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## Comparative Study of Consumer Awareness among Males and Females of Cuddalore Town

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### ABSTRACT

Majority of Indian Consumers are ignorant and do not know the role of Consumption vis-à-vis 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 claims to have passed more legal laws protecting consumers than any other country in the world. The study was conducted on 120 respondents comprising 60 males and 60 females in Cuddalore town, to ascertain awareness level of both the categories for consumer terminologies, legal laws and organizations. Mean scores on consumer awareness statements depicted that nearly 50% respondents were having low level of awareness. Majority of respondents were aware about existence of legal laws and various consumer terminologies.

**Keywords:** Consumer Awareness, Consumption, Adulterations, Consumer terminologies, Standard deviation, Keemat.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Majority of Indian Consumers are ignorant and do not know the role of Consumption *vis-a-vis* 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 claims to have passed more legal laws protecting consumers than any other country in the world.

### 2.0 EARLIER STUDIES

Indian consumers are cheated through defective weights and measures to the tune of Rs.1,600 crores a year. Though government has passed several acts and laws to protect consumer and seek redressal of their grievances they are not in a position to utilize their knowledge or are simply ignorant of these [1-2]. Laws are not popular because they are framed in highly technical terminologies that it would not be possible to comprehend by laymen (Anonymous 1976).

Few institutions such as J.J.M. Ahmedabad and sporadic researches at individual levels have been conducted [3-4]. The problem is multidimensional

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and multi action is needed where incorporation of research institution and academician is required. Therefore the current investigation is undertaken with the objectives.

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the awareness of respondents towards (i) Consumer technology (ii) Legal laws
- To ascertain the awareness of respondents regarding consumer organization and various information sources.

### 4.0 METHODOLOGY

- Research Design:** Survey method was used with a structured type questionnaire as the data collecting instrument.
- Pre-Testing:** Pre-testing was done on 20 subjects (10 males and 10 females) for clarity and reliability of the tool.
- Sampling Procedure:** The sample for the study was selected from Cuddalore town. Fifty percent respondents were males and 50 percent females having formal education.
- Data Collection:** In total 150 questionnaires were distributed out of which 120 sample was selected finally.
- 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 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.

### 5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Consumer awareness:** It was observed from Table 1 that out of total, 41.6% respondents have low level of awareness regarding consumer terms. Amongst this, 15.0% are males and 26.6% females. Only 23.3% respondents had partial awareness out of which 15% are male and 8.3% females. Out of total, 85% respondents had high level of awareness with 20% belonging to males and 15% of females. Finding also confirmed that majority of respondents have partial consumer awareness.

**Legal awareness:** Analysis of data (Table 2) 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% males, 86.6% females), adulteration of drugs (90% males, 86.6% females); short weighing (86.6% each of males and females); false weights and measures (86.6% males, 76.6% females); using stones for weights (80.6% males, 63.3% females); using hand made balance (76.6% males and 50% females) and using deceitful packaging (70% males and 43.3% 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. It was inferred from the table findings that more number of female respondents (66.6%) was 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 Technology:** Majority of male and female respondents got some information of consumer interest through T.V. (86.6% males and 6.6% females) followed by radio, newspaper and magazines (Table 4). Journals were least commonly used sources of information (33.3% males and 36.3% males) It can be concluded that mass-media can effectively be used to promote information and awareness especially to educated respondents.

**Awareness regarding consumer organizations:**

The data in Table 5 showed that 80% males and 53.3% females were aware about consumer organisations working in and around their area. On the contrary, only 40% males and 26.6% females had shown any interest in Joining these organisations. The reason given by majority of them was lack of time and no interest in joining them, as it will yield no results. [5-6] analysed that unless consumer awareness is created, the efforts of the government and voluntary organisations 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 had 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.

**6.0 Recommendations**

- Promote general awareness of the rights of the consumer by encouraging consumer education and supplying information.
- Bringing together the consumers, traders and policy makers to exchange information of mutual interest for better co-ordination.
- Enlighten the business community on its ethical and legal obligations to maintain quality of the products or services and to be transparent in dealing with consumers.
- Publish periodical and products specific booklets, pamphlets, CDs, Slides, documentary films and other devices of mass communication for promoting awareness in English and regional languages, highlighting the problem in specified areas like real estate, public utilities, non-banking financial agencies, etc.

**Table 1: Distribution of Sample According to their Level of Consumer Awareness (N = 120)**

Respondents	Low		Partial		High	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
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

Source: Primary Data

**Table 2: Distribution of Sample According to Level of Consumer Legal Law Awareness (N=120)**

S. No.	Legal Laws	Males				Females			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage
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	50.3
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

Source: Primary Data

**Table 3: Distribution of Sample According to their Awareness of Consumer Terminology (N=120)**

S. No.	Legal Laws	Males				Females			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage
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.	Merцерized	8	13.3	26	86.6	12	20.0	48	80.0

Source: Primary Data

**Table 4: Distribution of Sample According to Mass Media Information Sources (N=120)**

S. No.	Information Sources	Males				Females			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage
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

Source: Primary Data

**Table 5: Distribution of Sample According to their Awareness of Consumer Organization**

S. No.	Information Sources	Males				Females			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage	Freq uency	Percen tage
1.	Consumer organization 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

Source: Primary Data

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

Industrial and consumer markets in India have been witnessing many changes driven by globalization and privatization. Consequently, production oriented market has been shifting towards customer oriented market. Consumers now have varied choices and they are more knowledgeable and demanding too. Hence, consumer awareness is very indispensable.

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