

Impact of consumer literacy on purchase behaviour of women homemakers

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken on a sample of 120 women respondents selected randomly 40 each from low, middle and high income groups in Hisar city of Haryana State. The data were collected on purchase practices of homemakers by administering a pre-structured interview schedule. A consumer literacy package was prepared on the basis of results of pre-exposure knowledge and was then introduced to study the impact of consumer literacy on purchase behaviour of homemakers. Majority of the respondents were unaware of their consumer rights, responsibilities and protective laws (68.3%) irrespective of income groups. Friends and relatives (65.8%) were the most common source of information for buying goods. Sale gimmicks attracted more of LIG (55%) than MIG (37.5%) and HIG (30.0%) respondents. Getting justice through judiciary was considered as difficult (40.8%), time consuming (31.7%) and costly processes (30%). Ignorance (59.2%) and indifferent attitude (49.2%) among consumers was the perceived reason for non-implementation of laws. The introduction of consumer education through media mix approach led to significant level of gain in knowledge regarding consumer rights, responsibilities and protective laws. Literacy level of homemakers showed a better impact on purchase behaviour. Hence, there is a need to start a strong and popular consumer movement to promote consumerism in the society.

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Consumers play a pivotal role in the growth of a nation's economy. With the advancement in science and technology, the market is flooded with variety of products and selling schemes to attract the buyers that makes the decision making process difficult for the consumer to buy a product from the market. They face problems regarding quality, product range, and prices of the goods available in the market. During the process of purchase, they fall continuous prey to various fraudulent practices like duplicate products, adulteration, faulty weights and measures, misleading advertisements etc. Hence, to protect the consumers, government has made sincere efforts to curb the fraudulent practices by enactment of various consumer protection laws. But these efforts of the govt. are not fruitful unless consumers themselves are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Ignorance of consumers is the largest obstacle in the growth of consumer movement in our country (Sukh Ram, 1988). Hence, there is a need to educate consumers regarding consumerism *i.e.* when they can make use of the consumer rights, responsibilities and protective laws.

In a family system, a woman as a homemaker is rigorously involved in procuring, using and managing various goods and services for well-being of the family. Since a woman as a common consumer does not have a knowledge regarding rational consumer practices, so undergoes an impulsive/irrational buying.

Therefore, there is an dire need to recognize woman as a prime consumer, educate her regarding consumer

rights, responsibilities, standard marks and protective laws. In view of the above, an effort has been made in the present study to introduce consumer literacy to the women homemakers of various income groups and to study its impact on their purchase behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted on a sample of 120 respondents from randomly selected four localities of Hisar city of Haryana State. From each locality 30 respondents, ten each from low (LIG), middle (MIG) and high income group (HIG) were selected randomly. The data were collected with the help of pre structured interview schedule on purchase behavior consisting of statements on purchase practices and knowledge about consumerism.

Consumer literacy package comprising video cassette, booklets having information on consumer rights, responsibilities and protective laws was prepared and introduced to the sample respondents. Their knowledge on consumer education was studied in dichotomized manner *i.e.* yes or no. Literacy score was calculated on the basis of weighted mean score classified in three categories *viz.*, low, medium and high literacy level affecting the purchase behavior of women consumers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General profile of the respondents:

More than one half of the respondents from LIG

category belonged to the age group of 21-35 years (52.5%) as compared to MIG and HIG respondents (35-50 yrs). Maximum number of the LIG respondents were illiterate (45%) and having low employment status and family education status as compared to MIG and HIG category. Employment as well as family education status of MIG respondents was also low as compared to HIG respondents. Irrespective of income group, it was evident from the data that majority of the respondents were from nuclear family system having a family size of 4-6 members in the family.

Consumer literacy and purchase behaviour of women homemakers:

Consumer literacy was determined by studying purchase behavior of the women homemakers and knowledge regarding consumer rights, responsibilities and protective laws, discussed as under.

Purchase behaviour:

The common purchase behaviour in Table 1 revealed that maximum respondents prepared shopping list for only food and groceries. Gandhi(1992) also reported that considerable number of the respondents planned their purchasing. Friends and relatives were the common source of information for buying goods.. Price and quality were the most important factors considered by respondents while making purchase. More number of the respondents (71.7%) was attracted towards off seasonal discounts Irrespective of income group majority of the respondents checked weights and measure regarding purchase of food and groceries as compared to other goods. A large number of the respondents purchased goods on cash payment and got cash memo/receipt but didn't bother to preserve it.

Results revealed that in case of problems more number of the respondents returned or replaced the

defected products whereas only 3.3 per cent of the respondents filed a case for a problematic purchase. Maximum number of respondents felt getting justice through judiciary as difficult and costly process. The findings reported by Rana (1997) are also in consonance with present results.

Consumer literacy:

Consumer literacy was studied before exposure of media package on consumer education. It revealed low to medium literacy level of the respondents regarding all the consumer rights except the right to be informed where high consumer literacy level was observed. Majority of the respondents (68.3%) irrespective of income groups showed low literacy level regarding consumer protective laws (Table 2).

Gain in knowledge of consumer rights:

Table 2 elucidates that regarding right to safety in pre exposure stage, maximum respondents from MIG and HIG group had medium to high literacy level but low literacy level was observed in case of LIG respondents. Whereas in post exposure stage, high literacy level was reported among respondents irrespective of income group. Regarding right to be informed, irrespective of income group, majority of respondents had high literacy level in both pre and post exposure.

It is clear that in case of right to choose nearly half of the respondents had medium literacy level in pre exposure whereas it was high literacy level in post exposure among majority of the respondents. Low literacy level was observed in case of right to be heard comprising mainly of LIG respondents (40%). Regarding right to seek redressal irrespective of income group, majority of the respondents had medium literacy level in pre exposure followed by high literacy level followed by medium and high literacy level in MIG and HIG respondents (47.5%

Table 1 : Factors considered by respondents while buying goods

(N=120)

Sr. No.	Factors	Food and groceries		Clothes		Small tools		Big appliances	
		Meanscore	Rank	Meanscore	Rank	Meanscore	Rank	Meanscore	Rank
1.	Price	6.91	II	7.11	II	6.44	III	8.66	I
2.	Performance/ quality	8.29	I	7.84	I	7.23	I	8.15	II
3.	Contents/made of	4.87	III	4.92	IV	3.11	VI	5.10	IV
4.	Special offer	4.02	V	3.23	V	--	--	4.88	V
5.	Availability	3.64	VI	3.00	VI	4.13	V	4.71	VI
6.	Safety features	1.72	VIII	2.81	VII	4.50	IV	2.98	VII
7.	Packaging	4.40	IV	--	--	2.21	VII	--	--
8.	Guarantee/ warranty	--		5.51	III	6.97	II	7.23	III
9.	Manufacturing expiry date	2.15	VII	--	-	--	--	0.11	IX
10.	Warning given	--		1.97	VIII	0.68	VIII	2.91	VIII

Table 2 : Comparison of pre-exposure and post-exposure knowledge of consumers regarding rights in various income groups N=120

Literacy level	LIG(n=40)			MIG(n=40)			HIG(n=40)		
	Pre exposure	Post exposure	Gain in knowledge (meanscore)	Pre exposure	Post exposure	Gain in knowledge (meanscore)	Pre exposure	Post exposure	Gain in knowledge (meanscore)
Right to safety									
Low	24(60.0)	0(0.0)	8.9	8(20.0)	0(0.0)	5.6	3(7.5)	0(0.0)	3.62
Medium	14(35.0)	6(15.0)	t- value	16(40.0)	3(7.5)	t- value	15(37.5)	1(2.5)	t- value
High	2(5.0)	34(85.0)	16.615**	16(40.0)	37(92.5)	8.326**	22(55.0)	39(97.5)	7.585**
Right to be informed									
Low	4(10.0)	0(0.0)	1.05	2(5.0)	0(0.0)	0.7	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0.35
Medium	14(35.0)	1(2.5)	t- value	4(10.0)	0(0.0)	t- value	1(2.5)	1(2.5)	t- value
High	22(55.0)	39(97.5)	6.736**	34(85.0)	40(100)	5.188**	39(97.5)	39(97.5)	4.149**
Right to choose									
Low	16(40.0)	0(0.0)	2.08	7(17.5)	0(0.0)	1.68	4(10.0)	0(0.0)	1.27
Medium	19(47.5)	9(22.5)	t- value	19(47.5)	7(17.5)	t- value	20(50.0)	2(5.0)	t- value
High	5(12.5)	31(77.5)	10.512**	14(35.0)	33(82.5)	8.486**	16(40.0)	38(95.0)	6.502**
Right to be heard									
Low	16(40.0)	0(0.0)	2.00	6(15.0)	0(0.0)	1.08	3(7.5)	0(0.0)	0.55
Medium	14(35.0)	0(0.0)	t- value	17(42.5)	0(0.0)	t- value	8(20.0)	1(2.5)	t- value
High	10(25.0)	40(100)	8.235**	17(42.5)	40(100)	4.977**	29(72.5)	39(97.5)	3.439**
Right to seek redressal									
Low					1(2.5)				
Medium	11(27.5)	0(0.0)	2.02	6(15.0)	13(32.5)	1.82	1(2.5)	0(0.0)	1.48
High	26(65.0)	20(50.0)	t- value	28(70.0)	26(65.0)	t- value	33(82.5)	10(25.0)	t- value
	3(7.5)	20(50.0)	7.524**	6(15.0)		8.070**	6(15.0)	30(75.0)	9.713**
Right to consumer education									
Low	5(12.5)	0(0.0)	0.73	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0.35	1(2.5)	0(0.0)	0.3
Medium	10(25.0)	0(0.0)	t- value	8(20.0)	0(0.0)	t- value	11(27.5)	0(0.0)	t- value
High	25(62.5)	40(100)	40134**	32(80.0)	40(100)	3.819**	28(70.0)	40(100)	3.122**
Right to healthy environment									
Low	19(47.5)	0(0.0)	4.02	4(10.0)	0(0.0)	2.4	7(17.5)	0(0.0)	2.07
Medium	17(42.5)	0(0.0)	t- value	19(47.5)	0(0.0)	t- value	10(25.0)	0(0.0)	t- value
High	4(10.0)	40(100)	17.888**	17(42.5)	40(100)	10.014**	23(57.5)	40(100)	7.649**

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

LIG= Low Income Group, MIG= Middle Income Group, HIG= High Income Group

and 57.5%, respectively) in pre-exposure whereas in post exposure all respondents had high literacy level.

Conclusively, irrespective of income group low literacy level was observed regarding various rights in pre exposure as compared to post exposure in which maximum respondents had high literacy level. Thus, respondents among all the three income groups succeeded in gaining sufficient knowledge

Gain in exposure knowledge of consumer protective laws:

Table 3 shows that regarding protective laws, majority of HIG respondents had low to high literacy level followed by low literacy level in MIG and LIG respondents in pre-

exposure. The findings of the present study are in consonance with the results of Kairon (1991) where it was reported that awareness regarding laws was almost negligible among rural as well as urban respondents. But in post-exposure, irrespective of income groups, maximum respondents had medium to high literacy level. This shows that although the respondents were unaware about protective laws at first instance, but after the media exposure, they had gained sufficient knowledge.

Impact of consumer literacy on purchase behaviour of women homemakers:

Fig.1 or Table 4 illustrates that respondents having low consumer literacy level showed more an irrational or

Table 3 : Gain in knowledge for consumer protective laws among consumers of various income groups N=120						
Literacy level	LIG (n=40)		MIG (n=40)		HIG (n=40)	
	Pre exposure	Post exposure	Pre exposure	Post exposure	Pre exposure	Post exposure
Low	37 (92.5)	0 (0.0)	27 (67.5)	0 (0.0)	18 (45.0)	0 (0.0)
Medium	1 (2.5)	20 (50.0)	6 (15.6)	8 (20.0)	4 (10.0)	3(7.5)
High	2 (5.0)	20 (50.0)	7 (17.5)	32 (80.0)	18 (45.0)	37 (92.5)
Average literacy level (meanscore)	0.47	5.65	1.97	7.15	3.67	7.87
Gain in knowledge (meanscore)	5.17		5.17		4.2	
't' values	24.469**		14.318**		8.787**	

** indicates significance of value at P= 0.01. Figures in parentheses indicate percentage
 LIG= Low Income Group, MIG= Middle Income Group, HIG= High Income Group

Table 4 : Impact of Consumer literacy on purchase behaviour of women homemakers N=120			
Literacy level	Purchase behaviour		
	Irrational	Moderate	Rational
Low	8(50.0)	7(43.7)	1(6.3)
Medium	11(16.7)	47(71.0)	8(12.1)
High	2(5.3)	20(52.6)	16(42.1)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

impulsive purchase behavior (50%) followed by a moderate behavior (43.7%). But with increase in literacy level, the purchase behavior was also found to be more towards rationality. Majority of the consumers having medium literacy level showed moderate purchase behavior. Whereas the consumers with high literacy level depicted an increasing trend towards rational purchase behavior. This depicts that with the gain in consumer education the women homemakers showed a better purchase behavior.

Hence, it can be concluded that with the introduction of consumer literacy, there was a significant gain in knowledge about consumer rights, responsibilities, standard marks and protective laws which brought a remarkable change in the purchase behaviour of women homemakers. This is an indicative of the fact that there is a need to introduce consumer education in the society to create awareness about consumerism to boost the national economy.

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