

## AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF CONSUMER RIGHTS BY WOMEN CONSUMERS OF PALANPUR CITY

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted at Palanpur city of Gujarat State, India. A representative sample of 200 women consumers was selected from 14 voting wards of Palanpur city through proportionate random sampling procedure. Data was collected by personal interview technique. The Findings revealed the majority of women consumers showed low level of awareness regarding consumer right and low extent of utilization of consumer right. Among the various consumer rights, maximum awareness was observed for the right of choice and minimum awareness was regarding right to safety. The right to information was found to be utilized by most of the consumers and minimum utilization was observed for the right to health and environment. Perceiving consumer rights as wastage of time was expressed as major constraint, while utilizing their consumer right.

### INTRODUCTION

The need for empowerment of consumers as a class can not overemphasized and 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. 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.

Liberalization in paving way for a market-driven economy, where the manufacturers seek to maximize profits. Manufacturers are not often concerned about the quality of goods and services and their impact on the health of people and the environment. Instead of the consumer guiding the producer about what should be produced, it is the producer who the use of advertising techniques. Consumers are saddled with the problem of choosing between too many products with too less information. With the concentration of

market in the hands of a few large corporations, it becomes important that the consumers are aware of their rights in order to ensure proper standards for the goods and services for which they make payment.

Unless the consumers are aware of the constitutional provisions by government to protect the rights of the consumers, the effort of the government and voluntary organizations cannot achieve the desired result (Parameshvar, 1988). So consumer education is focused upon these days. Consumer education not only enhances skill of homemaker in better management of resources (Bonner, 1992) but also keeps them alert from being cheated by shopkeepers, vendors etc.

In India, C. Rajagopalachari was the first to start Consumer Protection Council at Madras in 1950. Since then journey of struggle for consumer protection began. The government of India came forward with Consumer Protection Council in 1983 and Consumer Protection Act, in 1986.

But still, Indian consumers are cheated to rupees in crores annually through various device invented by clever businessman, producers and traders. (Anon; 1995). It is found that people prefer to absorb and endure the wrong done to them rather than light against injustice. This is because consumers do not know the ways and means or facing them confidently. (Neelkhanta & Anand, 1992) Therefore to find out that how many women at Palanpur, who shop for their households, are aware of consumer rights and are actually utilizing them. So this study was carried out with following objectives:

- \* To study the personal, socio-economic and communicational characteristics of women consumers
- \* To study the level of awareness about Consumer rights by women consumers
- \* To find out the extent of utilization of Consumer rights by women consumers
- \* To find out the constraints, if any, of the women consumers for utilizing their consumer rights.

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- \* To determine association between personal, socio-economic and communicational characteristics of women consumers and their level of awareness about consumer rights
- \* To determine association between personal, socio-economic and communicational characteristic of women consumers and their extent of utilization or consumer rights

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

Palampur is the district headquarter and centre for purchasing for consumers of whole of Banaskantha district. Hence, women consumer of Palampur are purposively selected for the study. From 14 voting wards in Palampur, a representative sample of 200 women consumers were selected by following proportionate random sampling procedure. A pre-structured interview schedule was developed to collect data for the measurement of dependent and independent variables. First part of interviews schedule dealt with the background information of the respondent i.e. personal, socio-economic and communicational characteristics. Part two and three consisted of questions pertaining to measurement of level of awareness regarding various consumer rights on two point scale i.e. aware and not aware and extent of utilization of consumer right on three point scale i.e. always, 'sometimes' and 'never' Part four of interview schedule included questions regarding constraints with respect to utilization of various right.

**Table 1 : The score values for level of awareness and extent of utilization of consumer rights**

Independent Variables	Responses	Score Values
Level of Awareness	Aware	2
Not aware	1	
Extent of utilization	Always	3
	Sometimes	2
	Never	1

#### Results and Discussion

Majority of the respondents (52 per cent) belonged to the age group of 36 to 52 years. Maximum number of respondents (31.5 percent) was educated up to high school level and 11.5 percent were professional with graduate degree and only 3.5 per cent were post graduates.

**Table 2 : Personal Characteristics of respondents**

S.No.		Respondent
1. Age (years)	18-36	72 (36)
	36-52	104 (52)
	Above 52	24 (12)
	Illiterate	12 (6)
	Primary	23 (11.5)

2. Education	Middle	23 (11.5)
	High School	63 (31.5)
	Secondary School	38 (19)
	Diploma	11 (5.5)
	Graduation	23 (11.5)
	Post graduation	7 (3.5)

**Figure in parenthesis indicated percentages of total sample**

Forty five percent belonged to general category and majority of them, i.e., 51 per cent had joint family type. Maximum responder i.e. 46, per cent had low family income and majority of them (51 per cent) were involved in home making.

**Table 3 : Social-Economic characteristics of the respondents**

S.No.		Respondent
1. Category	General	90 (45)
	OBC	72 (36)
	SC/ST	38(19)
2. Family Type	Joint	102 (51)
	Nuclear	98 (49)
3. Family income	Rs. 50, 000-1,50,000	92 (46)
	Rs. 1, 50,001-2,50,000	73 (36.5)
	Rs. 2, 50,001-3,50,000	35 (17.5)
4. Occupation	Home making	102 (51)
	Home making + Labour	18 (9)
	Home making + Animal husbandary	15 (7.5)
	Home Making + + Self employment	41 (20.5)
	Home making + Service	24 (12)

**Figure in parenthesis indicates percentages of total sample**

A majority of the respondents, i.e. 62.5 per cent had medium mass media exposure and sixty per cent of the respondents had low social participation.

**Table 4 : Communication characteristics of respondents**

S.No.		Respondent
1. Mass Media Exposure	Low (8-21)	21 (10.5)
	Medium (22-35)	125 (62.5)
	High (36-48)	54 (27)
2. Social Participation	Low (1-3)	120 (60)
	Medium (4-6)	65 (35.5)
	High (7-10)	15 (7.5)

**Figure in parenthesis indicates percentages of total sample**

Level of Awareness about consumer rights  
Majority of the respondent (65 percent) had low level of awareness. The findings reaffirm with the finding of Rana (1997), Jindal (1997), Raghvan (2000),

Minakshi (2002) and Ramchandran (2006). The finding is in contrast with Rani (2003) .

It was further found that highest level of awareness was regarding right to choose (81.25 per cent) and least awareness was found regarding right to redress (40 percent).

**Table 5 : Level of awareness about consumer rights**

Level of awareness	Respondents
Low (154-186)	130 (65)
Medium (187-219)	33 (16.5)
High (220-249)	37 (18.5)

**Extent of utilization of consumer right:**

Majority of the respondents 66.5 percent expressed low extent of utilization of consumer right. The findings reaffirm with final's of Goel (1997) and Sudha (1998), but are 'in contrast with the findings of Rani (20)3) who reported high level of utilization of consumer rights by consumers during purchasing. It was further found that the highest utilization was regarding right to information (71.35 per cent) and least utilization was found regarding the right to health and environment (38.31 per cent).

**Table 6: Extent of utilization of consumer rights**

Extent of Utilization	Respondent
Low (188-234)	133 (66.5)
Medium (235-281)	49 (24.5)
High (282-327)	18 (9)

**Constraints faced while utilizing consumer right**

Majority of the consumers considered 'wastage of tune' as main constraint, followed by 'wastage of money' and 'complicated procedure for filing complaints' as main constraint in utilizing their rights. The present findings are supported by the findings of Jindal (1997) and Prasunav (2000) who also revealed that grievance redressal system is very time consuming.

**Association between dependent and independent variables**

Education category, occupation mass media exposure showed positive and significant association with both awareness and extent of utilization of consumer rights. Family type showed positive and significant correlation with extent of utilization of consumer rights. Positive and significant association existed between level of awareness and extent or utilization of consumer rights by women consumer.

**CONCLUSION**-Majority of the women consumers showed low level of awareness and low

**Table 7: Association between dependent and independent variables**

S. No.	Independent variable	Dependent variable	
		Awareness	Utilization
<b>Co-efficient of correlation 'r' value</b>			
1	Age	.018 NS	0.673 NS
2	Education	.428 **	0.275 **
3	Category	.180 *	0.147 *
4	Family type	.141 *	0.132 NS
5	Family annual income	.300 **	0.334 **
6	Occupation	.285 **	0.294 **
7	Mass media exposure	.310 **	0.300 **
8	Social participation	.093 NS	0.098 NS
9	Awareness		0.524 **

\* = Significant at .05 probability level  
 \*\* = Significant at .01 probability level  
 NS = Non Significant

extent of utilization of consumer rights. It can be concluded from the findings that the major reason for low awareness and low extent of utilization of consumer rights among women consumers is low education and low socio-economic status. Another reason for this is low exposure to communicational media and low social participation. It can further be concluded that as the awareness of women consumers regarding consumer rights increases, its extent of utilization also increases. Thus through use of mass media, training camps and exhibit ons can improve awareness level of consumers and thereby increase utilization of consm lei. rights by women consumers.

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