

MEASURING CONSUMER AWARENESS IN THE EASTERN CAPE

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to measure and compare different levels of consumer awareness amongst a multi-cultural sample of urban and rural consumers in the Eastern Cape. The study is based on past research in the field and used an extended version of a questionnaire developed for urban samples. A non-probability convenience sample (N = 326) was drawn from English, Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking consumers. Field work was carried out by the University of Port Elizabeth and the Consumer Protection Committee of the Eastern Cape. Different levels of consumer awareness emerged from the sample. These differences can be attributed to socio-demographical variables such as language, household size and income. Results further suggest a low level of personal consumer knowledge amongst the sample. This implies an urgent need for more consumer information and education of consumers in the province regarding consumer rights and problem solving skills.

OPSOMMING

Die hoof doelstelling van hierdie studie is die meting en vergelyking van verskillende vlakke van verbruikersbewustheid onder 'n multi-kulturele steekproef van stedelike en plattelandse verbruikers in die Oos-Kaap. Die studie is gegrond op vorige navorsing in die veld en maak gebruik van 'n uitgebreide weergawe van 'n vraelys ontwikkel vir stedelike steekproewe. 'n Nie-ewekansige gerieflikheidssteekproef (N = 326) is getrek uit Engels, Afrikaans en Xhosa-sprekende verbruikers. Veldwerk is uitgevoer deur die Universiteit van Port Elizabeth en die Verbruikersbeskerminingskomitee vir die Oos-Kaap. Verskillende vlakke van verbruikersbewustheid het na vore getree uit die steekproef. Hierdie verskille kan toegeskryf word aan sosio-demografiese veranderlikes soos taal, huishoudelike grootte en inkomme. Bevindinge suggereer verder 'n lae vlak van persoonlike verbruikerskennis onder die steekproef. Dit impliseer 'n ernstige behoefte aan meer verbruikers inligting en opvoeding aan verbruikers in die provinsie ten opsigte van verbruikersrege en probleem oplossings vaardighede.

Consumer awareness refers to the alertness of individual consumers of their rights and responsibilities in the market place. Consumer rights are defined by Consumers' International as the right to satisfaction of basic needs, the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, the right to be heard, the right to redress, the right to consumer education and the right to a healthy environment. Consumer responsibility implies the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills to make independent and rational consumption choices in relation to society and the environment (Du Plessis, Rousseau & Blem, 1995).

Previous research on consumer awareness in Southern Africa identified and confirmed five factors of consumer awareness viz bargain hunting, general consumer knowledge, product knowledge, information search and price consciousness (Rousseau & Venter 1992; Rousseau & Venter 1995; Rousseau & Venter 1996 a & b). The results of all these studies showed that different levels of consumer awareness observed from the samples could be attributed to bio-demographical variables such as household size, income, age, education and area. The result of these studies further suggest that the item scale developed for measuring consumer awareness in South Africa was applicable in Zimbabwe and Kenya.

A major limitation of all these studies however was that they focused exclusively on urban samples. There appears to be a distinct gap between urban and rural consumers. People live in rural areas for various reasons which include their interest in farming, the slower pace of life and inability to cope with the financial demands of urban life. Rural areas often represent large numbers of poor and disadvantaged consumers, people who because of their social standing, age, language difficulties or geography have relatively little influence or choice of goods

and services and are vulnerable to all sorts of deceitful and misleading business practices (Masimong, 1995). Rural areas are often the last to be considered when development and upliftment programmes are being planned. From a consumer awareness perspective, it is therefore imperative that these people be included in consumer research.

The multi-cultural composition of samples drawn in previous research were further hampered by the fact that the questionnaires were printed only in English (one of the official languages spoken in the countries surveyed). Although fieldworkers were asked to translate questions into the vernacular where respondents had difficulty in understanding the statements, no account was given of the number of cases where this proceeding actually occurred. Thus, if language can be regarded as an indication of cultural diversity, the previous studies fell short of incorporating this socio-demographic variable in the analyses.

Multiculturalism and its implications for marketing and consumer research are significant in both the domestic and global marketing context. This is evidenced by various studies conducted abroad which are global in scope and pertain to geographical location. These studies include research on consumer behaviour in East West cultures (Anderson & Hè, 1996); cultural effects on product choice (Yucelt & Demiral, 1996) and cultural differences regarding service experience (Rinehart, 1996). All these studies illustrate how an understanding of cultural differences can help firms effectively compete in foreign markets.

Within the consumer awareness context, Penaloza (1994) emphasized the role of acculturation in the adaptation experiences of Mexican immigrants into the United States, while Sabic (1994) described the financial problems of rural, marginalized Aboriginal communities in Australia. Penaloza (1994) found the Mexican immigrants often experience anxiety and pressure to pay bills, express distrust of financial institutions and resent impending materialism and debt because they do not understand commercialized credit and are un-informed about

American financial services. Sabic found that Aboriginal people were reluctant to seek redress, even when they were aware that it is their right, because they were ashamed. Both authors recognise the important role of consumer education in reaching displaced consumers in these countries.

In another study on consumer awareness of laws and regulations related to consumer rights and responsibilities, Alhabeeb, Mammen and Gary (1996) found that divorced and widowed consumers were more aware of their rights than single or married consumers. Surprisingly consumers with lower levels of education were more knowledgeable of consumer laws than those with higher levels of education. The study was carried out in Massachusetts with an overwhelming majority of respondents full-time employed, white homeowners.

Garrett and Meyers (1996) investigated verbal communication between complaining consumers and company service representatives in Milwaukee, USA. The authors content analyzed 461 telephone calls between complaining consumers and service representatives. The results showed that despite complaint "hotlines", many consumers are still reluctant to contact companies to complain, because in many instances, they have to deal with anonymous service representatives from large companies in distant locations. The authors conclude that education programs could potentially teach dissatisfied consumers to become more effective in voicing their complaints.

From the above overview, it seems that in order to conduct effective research, multiculturalism needs to be taken into account, not only between country-type cultural differences but also by looking at cultural differences that exist within a country's borders. Care must be taken in the development and utilization of questionnaire instruments that are sensitive to the unique problems of multi-cultural research (Stanton, Clark & Stanton, 1996). It further appears that researchers agree that education is a major factor to be considered in sensitizing consumers of their rights and responsibilities.

At a recent conference organized by "Pro-Consumers" in Maputo, Mozambique (Chimbandi, 1996) the need for education as a necessary condition for consumer awareness and protection was acknowledged by consumer activists. Research was also viewed as a key component of the process of consumer education. Hence governments in Southern Africa were called upon to work together with consumer organizations to promote consumer rights, protection, education and research in the region. Similar views were also expressed by the American Council in Consumer Interests (Hefferan, 1996) at their 42nd Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Here it was stated that those who serve the consumer interest need to aggressively and specifically articulate the value of consumer research and education in helping government and NGOs meet their responsibilities in assuring consumer welfare.

The main objective of the present study is to measure consumer awareness within a multicultural context in the Eastern Cape. This implies drawing a sample of respondents representative of different language groups as well as from urban and rural areas. The following design hypothesis was set: There are significant differences between levels of consumer awareness amongst the three language groups in the sample.

METHOD

A questionnaire developed and used in previous studies (Rousseau & Venter 1992, Rousseau & Venter 1995, Rousseau & Venter 1996) identified five factors regarding consumer awareness, ie bargain hunting, general consumer knowledge, product knowledge, information search and price consciousness. This questionnaire was modified by adding five additional items. The 25 items used in the original questionnaire, measure perception and behaviour towards consumer awareness in general. Items six to ten for instance, measure the respondents perception of the public's level of consumer knowledge in general. It therefore became necessary to add

five or more items which would indicate the respondent's personal level of consumer knowledge. Items 26 to 30 consisted of structured multiple-choice questions, each with five alternative answers. These items focused on the respondents personal knowledge and skills regarding consumer rights and related problem resolution. Responses to the first 25 items in the questionnaire was measured by using the original six point rating scale from previous studies.

The questionnaire was translated from the original English version into Afrikaans and Xhosa to accommodate respondents from these cultural backgrounds. In order to avoid translation errors, the procedure of back translation as suggested by Malhotra, Agarwal & Petersen (1996) was followed.

To determine whether the five factors previously identified and the additional factor can be calculated accurately and reliably using the original 25 items plus the extra five new items, item analysis were performed for each factor separately.

The analysis were performed to:

- (i) determine whether any items should be excluded, this was done by means of principal component factor analysis and item versus scale-minus-item correlations;
- (ii) test the reliability of factors by means of Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

The five factors previously identified, were calculated each as the mean of the five related six point items. The sixth factor was calculated as follows: For items 26 to 28 a score of zero, one or two were allocated, depending on the correctness of the response; for item 29 a zero or two as no intermediate alternative was possible; for item 30 one point was allocated to correct responses and minus one to incorrect responses with a minimum of zero. The scores for items 26 to 30 were summed and this summated score, ranging from zero to ten, linearly mapped on to a six point scale for comparison purposes with the previously identified scales.

One way analysis of variance and Pearson t-tests were used to determine the statistical significance of differences in factor scores between various levels of demographic variables. Analysis of variance was used to identify the demographic variables which were significantly related to factor scores.

Sample: A non-probability convenience sample (N = 326) was drawn from Port Elizabeth, East London and surrounding rural areas as far as Queenstown in the North and Humansdorp in the South. The sample was stratified to include all the important sub-populations in the urban and rural areas. Respondents were selected from the upper, middle and lower income groups residing in various suburban, rural and township areas in the region. They were also representative of the main languages spoken in the province.

Procedure: Field work was carried out by students of the University of Port Elizabeth and officials of the Consumer Protection Office in Port Elizabeth. All the field workers were properly briefed on sample selection and interview procedures. Households in various residential areas were chosen for interviewing. Only one respondent per household, either a husband or wife, completed the questionnaire. Consumers from the selected households completed questionnaires in their home language (English, Afrikaans or Xhosa). In cases where respondents did not understand a question, they were allowed to compare the phrasing with that of a questionnaire printed in one of the alternative languages.

Respondents were asked to rate each of the first twenty five items in the questionnaire on a six point Likert type scale ranging from agree completely to disagree completely. Malhotra (1996) suggest that when interval scales are used to measure attitudes and opinions in developing countries, these instruments should not contain too many grades as opinion formation may not be well crystallized. Questions 26 to 30 followed a structured multiple-choice format and related to problem sol-

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS

FACTOR	MEAN	S.D.	CORRELATIONS					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Bargain Hunting	3,8411	1,3104	–	0,1059	0,2282**	0,4590**	0,4778**	-0,0826
2 General Consumer Knowledge	4,8816	0,9302	0,1059	–	0,6314**	0,4094**	0,1621**	0,4465**
3 Product Knowledge	4,9785	0,8683	0,2282**	0,6314**	–	0,6582**	0,2859**	0,5099**
4 Information Search	4,5675	0,9649	0,4590**	0,4094**	0,6582**	–	0,3985**	0,2869**
5 Price Consciousness	4,1865	0,9983	0,4778**	0,1621**	0,2859**	0,3985**	–	0,0401
6 Personal Consumer Knowledge	4,0690	1,2288	-0,0826	0,4465**	0,5099**	0,2869**	0,0401	–

N = 326

* significant at 95% confidence level ($r > 0,1090$)

** significant at 99% confidence level ($r > 0,1425$)

ving behaviour and knowledge of consumer rights. Field workers explained to respondents that there were no right or wrong answers to the first twenty five items in the questionnaire. The only answer which was important was the one which gave a true reflection of how the respondent felt about the question. Respondents were however told that the last five multiple-choice questions did contain right and wrong alternatives. Demographic information was also obtained from respondents regarding household size, income, age, education and gender.

Data analysis: Data analysis employed the computer program BMDP4M (Frane, Jenrich & Samson, 1985) to perform factor analysis on the item sample. The method of principal component analysis was used with direct quartimin rotation. The BMDP program 4M was also used to calculate item versus scale-minus-item Pearson Product Moment correlations. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was further calculated to determine reliability of the various sub-scales.

The BMDP program 1D was then used to calculate mean factor scores for the various socio-demographic variables. These re-

TABLE 2
OBLIQUE ROTATED FACTOR ANALYSES RESULTS

Criterion	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
	Bargain Hunting	General Consumer Knowledge	Product Knowledge	Information Search	Price Conscious- ness	Personal Consumer Knowledge
Item						
1. I look in the newspapers every week for low priced items	0,793					
2. When I see a "special" advertised on TV or the radio, I always follow it up	0,775					
3. I always shop at more than one store to compare prices and take advantage of the lowest priced item	0,789					
4. I like to look for bargains at seasonal sales or auctions	0,720					
5. I always buy with discount vouchers to obtain the best deal	0,737					
6. Consumers in South Africa are not aware of their legitimate consumer rights when it comes to doing business or shopping		0,635				
7. More attention should be paid to consumer matters in school education		0,698				
8. Too few consumers in our country pay attention to consumer reports in newspapers and magazines		0,803				
9. SA consumers are not aware of the laws available to protect their consumer rights		0,784				
10. SA consumers organisations should get better support from consumers		0,750				
11. Checking "best-before" dates on perishable food items is essential for ensuring fresh products			0,804			
12. I always look for a guarantee on expensive products before deciding to buy			0,740			
13. It is important to discuss product information with friends and family			0,760			
14. Product knowledge is one's best protection against being cheated			0,768			
15. I keep a watch on the media for new products and services that may be useful to me			0,527			
16. I always consult booklets and pamphlets for information before buying expensive goods				0,752		
17. Asking information from family and friends before making a final choice is always a good idea				0,643		
18. Sales persons are very important in giving product information				0,583		
19. Before buying a certain product, I usually compare different brands to choose the best				0,728		
20. I usually read newspaper adverts to get product information before I buy				0,661		
21. Choosing "no-name brands" is a good way to beat price increases					0,498	
22. Price is the most important factor to me in choosing an item					0,758	
23. When a product is offered at a special discount price, I very much want to buy it					0,724	
24. Before deciding where to go shopping, I usually try to find out whether any specials are being offered at a particular store					0,684	
25. I always compare prices of the same products on display in the store					0,552	
26. Knowledge of problem solving relating to a product or service without assistance from a salesperson or store where item was purchased						0,663
27. Knowledge of dealing with a situation where you no longer want a product bought the previous day from a door to door salesperson						0,570
28. Knowledge of dealing with malfunctioning new products bought the previous day						0,661
29. Knowledge of handling inferior repair work done to a car or home electrical appliance						0,713
30. Knowledge of consumer rights						0,374
Percentage of total variance explained	58,3%	54,2%	52,8%	45,7%	42,4%	37,0%
Cronbach's coefficient alpha	0,82	0,79	0,77	0,70	0,65	0,58
Sample size N = 326						

sults are shown in table 3. Program 2V was subsequently used to perform analysis of variance (ANOVA) to investigate which of the socio-demographic variables are significantly related to the various factors. These results are shown in table 4. To test the statistical significance of factor score differences between the various socio-demographic groups (including language groups) one way analysis of variance (ANOVA program 7D) and Pearson t-tests (program 3D) were performed. These results are also summarized in table 3.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and correlations.

As can be seen from the table, the mean scores for product knowledge and general consumer knowledge were the highest, while those of bargain hunting and personal consumer knowledge were the lowest. The low scores observed for bargain hunting and personal consumer knowledge, may indicate that respondents need to be made aware of the usefulness of bargain hunting and increased personal consumer knowledge before entering purchase transactions.

Table 1 further shows moderate significant positive correlations between all the factors except for bargain hunting and general consumer knowledge, bargain hunting and personal consumer knowledge and price consciousness and personal consumer knowledge.

Table 2 shows the six factor analyses performed, one for each factor. Direct quartimin rotation and principal component extraction was used. The analyses confirmed that all items loaded significantly on the applicable scale, the lowest factor loading being 0,374. The Cronbach's alphas for factors one, two, three and four were all above 0,70 while for factors five and six, the values of 0,65 and 0,58 can also be regarded as acceptable.

The "percentage of total variance explained" for each factor refers to the percentage of total variance of the five items that constitute the factor.

Table 3 shows matrices of factor mean scores for demographic variables obtained from the sample and also indicates which factor score differences between the various socio-demographic categories are significant. In the table a low score indicates a negative response while a high score indicates a positive response. (The six point rating scale used for the first 25 items in the questionnaire comprised of verbal anchor points ranging from agree completely to disagree completely.)

From table 3, it can be seen that Xhosa speaking respondents from large households with a primary or secondary school education in the lower income group were the biggest bargain hunters. With regard to factor two, it seems as though general consumer knowledge were highest among Afrikaans speaking respondents from small households with a tertiary education in the upper income group. Product knowledge also scored highest among female Afrikaans speaking respondents from small households in the upper income group. Female respondents from large households in the lower income groups spent most time searching for information (factor four) whilst Xhosa speaking respondents from large households in the lower income group were most price conscious.

With regard to personal consumer knowledge (factor six), Afrikaans speaking female respondents with a tertiary education from large households in the upper income group were most knowledgeable on consumer rights and on how to solve consumer related problems. Xhosa speaking male respondents from the middle income and middle household size groups with a primary school education, were least knowledgeable on these issues. Personal consumer knowledge on average further obtained the second lowest score of all six factors.

Table 4 shows which of the socio-demographical variables are significantly related to factor scores. From table 4, it can be seen

that language significantly influences bargain hunting (factor one), product knowledge (factor three) and personal consumer knowledge (factor six). Household size significantly influences bargain hunting (factor one), general consumer knowledge (factor two), product knowledge (factor three) and personal consumer knowledge (factor six). Age significantly influences bargain hunting (factor one), while income significantly influences general consumer knowledge (factor two), product knowledge (factor three), price consciousness (factor four) and personal consumer knowledge (factor six).

With regard to bargain hunting (factor one) table 3 shows amongst others, significant differences between Afrikaans, English and Xhosa speaking respondents. Household size and age groups also featured amongst those who differed significantly on the factor mean scores. In the case of general consumer knowledge (factor two), household size and income were amongst those categories which differed significantly. Lower income groups for instance differed significantly from middle income groups on factor mean scores, whilst middle income groups differed significantly from upper income groups.

For product knowledge (factor three) table 3 reflects amongst others, significant differences between factor mean scores for different language, household size and income categories. Xhosa speaking respondents for instance, obtained significantly lower scores than did Afrikaans or English speaking respondents on the factor.

With regard to personal consumer knowledge (factor six) language, household size and income categories were once more amongst those who differed significantly on factor mean scores. Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking respondents, as well as English and Xhosa speaking respondents differed significantly on the factor. Table 3 further indicates other significant differences between the various socio-demographic categories which are not necessarily derived from table 4.

An analysis of the main trends observed from table 4 indicate that language, household size and income are major socio-demographic variables influencing factors of consumer awareness. Table 3 further shows that these variable categories differ significantly on at least five of the factors of consumer awareness. This implies that language, household size and income category differences need to be taken into account when targeting consumer groups with information and educational programmes.

The fact that education did not feature as a major socio-demographic variable significantly relating to factors of consumer awareness, may be due to its influence being reflected in language groups. It is a known fact that educational standards differed markedly in the past between schools catering for different language groups. An analysis of the sample composition by language frequency, further shows that 60,4 percent of the Xhosa speaking respondents only had a primary or secondary school education, while in the case of Afrikaans and English speaking respondents, the percentage were 47,9 and 38,2 percent respectively.

Tables 1 and 3 further indicate that personal consumer knowledge (factor six) were disappointingly low. Significant differences between all the socio-demographic variable categories were also observed for this factor. These trends suggest that although respondents' perception of the public's level of consumer knowledge in general (factor two) may be high (4,88), respondents' personal consumer knowledge (factor six) relating to consumer rights and problem solving skills, are low (4,07). One may therefore assume that what respondents think and what they know, may differ markedly. Table 3 shows that Xhosa speaking respondents were the most in need for education on consumer rights, responsibilities and problem solving skills.

Hypothesis testing: Based on the findings of the present study, the design hypothesis stating that significant differences between levels of consumer awareness amongst the three

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS BY LANGUAGE, HOUSEHOLD SIZE, INCOME, AGE, EDUCATION AND GENDER

		N	Factor 1 Bargain Hunting		Factor 2 General Consumer Knowledge		Factor 3 Product Knowledge		Factor 4 Information Search		Factor 5 Price Conscious- ness		Factor 6 Personal Consumer Knowledge	
			\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
Language	Afrikaans	73	3,69a	1,40	5,01a	0,95	5,32a	0,59	4,70	0,97	4,24	1,00	4,51a	1,03
	English	157	3,50b	1,27	4,98b	0,83	5,03b	0,74	4,52	0,90	4,03b	1,01	4,33b	1,11
	Xhosa	96	4,52c	1,02	4,62c	1,03	4,63c	1,10	4,54	1,07	4,40c	0,95	3,31c	1,22
Household Size	1-2	99	3,55d	1,32	5,15d	0,80	5,24d	0,58	4,58d	0,91	4,03d	0,95	4,29d	0,85
	3-4	177	3,79e	1,24	4,67e	0,97	4,77e	0,94	4,44e	0,98	4,20	1,01	3,84e	1,37
	5+	50	4,60f	1,27	5,09f	0,86	5,20f	0,89	5,00f	0,91	4,45f	0,99	4,43f	1,20
Age	-25 yrs	83	3,44g	1,33	5,04	0,75	5,19	0,59	4,65	0,90	4,06	1,00	4,49g	0,82
	26-40	139	4,05h	1,22	4,85	0,93	4,88	0,91	4,55	0,94	4,21	0,91	3,88h	1,25
	41-55	81	3,84	1,31	4,72	1,07	4,85	1,02	4,41	1,08	4,21	1,09	4,04	1,45
	56-70+	21	4,20	1,45	5,02	0,92	5,30	0,64	4,97	0,87	4,46	1,18	3,79	1,20
Education	Primary/Secondary	153	4,04k	1,35	4,76k	1,00	4,90	0,97	4,49	1,06	4,24	1,07	3,83k	1,39
	Tertiary	173	3,67l	1,26	4,99l	0,85	5,05	0,77	4,63	0,87	4,14	0,93	4,28l	1,03
Income	Lower	27	4,30m	1,38	5,12m	0,89	5,22m	0,82	5,01m	0,86	4,87m	0,85	4,00m	0,88
	Middle	181	3,96n	1,24	4,61n	0,98	4,77n	0,98	4,47n	0,97	4,17n	0,95	3,70n	1,31
	Upper	118	3,55o	1,35	5,24o	0,70	5,25o	0,56	4,62	0,95	4,05o	1,05	4,65o	0,91
Gender	Male	130	3,79	1,27	4,77	1,01	4,82p	0,92	4,43p	0,93	4,10	1,01	3,90p	1,23
	Female	195	3,88	1,34	4,95	0,87	5,09q	0,81	4,66q	0,98	4,25	0,99	4,18q	1,22
Total Sample		326	3,84	1,31	4,88	0,93	4,98	0,87	4,57	0,96	4,19	1,00	4,07	1,23
Significant Differences:														
Language			**ac bc		*ac bc		**ac bc				*bc		**ac bc	
Household Size			**df ef		**de; *ef		**de ef		**ef; *df		*df		*de ef	
Age			**gh										**gh	
Education			*kl		*kl								**kl	
Income			*mo no		**no; *mn		**no; *mn		*mn		**mn mo		**mo; *no	
Gender													*pq	

Lower case letters indicate significant differences according to ANOVA Scheffé Tests or T-tests. (*p < 0,05, **p < 0,01)

TABLE 4
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TO DETERMINE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIO-BIOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND CONSUMER AWARE-

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	Factor 1 Bargain Hunting		Factor 2 General Consumer Knowledge		Factor 3 Product Knowledge		Factor 4 Information Search		Factor 5 Price Consciousness		Factor 6 Personal Consumer Knowledge		
	df	F	p	F	p	F	p	F	p	F	p		
Language	2	6,88	0,0012**	0,41	0,6662	5,35	0,0052**	1,07	0,3434	1,51	0,2221	13,17	0,0000**
Household size	2	10,75	0,0000**	7,86	0,0005**	5,75	0,0035**	5,96	0,0029	3,88	0,0217	5,24	0,0058**
Age	2	3,61	0,0137**	0,29	0,8316	0,51	0,6789	1,88	0,1329	1,69	0,1686	1,74	0,1597
Education	3	0,04	0,8450	1,15	0,2841	0,51	0,4747	3,24	0,0727	0,38	0,5360	2,64	0,1051
Income	1	2,57	0,0780	14,02	0,0000**	6,70	0,0014**	2,55	0,0795	7,48	0,0007**	10,52	0,0000**
Gender	1	0,05	0,8217	0,78	0,3789	3,80	0,0520	3,05	0,0817	1,52	0,2182	1,74	0,1880
Error	312	*p < 0,05; **p < 0,01											

language groups in the sample exist, can be accepted. Language groups differed on five of the six factors of consumer awareness (table 3).

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to measure and compare different levels of consumer awareness amongst a multi-cultural sample of urban and rural consumers in the Eastern Cape. The

study was initiated by shortcomings of previous research in the field. Past research by Rousseau & Venter (1992, 1995, 1996) did not take into account the multi-cultural composition of the South African consumer public in their analysis and did not include rural consumers into the sampling frameworks. These studies also focused mainly on respondents perceptions of the public's level of consumer knowledge in general, without attempting to measure how much personal consumer knowledge respondents actually possess.

The present study attempted to address all these shortcomings. A non-probability convenience sample drawn from the three main language groups spoken in the urban and rural areas of the province were included in the study. The measuring instrument, a twenty five-item, six point rating scale, was extended to include five structured multiple choice questions aimed at measuring personal consumer knowledge.

Results of the study revealed different levels of consumer awareness for the sample. These differences can be attributed to socio-demographic variables such as language, household size and income. The results confirm findings of previous studies (Rousseau & Venter 1992, 1996) that household size and income are major variables influencing consumer awareness in South Africa. It is however important to recognize that the results of the present study are pertinent only to consumers in the Eastern Cape.

Findings of the study further revealed significant differences between language, household size and income groups in the sample. These differences imply that as far as language, household size and income may be regarded as artifacts of cultural differences, the multi-cultural nature of the Eastern Cape population need to be taken into account when planning consumer information and educational programmes. Such a strategy would be in line with sentiments expressed by various authors (Penaloza, 1994; Sabic 1994) advocating a multi-cultural approach to consumer research and education.

The relatively low average score for the total sample observed on personal consumer knowledge (factor six), confirms previous concerns that respondents perception and rating of the public's consumer knowledge in general (factor four), may differ when compared to their own personal consumer knowledge. This finding implies an urgent need for more consumer information and education to people in the province regarding consumer rights and problem solving skills.

Despite attempts to address the shortcomings of previous studies in the field, the present study is not without its limitations. The introduction of structured multiple-choice questions to measure personal consumer knowledge needs to be further refined, especially with regard to the questions asked, the number of alternative answers and the scoring of responses. The sample stratification in terms of urban, rural and language composition need to be more evenly balanced in order to reflect the true multi-cultural nature of the population in the province.

The results and implications of the present study should therefore be seen as a first step in gaining more accurate knowledge on consumer awareness within the multi-cultural context of the new South Africa. Follow-up studies with larger samples in different provinces of the country need to be pursued to verify the new trends observed by this investigation.

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