation is undertaken with the

### Objectives

- To assess the awareness of respondents

towards (i) consumer terminology (ii) legal laws.

- To ascertain the awareness of respondents regarding consumer organizations and various information sources.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

**(a) Research Design:** Survey method was used with a structured type questionnaire as the data-collecting instrument.

**(b) Pre- Testing:** Pre – testing was done on 20 subjects (10 males and 10 females) for *clarity and reliability of the tool*.

**(c) Sampling Procedure:** The sample for the study was selected from Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. Selective sampling was chosen after critical review of literature. It has been observed that consumer behaviour has been imposed on a range of people belonging to middle class. Both rich and poor have different problems. Therefore, the present study was limited to middle class society. Fifty percent respondents were males and 50 percent females having formal education.

**(d) Data Collection:** In total 150 questionnaires were distributed out of which 120 sample was finally selected.

**(e) Analysis of Data:** The statements on consumer awareness were framed after critical review of literature and discussions with experts in the field. The answer to these statements were sought in terms of 'right', 'wrong', 'not sure' and 'don't know' which were scored as follows:

|          |   |          |
|----------|---|----------|
| Right    | : | 3 points |
| Not sure | : | 2 points |

Don't Know : 1 point

Wrong : 0 point

Scoring pattern was reverse in case of wrong statements. Thus minimum score was 0 and maximum possible = 105. Mean and Standard deviation were calculated and range was formed to categorize the respondents as follows:

Low awareness 0-35

Partial awareness 36-70

High awareness 71-105

't'- test was used to study the difference between awareness level and sex of respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Consumer Awareness:** It was observed from Table 1 that out of total, 41.6 percent respondents have low level of awareness regarding consumer terms. Amongst this, 15.0 percent are males and 26.6 percent females. Only 23.3 percent respondents had partial awareness out of which 15.0 percent are males and 8.3 percent females. Out of total, 35 percent respondents had high level of awareness with 20 percent belonging to males and 15 percent to females. Findings of John's study (1974) also confirmed that majority of respondents have partial consumer awareness.

**Legal Awareness:** Analysis of data (Table 2)

**Table 1: Distribution of sample according to their level of consumer awareness (N= 120)**

| Respon-<br>dents | Low            |                 | Partial        |                 | High           |                 |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                  | Frequ-<br>ency | Perce-<br>ntage | Frequ-<br>ency | Perce-<br>ntage | Frequ-<br>ency | Perce-<br>ntage |
| Males            | 18             | 15.0            | 18             | 15.0            | 24             | 20.0            |
| Females          | 32             | 26.6            | 10             | 8.3             | 18             | 15.0            |
| Total            | 50             | 41.6            | 28             | 23.3            | 42             | 35.0            |

regarding legal awareness showed that majority of males and female respondents were aware about the legal laws protecting the consumers against adulteration of food stuffs (90 percent males, 86.6 percent females), adulteration of drugs (90 percent males, 86.6 percent females); short weighing (86.6 percent each of males and females); false weights and measures (86.6 percent males, 76.6 percent females); using stones for weights (80.6 percent males, 63.3 percent females); using hand made balance (76.6 percent males and 50 percent females) and using deceitful packaging (70 percent males and 43.3 percent females). It was concluded from the above findings that males were having better awareness regarding legal laws than female respondents.

**Awareness of Respondents Regarding Consumer Terminology:** Level of awareness regarding various terminologies was observed in Table 3. The data showed that 53.3 percent males and 66.6 percent females were aware of term Ag mark. The term I.S.I was known to 60 percent males and 66.6 percent female respondents. About 30 percent males and 40 percent female respondents were aware of the term mercerization. It was inferred from the findings that more number of female respondents were aware of these specific terms than men. It may be attributed to the fact that it is related more to clothing which is frequently purchased by women than men.

**Source of Information Regarding Consumer Terminology:** Majority of male and female respondents got some information of consumer interest through T.V. (86.6 percent males and 6.6 percent females) followed by radio, newspaper and magazines (Table 4). Journals were least commonly used sources of information (33.3

**Table 2: Distribution of sample according to level of consumer legal law awareness (N=120)**

| S.<br>No. | Legal laws                      | Males          |                 |                |                 | Females        |                 |                |                 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
|           |                                 | Yes            |                 | No             |                 | Yes            |                 | No             |                 |
|           |                                 | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage |
| 1.        | Adulteration of food stuff      | 54             | 90.0            | 6              | 10.0            | 52             | 86.6            | 8              | 13.3            |
| 2.        | Adulteration of drugs           | 54             | 90.0            | 6              | 10.0            | 52             | 86.6            | 8              | 13.3            |
| 3.        | Short weight and measures       | 52             | 86.6            | 8              | 13.3            | 52             | 86.6            | 8              | 13.3            |
| 4.        | False weights and measures      | 52             | 86.6            | 8              | 13.3            | 46             | 76.6            | 14             | 23.3            |
| 5.        | Misuse of weights and measures  | 44             | 73.3            | 16             | 26.6            | 38             | 66.3            | 22             | 36.6            |
| 6.        | Using stones for weights        | 48             | 80.6            | 12             | 20.0            | 38             | 63.3            | 22             | 36.6            |
| 7.        | Using handmade balances         | 46             | 76.6            | 14             | 23.3            | 30             | 50.0            | 30             | 50.0            |
| 8.        | Using deceitful advertisement   | 46             | 76.6            | 14             | 23.3            | 34             | 56.6            | 26             | 43.3            |
| 9.        | Using deceitful packaging       | 42             | 70.0            | 18             | 30.0            | 34             | 56.6            | 26             | 43.3            |
| 10.       | Without giving weighed contents | 44             | 73.3            | 16             | 26.6            | 38             | 63.3            | 22             | 36.6            |

percent males and 36.3 percent males). It can be concluded that mass – media can effectively be used to promote information and awareness especially to educated respondents belonging to middle income group. Mass- media can also play an effective role for masses belonging to different socio- economic categories also.

**Awareness Regarding Consumer Organizations:** The data in Table 5 showed that 80 percent males and 53.3 percent females were aware about consumer organizations working in and around their area. On the contrary, only 40 males and 26.6 percent females had shown any interest in joining these organizations. The reason given by majority of them was lack of time and no interest in joining them, as it will yield no results. Parameshwar (1988) analyzed that unless

consumer awareness' is created, the efforts of the government and voluntary organizations can't achieve the desired results.

#### **H<sub>0</sub>: Sex Postulated to be Positive Co-relates Level of Awareness of Selected Sample**

Level of awareness between males and females was tested by employing 't' test. The results indicated that awareness level of both male and female respondents showed significant difference. Male respondents were significantly more aware than the female respondents. 't' value – 3.40\*

Thus, overall the findings gave an insight into the extent of consumer lack of awareness of many facts that are of much relevance for their own welfare.

**Table 3: Distribution of sample according to their awareness of consumer terminology (N=120)**

| S. Legal Laws<br>No. | Males          |                 |                |                 | Females        |                 |                |                 |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                      | Yes            |                 | No             |                 | Yes            |                 | No             |                 |
|                      | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage |
| 1. Agmark            | 32             | 53.3            | 28             | 46.6            | 40             | 66.6            | 20             | 38.3            |
| 2. I.S.I             | 36             | 60.0            | 24             | 40.0            | 40             | 66.6            | 20             | 33.3            |
| 3. Sanforized        | 18             | 30.0            | 42             | 70              | 24             | 40.0            | 36             | 60.0            |
| 4. Mercerized        | 8              | 13.3            | 26             | 86.6            | 12             | 20.0            | 48             | 80.0            |

**Table 4: Distribution of sample according to mass media information sources (N=120)**

| S. Information sources<br>No. | Males          |                 |                |                 | Females        |                 |                |                 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                               | Yes            |                 | No             |                 | Yes            |                 | No             |                 |
|                               | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage |
| 1. Television                 | 52             | 86.6            | 8              | 13.3            | 56             | 93.3            | 4              | 6.6             |
| 2. Radio                      | 38             | 63.3            | 22             | 36.3            | 34             | 56.6            | 26             | 43.3            |
| 3. Newspaper                  | 36             | 60.0            | 24             | 40.0            | 42             | 70.0            | 18             | 30.0            |
| 4. Journals                   | 20             | 33.3            | 40             | 66.6            | 22             | 36.6            | 38             | 63.3            |
| 5. Magazines                  | 34             | 56.6            | 26             | 43.3            | 42             | 70.0            | 18             | 30.0            |

**Table 5: Distribution of sample according to their awareness of consumer organization**

| S. Percentage<br>No.                          | Males          |                 |                |                 | Females        |                 |                |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                                               | Yes            |                 | No             |                 | Yes            |                 | No             |                 |
|                                               | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage | Fre-<br>quency | Perce-<br>ntage |
| 1. Consumer organizations working in the area | 48             | 80.0            | 12             | 20.0            | 32             | 53.3            | 28             | 46.6            |
| 2. Interest in joining                        | 24             | 40.0            | 36             | 60.0            | 16             | 26.6            | 44             | 73.3            |

### CONCLUSION

1. Television was the main media for both the male and female respondents, which influenced their buying most.
2. There existed a significant difference between the awareness level of the male and female respondents regarding consumer terminology and consumer protection laws. Males were more aware about the popular consumer terminologies than females.

### RECOMMENDATION

Mass- media and educational institutions need to play an effective role in consumer awakening and imparting information regarding

organizations working for the consumer's interest in their area.

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