

Comparative study of consumer awareness of college students in middle income group

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Abstract

Any individual who buys goods and services for personal consumption and not for commercial purpose are called consumers. Consumers form the largest economic group in any country. They are the pivots of all economic activities. The advancement of technology and the advent of sophisticated gadgets in the markets and the aggressive marketing strategies in the era of Globalization have not only thrown open a wide choice for the consumers but also rendered the consumer vulnerable to a plethora of problems associated with such rapid changes. There is an urgent and increasing necessity to educate young consumers so that they can be protected against the exploitation of the manufacturers and sellers. In spite of the various initiatives undertaken by the Government to educate and promote welfare to the consumers, the analysis of the primary data collected from 400 (undergraduates and post graduates) students from different colleges in Roorkee city revealed that the level of consumer awareness is limited. This paper tries to suggest some measures that should be undertaken by the Government, business houses and consumer themselves to protect the interest of the consumers. An enlightened consumer is an empowered consumer. An aware consumer not only protects himself from exploitation but induces efficiency, transparency and accountability in the entire manufacturing and services sector.

Keywords: consumers, buying habits, consumer awareness, consumer legislation and intellectual rights

1. Introduction

The Latin term "Consumo" means, "eat up completely" which understandably led to the current use of the term „consumer“. Any person who buys goods and services for personal consumption and not for commercial purpose or resale is called a consumer. Consumers form the largest economic group in any country. They are the pivots of all economic activities. The Government, Industry and the Consumers form the three main partners in the venture of national development. While the Government provides the capital resources, industry utilizes the capital for producing goods and consumer procures the goods, paying money for their material needs and facilities. The need for empowerment of consumers as a class cannot be overlooked in India and is already well recognized all over the world. The advancement of technology and the advent of sophisticated gadgets in the markets and the aggressive marketing strategies in the era of Globalization have not only thrown open a wide choice for the consumers but also rendered the consumer vulnerable to a plethora of problems associated with such rapid changes. There is an urgent and increasing necessity to educate and motivate the consumers with regard to quality of products. In short, the consumer should be empowered with respect to his rights as a consumer. He should be equipped to be vigilant with a discerning eye so as to enable to protect himself from any malpractice on the part of the traders.

2. Objective of the Study

The present study was thus planned with the following objectives:

- 1) To assess the level of awareness in under graduate boys and girls of Middle Income Group (M.I.G.)
- 2) To assess the level of awareness in post graduate boys and girls of Middle Income Group (M.I.G.)

3. Research Methodology

The study is largely descriptive and analytical. The required data for the study was collected from primary and secondary sources; the primary source constitutes the main corpus of information as it will make the major thrust area to collect reliable complete and first-hand information about the awareness of consumers in the areas under study. To test the objectives, field study was conducted wherein a combination of direct approach, comprising of questionnaire-aided interviews, discussions and observational techniques was followed. Primary data was collected from the sample subjects, the undergraduate students of conventional courses from six different colleges which were randomly selected from the areas of Roorkee city. The sample information was so designed that the study could be performed on sub classes of the respondents i.e., based on their education, gender and income class etc. In order to test the above stated objectives 400 questionnaires were distributed to the under graduate and post graduates students of middle income group.

4. Results and Analysis

The various data on the questionnaires was collected and compiled for further interpretations about consumer awareness among boys and girls. The data has been divided into various groups based on the level of education i.e., Post graduate (PG), Undergraduate (UG)) and gender (Boys and Girls) of middle income group. The results have been made on the data collected of exposure to consumer awareness.

4.1 Awareness of respondents regarding consumer terminology

The Data of M.I.G. students regarding awareness on consumer terminology revealed in Table 1 that a fewer percentage of sample was known about ISI mark, the proper knowledge of exchange offer and installment buying. Majority of

respondents knew about the weight. They know 1 kg is equal to 1000 gms. A very less percentage of respondents have a little knowledge about consumer rights and label. Approximately equal percentage of boys and girls have knew

about the guarantee card and less percent of respondents were not aware about Hallmark symbol, consumer forum, Red Dot (a mark of non-veg) and had no idea about vegetarian mark (Green Dot).

Table 1: Distribution according to awareness of the respondents regarding consumer terminology (In Percentage)

S. No.	Statements	Boys of PG			Girls of PG			Boys of UG			Girls of UG		
		Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
1	If one has correct knowledge of I.S.I.	26	12	62	21	21	58	25	20	55	12	12	76
2	I.S.I. is a stamp for good quality fabric	18	16	66	20	10	70	14	10	56	2	14	84
3	Is exchange offer benefit able	24	18	58	8	20	72	72	10	18	13	45	42
4	Installment buying is done by paying the price of the product in installments	16	6	78	4	14	82	34	14	52	14	16	70
5	1 Kg is equal to 1000 gm.	62	20	18	30	36	34	74	4	22	42	20	38
6	If the consumer has eight rights.	4	22	74	4	8	88	12	6	82	18	18	64
7	A tag found only on ready-made garments is known as label	28	12	60	70	10	20	38	20	42	32	20	48
8	Guarantee is a card which gives instructions how to operate goods.	24	12	64	20	30	50	26	42	32	22	18	60
9	Hall mark is stamp for good gold jewellery.	16	42	42	22	38	40	16	54	30	16	18	66
10	Consumer problems are heard in consumer forum	40	24	36	50	10	40	72	12	16	42	28	30
11	Red dot knowledge	14	16	70	10	20	70	8	10	82	15	7	78
12	Green dot knowledge	18	20	62	8	14	78	10	18	72	13	5	82

4.2 Legislation and Organisations

It is necessary to all the consumers that they should aware about consumer legislation and organisations to reduce consumer exploitation. About legislation only 22% PG and 20% UG boys had knowledge about it and a high percentage was not aware about legislation and organisation. Out of total very less percentage of girls were aware of the consumer organisation and legislation. Most of the girls PG and UG both

were unaware of the organisations and legislation. It may be due to lack of interest on the part of girls' respondents towards legislation and organizations (Fig 1).

The source of information about the existence of legislation and organisation, the main source of information of respondents was friends and neighbors. Data shows (Fig 2) a fewer percent of respondents have no specific source of information about legislation and organisation;

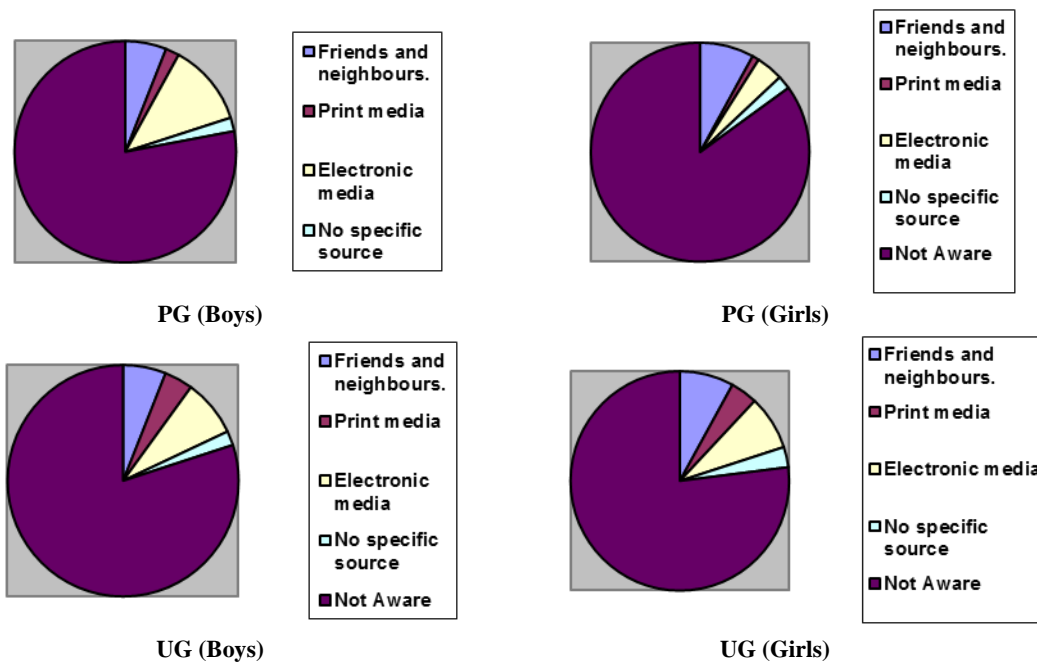


Fig 1: Primary sources of information of consumer Legislation.

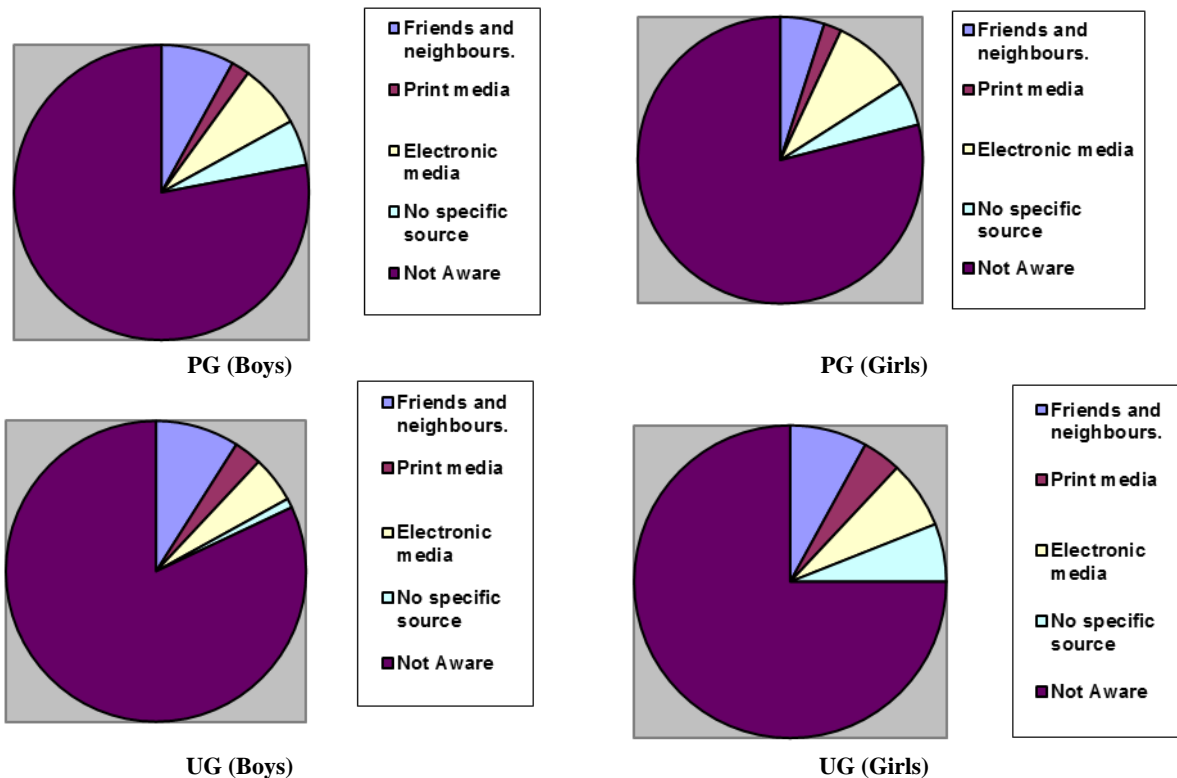


Fig 2: Primary sources of information of consumer Organizations

4.3 Possible reasons for unawareness

Possible reasons for unawareness was opted by respondents showed in Fig 3 scrutiny of data depicted that nearly half percentage of respondents thought that illiteracy was the main reason of unawareness about consumer legislation and

organisations. Nearly equal percentage of the respondents gave the less emphasis on consumer education was the main reason of unawareness about acts. Remaining sample gave the reasons as lack of display of consumer rights.

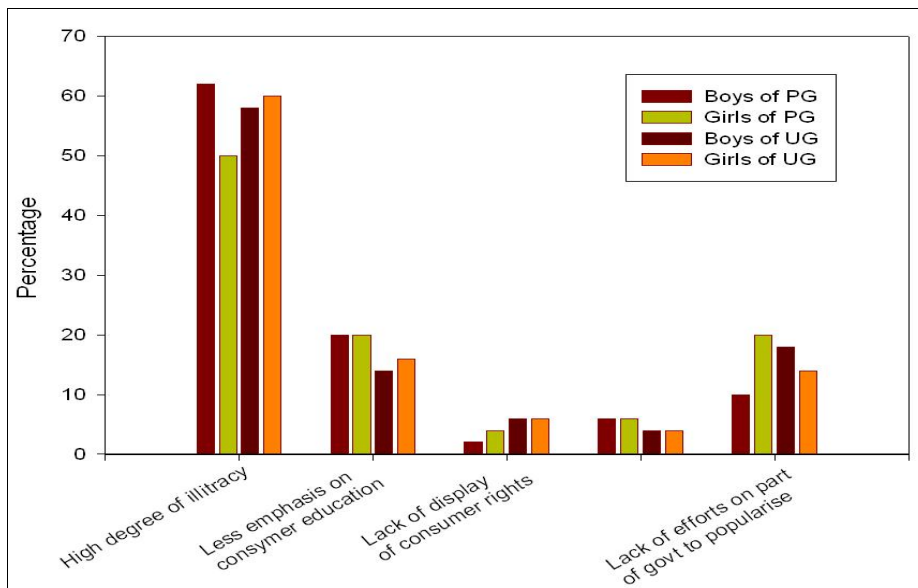


Fig 3: Possible reasons for unawareness

4.4 Perceived satisfaction of respondents from working of consumer organisations

If the consumer organisation works properly, they can deliver the desired satisfaction of consumers. Fig 4 shows that a high percentage of the respondents were neutral about the working

of consumer organisations. The data revealed that (10% PG and 14% UG boys) and (12% PG 8% UG girls) were dissatisfied with the working of consumer organisations and a very less percentage of the respondents were highly satisfied with the working of consumer organisations.

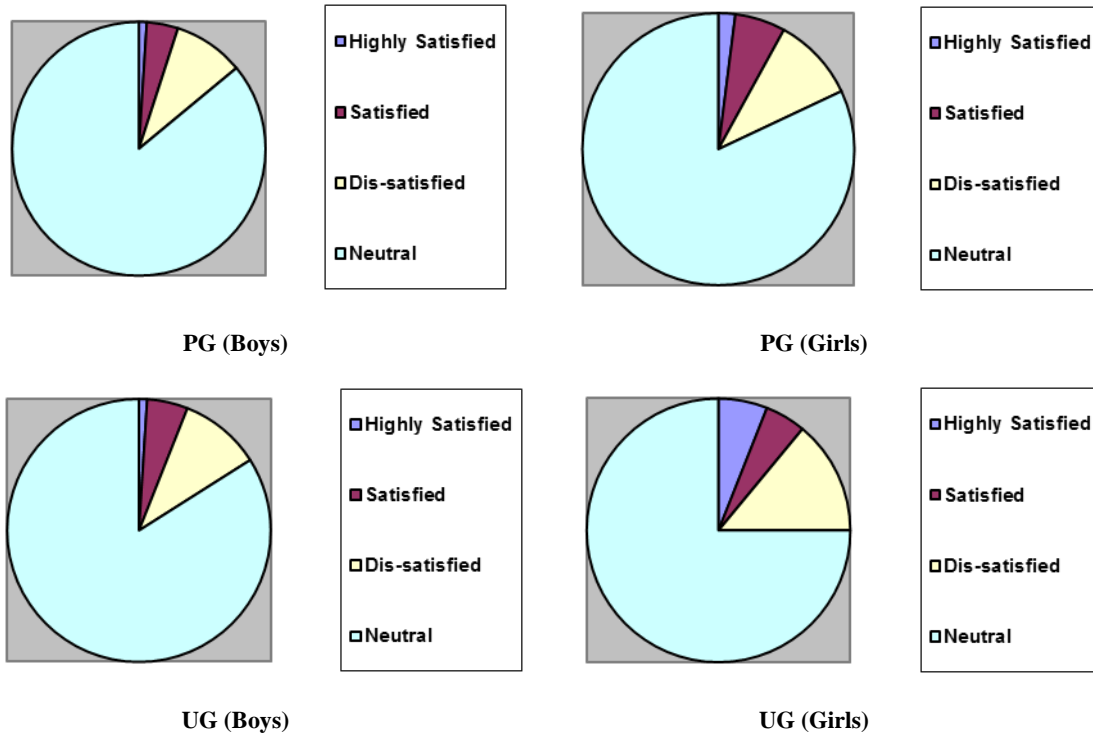


Fig 4: Satisfaction level of settlement of consumer complaints

4.5 Reasons for joining consumer organisations

The consumer faced new problems daily that’s why some of them wanted to join consumer organisations. The data revealed in fig. 5 that majority of respondents had no interest in joining the consumer organisation. Very less percentage of samples was join the consumer organisations for the complaint

of shop keeper. Some of them were interested to join these organisations to seek redressal against unfair trade practices. Only (4% PG and 6% UG boys) and (4% PG and UG both the girls) would like to join these organisations for other reasons (as for knowledge, guidance and to improve the quality of the product.

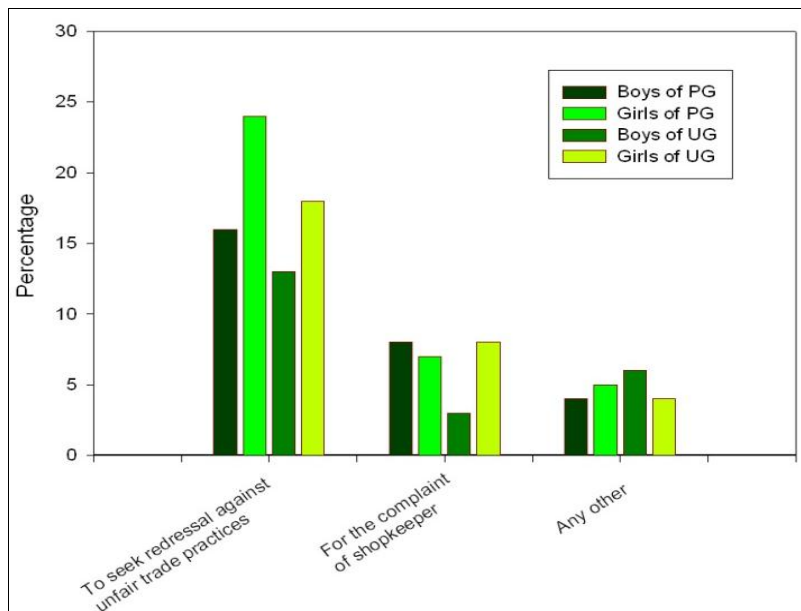


Fig 5: Reasons for joining consumer organisations

The study is supported by Gupta (1987) [1] who reported that Indian Consumers were cheated on account of limited choice inadequate supplies, incomplete information, ignorance of consumers and unlimited demand. These were the reasons that the consumers wanted to join various organisations for their protection.

4.6 Buying habits of the respondents

Buying is the necessity of life therefore every consumer should have good buying habits. A consumer should keep in mind that if they wanted to prevent themselves from cheating is to keep his eyes and ears open, know or are aware of what is happening around them.

4.6a Practices followed before buying

Data showed in Table 2 it was found that majority of respondents were not prepared shopping list before going to the market in order to purchase products. Majority that is (60 percent PG, 48percent UG boys) and (54% PG, 51% UG girls) were never compared brands of the products. Table 2 shows

that some of the respondents always preferred to buy the commodities from company’s retail shop and buy from specific shop. There was no specific trend about shopping from a retail and a whole sale chop. Mostly respondents were ‘never’ made a budget before purchases.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their practices followed before buying

S. No.	Statements	Boys of PG			Girls of PG			Boys of UG			Girls of UG		
		Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never
1	Do you make shopping list before going to market?	8	20	72	14	28	58	12	20	68	10	14	76
2	Do you compare brand quality of the item to be purchased before going to market	16	24	60	8	38	54	12	40	48	20	29	51
3	Do you decide to buy from:												
	(a) Company’s retail shop	30	48	22	12	48	40	20	55	25	20	43	37
	(b) Any specific shop	26	40	34	22	39	39	24	48	28	30	27	43
	(c) Any shop	22	65	13	58	29	13	18	70	12	46	31	23
	(d) Whole sale shop	4	79	17	13	38	49	8	74	18	17	23	60
4	Do you make budget before purchasing	20	30	50	26	18	56	25	22	53	23	16	61

4.6b Buying practices while purchasing

While purchasing a consumer should be alert about weight and measures, quality of product, price and standard marks on packets of products etc. Perusal of data showed Table 3 that majority of respondents were never compared shops for buying the products, very few of them ‘always’ compared shops to get the right product at reasonable price. This is supported by the findings of herrmann (1990) [2], that buying practices included gathering of product information and use of comparison shopping. When purchasing the products a lesser

percent of respondents look the standard mark such as ISI, FPO, Agmark, Green Dot, Red Dot and Hallmark symbol on the products while buying. Only (24% PG and 16% UG boys) (18% PG, 23% UG g read the label for expiry and manufacturing date. A fewer percentage were check proper seal when buying the product. As many as always buy the product because of attractive packing and free gift. Majority of respondents did not alert when commodities were being weighed and measured (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents according to their practices followed while purchasing

S. No.	Statements	Boys of PG			Girls of PG			Boys of UG			Girls of UG		
		Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never
1	Do you compare shops for buying the products?	10	32	58	10	14	76	12	39	49	14	18	68
2	Do you look for standard marks?												
	(a) I.S.I. mark	22	22	56	6	34	60	26	48	26	12	24	64
	(b) Ag mark	12	16	72	8	18	74	4	38	58	8	24	68
	(c) F.P.O.	2	10	88	4	14	82	16	22	62	0	16	84
	(d) Green Dot (Veg. mark)	4	6	90	6	12	82	2	20	78	0	10	90
	(e) Red Dot (Non-Veg. mark)	6	6	88	2	10	88	0	10	90	0	6	94
	(f) Hall mark on jewellery	22	26	52	10	16	74	4	4	92	18	20	62
3	Buy after reading label for expiry and manufacturing date M.R.P.	24	18	58	18	30	52	16	58	26	23	20	57
4	Check for proper seal.	16	14	70	14	20	66	22	64	14	21	22	57
5	Do you buy the product because it has an attractive packing.	58	20	22	69	12	19	67	26	7	73	14	13
6	Do you buy the product because of free gift?	36	48	16	66	20	14	46	44	10	75	8	17
7	Are you alert when commodity is being weighed and measured?	12	18	70	8	18	74	4	64	32	11	9	80
8	Do you buy the packed costly goods on credit installment?	22	50	28	66	16	18	28	68	4	58	20	22
9	Do you prefer to put locally available goods?	18	12	50	58	26	16	20	38	42	56	24	20

4.6c Practices followed after buying

The data reveals (Table 4) that only (22 percent PG, 14% UG boys) and (16% PG, UG both girls) were always insisted for cash memo and remained percentage were unaware about the advantage of taking cash memo. Mostly respondents were

never check the cash memo before making payment. Guarantee/Warranty card was never asked by the respondents, this is due to unawareness. Majority of respondents were never checked the number of items purchased.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to their practices followed After Buying

S. No.	Statements	Boys of PG			Girls of PG			Boys of UG			Girls of UG		
		Always	Some times	never	Always	Some times	never	Always	Some times	never	Always	Some times	never
1	Do you insist on taking cash memo?	22	36	42	16	30	54	14	64	22	16	28	56
2	Do you check the cash memo before making payment?	14	16	70	14	18	68	4	38	58	9	20	62
3	Do you ask for guarantee/warranty card after buying equipments?	16	26	58	16	22	62	18	18	64	20	24	56
4	Do you check for the items purchased?	22	28	50	10	18	72	4	28	68	12	33	65
5	Do you return the product purchased if it is not up to the standard.	10	38	52	16	14	70	4	40	56	8	16	70

4.7 Preference on mass media on purchases

Advertisements are considered major source of information which persuade people to buy things. Advertising encourages loyal consumers to use the brand more frequently.

4.7a Influence of advertisements on purchases

Perusal of data disclosed (Table 5) that advertising encourages loyal consumers to use the brand more frequently and suggests new ways to use the product. It was observed that (50% PG, and 58% UG boys) and (40% PG, 30% UG girls) ‘always’

found that advertisements increased the sale of the product. Majority of respondents considered advertisement a reason for preferring a specific brand. The data (Table 7) showed that (14% PG and 12% UG boys) and (16% both the girls) ‘never’ look for the instruction on the product as mentioned in advertisements for self-satisfaction. Majority of respondents convinced to buy the product through advertisements. A high percentage of respondents thought that advertisements made aware about the new product in the market.

Table 5: Percentage of the students according to influence of advertisements on purchases

S. No.	Statements	Boys of PG			Girls of PG			Boys of UG			Girls of UG		
		Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never	Always	Some Times	Never
1	Advertisement increases the sale of the product.	50	36	14	40	32	28	58	30	12	30	42	28
2	Buy the advertised products which are already tried by others.	48	42	10	58	30	12	44	40	16	64	32	24
3	Advertisement is a reason for preferring a specific brand.	64	24	12	42	32	26	58	28	14	40	50	10
4	If you are satisfied with your purchases do you recommend others to buy?	36	44	20	22	36	42	30	50	20	18	42	40
5	Do you look for the instructions given on the product as mentioned in advertisement?	56	30	14	52	32	16	22	66	12	58	26	16
6	Are you convinced more easily to buy new product in the market?	52	46	2	28	34	38	30	62	8	28	40	32
7	Advertisements make you aware about the new product in the market.	92	6	2	69	20	11	74	16	10	78	12	10

5. Conclusion

The awareness, especially in college students has to be ascertained which requires its quantification. By Consumer awareness we mean making the consumer aware of his/her right. An endeavor has been made in the present study to quantify the lack of awareness about consumerism. This leads to conclusion from the present study that as a consumer young people behave the same way, they are equally impulsive, when it comes to buying anything. Also education level does not influence consumer awareness possibly because, consumerism is not taught at any level of education. The boys are probably more aware than girls.

6. References

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