

CONSUMERS' AWARENESS ON THEIR EIGHT BASIC RIGHTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FILIPINOS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND GUAM

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ABSTRACT

This study considers Filipino consumers living in two different places and the degree to which they are aware of the eight basic consumer rights and whether there are significant differences in their level of awareness. The eight consumer rights are: Right to basic needs, Right to safety, Right to information, Right to choose, Right to representation, Right to redress, Right to consumer education, and Right to healthy environment. Findings show moderate overall degree of awareness of both Filipinos living in their own country and those living in Guam. No significant difference was observed as to their overall awareness on the eight basic rights. However, significant differences were manifested in three rights: basic needs, information and choice. Filipinos living in Guam have low awareness on their right to choose and right to information while Filipinos in the country showed moderate awareness on all other rights except for right to safety.

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KEYWORDS: Consumer Awareness, Consumerism, Consumer Rights

INTRODUCTION

Consumers, by definition, include us all; they are the largest economic group, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Yet theirs is the only important group whose views are often not heard (Kennedy, 1962). Consumption refers to anything a person needs for survival. It starts from a person's birth until they end up in grave. People buy and consume a variety of goods and services everyday. Hence, consumers are the largest economic group and central point of all marketing activities (Gupta and Panchal, 2009).

Self-effort on the part of consumers for safeguarding themselves is known as "consumerism" (Cravens and Hills, 1970). Consumerism is an outcome of sufferings and exploitation of the consumers by market forces. Technological innovations have brought about a revolution in every sector creating a variety of products. It is a challenge to the consumer to purchase the products when s/he enters into the market. It is therefore necessary for the consumers to be aware of their legitimate rights during and after purchases (Bhatt, 1995). Consumer rights gained importance in the world at the advent of the 20th century. The rights of consumers got international recognition when in 1985 the UN promulgated the basic guidelines regarding consumer rights protection. The UN guidelines said that "*all citizens, regardless of their incomes or social standing, have basic rights as consumers*" (Subedi, 2007). The consumer movement now marks March 15 every year as a day of raising global awareness about consumer rights.

In developing countries like the Philippines, where rights are sometimes ignored and taken for granted, it is hard to speculate how many Filipinos are aware of their rights as consumers. While concern for the welfare and protection of consumers is rising locally, data on public perception about their basic consumer rights are limited. The psychology of the typical Filipino consumer has been the result of many factors in their cultural environment. The behavior of Filipino consumers changes in a degree commensurate to social revolution. The tastes, motives, habits and values of present day Filipino consumer are actually the products of acquired post-Spanish (1565) and American cultures (Del Rosario, 1961). The needs and roles of the Filipino consumers are deeply rooted in their value patterns. This behavior is aimed at social acceptance, economic security, and social mobility (Roces, 1961).

In response to the ASEAN initiatives for consumer protection, the Philippines passed into law on April 13, 1992 Republic Act 7394, also known as “The Consumer Act of the Philippines” geared towards controlling fraudulent trade practices to protect the interest of the consumers, promote their general welfare, and establish standards of conduct for business and industry. The National Consumer Affairs Council (NCAC) was created by R.A. 7394 which composed of representatives from the government, consumer organizations, and business/industry sector to improve the management, coordination and efficacy of consumer programs.

However, it is unclear to what extent these laws have created an awareness of these basic rights among Filipinos. One way of determining this would be to compare Filipinos living in the Philippines with Filipinos living in a different location where a higher awareness of these rights might be predicted. One such location is Guam, which has a significant population of Filipinos, but where awareness of consumer rights might be higher as a result of it being a territory of the United States.

Guam is an island in the Western Pacific Ocean, located around 1,500 miles to south of Japan, 1,400 miles to east of Philippines, 2,000 miles to north of Australia, and 3,800 miles to west of Hawaii. It is the largest and southernmost of the islands that form a part of the Marianas Island. It is an unincorporated territory of United States since 1950 and shares most of the rights of Americans ([iloveindia.com/lounge/fact-about Guam](http://iloveindia.com/lounge/fact-about-Guam), July 27, 2012). Guam is approximately 3 1/2 hours away from the Philippines. The climate is almost the same as that of the Philippines between 75 and 86 degrees of Fahrenheit. The Philippines is accessible to Guam. While Filipinos need a US visa to visit Guam, Guam residents can visit the Philippines for 14 days without a visa. Residents of Guam avail themselves of this privilege to get medical treatment in the Philippines. Most of these visitors will shop while undergoing medical examinations and treatment.

Majority of the Filipinos in Guam migrated from the Philippines. Almost 26.3% of the entire Guam population of 159,358 (2010 US Census) are Filipinos. Filipino consumers in Guam could be influenced by fusions of several cultures such as Americans, Asians, and other Micronesian islands that predominates the population. This study compared the degree of consumers’ awareness between Filipinos living in the Philippines and in Guam on their eight basic consumers’ rights. Specifically, this study determined if there are significant differences in their degree of awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature, studies and data on public perception about basic consumer rights are limited. Two unpublished articles on consumerism were written by Ibarra in 1987 and in 1998. One pertains to an inter-industry analysis on the awareness of three manufacturing companies on the seven basic consumer rights and another study compares awareness of pharmaceutical companies in Belgium and in the Philippines to the basic rights of consumers. This study is different from previously conducted research because it focuses on the consumers; it will determine the consumers' awareness of their eight basic rights.

The review of literature presented below is limited to the eight basic consumer rights as defined by Consumers International (2011) and adopted by the National Consumer Affairs Council of the Department of Trade and Industry in the Philippines are presented below. *Consumer awareness* is referred to as the perception or understanding of these rights by consumers.

The first right refers to basic needs. This right ensures availability of basic goods and services to consumers at affordable prices and of good quality. It includes adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, public utilities, water and sanitation to lead a decent life. Based on these human needs, the United Nations Guidelines on Consumer Protection defines *sustainable consumption* as including “meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable” (United Nations, 1999). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, Paris (Article 25), as cited by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) further signifies that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...”

The second right pertains to safety. This right assures consumers to be protected against marketing of goods which are injurious to health and life. Consumers are assured that manufacturers of consumer products undertake extensive safety and performance testing before selling their products in the market. Products should be properly labelled with information as to the contents, use, precautions or warning signs and how to prepare it, if the need arises.

Wilson (2008) argues that consumers have the right not only to expect protection from hazardous products and services purchased in the marketplace, particularly if used properly for their intended purpose but also the right to be protected from the sale and distribution of dangerous goods and services. On the other hand, Dumalagan (2004) emphasizes that all consumers are entitled to safety against the marketing of goods or the provision of services that are hazardous to their health and life. She supports that economic globalization may benefit the consumers as a consequence of the expanding circulation of goods and services, thus, enhancing their right of choice, based on needs and purchasing power. Conversely, it may also create certain uncertainty about their safety. As Harland (1990) declares, the capacity of goods and services to cause serious injury or death has vastly increased as consumers are often faced with inadequate information to assess whether these goods and services conform to basic safety requirements.

The third is the right to information. This is the right of consumers to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising or labelling and the right to be given the facts and information needed to make an informed choice. Consumers have the right to receive adequate information about products on which to base buying decisions. Information to consumers includes product specification, place of origin, safety warnings, price, mode of payment, date of quality assurance, description of after-sale services, warranty, ingredient, nutritional facts, etc. Consumers expect complete information about the product to be purchased including its use, ingredients or chemical contents, limitations and expiry date. Consumers must be informed about the safety precautions to be taken while using the product to avoid loss or injury. Limited information is one of the factors causing exploitation of consumers.

Aaker and Day (1978) cited the right to be informed as a fundamental economic interest of the consumer. They believe that consumers should be provided with sufficient information to make wise purchase decisions. Information should not be persuasive as shown by commercials, but should be informative. At present, products are massive in quantity and more complicated to assess. Against this numerous products are lay buyers who do not have the time or the capacity to obtain information to help them in making the correct decision to buy. Along this line, Peter and Olson (2005) demonstrated that a substantial amount of marketing information is miscomprehended in that consumers form inaccurate, confused or

inappropriate information interpretation. The type of miscomprehension can vary from confusion over similar brand names to misinterpreting a product claim by forming an inaccurate means-end chain.

The fourth is the right to choose. This deals with the right to choose products and services at competitive prices, with an assurance of satisfactory quality. Consumers expect a wide array of goods and services which are offered in the market with diverse brands, sizes, shapes, colors and with differences in the price, quality and use. Consumers have the right to be assured that a selection of quality products and services are available for them to purchase at competitive prices. The right to choose also intends to protect competitors from each other, particularly the small firms from the large and powerful ones.

According to Wilson (2008) a consumer should have the opportunity to select the goods or services that he or she wants to purchase. Gupta and Panchal (2009) pointed out that with the rise in the income of people, the quality, quantity and sophistication of the consumer goods has also increased. They believe that the market literally overflows with new products based on intricate technology thus making it very difficult for the consumer to select an item because of misleading advertisements and improper media emphasis as well.

The fifth right refers to representation. The right to representation is also known as the right to be heard. This is the right to express consumer interest in the making and execution of government policies that will have an impact on the supply of goods and services to consumers. Consumers expect legislators would propose laws that would ensure that consumers would have the chance to live a better life by getting the best value for their hard-earned money. Consumers have the right to equal and fair consideration in government policy-making situations, as well as prompt treatment in administrative courts or legal communities. Consumers have the right to complain when there are problems or concerns. The right to be heard involved an assurance that consumer would be considered in the formulation of government policy and during regulatory proceedings. Some business enterprises advocate this consumer right in formulating their policies (Aaker and Day, 1978).

The sixth is the right to redress. This is the right of consumers to be compensated for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services. Under this right, consumers expect defective goods to be replaced or money refunded by the seller or dealer. Consumers also have the right to seek legal remedies in the appropriate courts of law. Through this right, the consumers are assured that their complaints will receive due attention. This right also provides for due compensation to consumers if they have suffered a loss or are put to jeopardy due to the fault of the supplier or manufacturer. Aaker and Day (1978) pointed out that consumers should be given an opportunity to voice dissatisfaction and complaint is settled satisfactorily. A variety of innovations, including free legal service for the poor, consumer class action suits, and arbitration procedures have substantially enhanced the right to recourse and redress, or to fair settlement of just claims.

The seventh right pertains to consumer education. This is the right to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be an informed consumer. Consumers may look forward to the three sectors of society: business, government and consumer would embark on an information campaign through tri-media on consumer-related issues as well as series of seminars, conferences, for training and public hearings for the welfare of consumer. To prevent market malpractices and exploitation of consumers, consumer awareness and education are essentially required. Recognizing the importance of consumer education, Singh (2002) lays down four important aspects: (a) Informed Choice- Consumers must learn to obtain information on goods and services, discriminate between sources of information, understand the psychology of selling and advertising; (b) Value Systems- Consumer education must enable the consumer to understand that individual consumer decisions have a broad social impact and influence on such important things as the overall allocation of resources within the society; (c) Wise Decision Making- Consumers need information to make careful, wise decisions and informed choices; and, (d) Catalyst for Action-

Consumers must be aware of the available avenues of consumer complaint and redress and learn to use them for their benefit. In addition, Prajapati et al. (2009) acknowledges the help of consumer education in making wise choice especially in developing countries where it becomes more important because there is variety of products and there is little control over standards.

Lastly, *the eight right concerns a healthy environment*. This right assures consumers to live and work in an environment which is neither threatening nor dangerous and which permits a life of dignity and well-being. Consumers expect the government exerting effort regarding the alarming increase in the degradation of the environment especially on forest, dying wildlife, depleted land fill space and environmental contamination to prevent further damage and the constant monitoring of our seas, coral reefs, forest and waste disposal being committed by factories to check if there is a violation of the laws on environmental protection. Dumalagan (2004) emphasizes that all consumers are entitled to a healthy environment and should be protected from the devastating effects of air, earth, and water pollution that may affect the performance of daily marketplace operations. Consumers have the right to live and work in an environment that does not threaten the well-being of present and future generations.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was adopted from the survey instrument used by Ibarra (1987, 1998), modified by Revilla (2012) and further modified by these researchers for consumers in Guam. The questions were structured using 4 point Likert type scales. The researchers involved enumerators to conduct the survey during the months of October and November 2011. Respondents were all 18 years old and above. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula (Guilford and Fruchter, 1973).

Guam has a population of 159,358. Chamorro is the largest social-cultural group in Guam about 37.1% of the population followed by Filipinos representing 26.3%. Approximately 64.6% are 18 years old and above. Using Slovin's formula at 10% margin of error, Guam sample size is 100. Guam respondents were purposely selected based on their being a Filipino by birth or by blood. Two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed to household consumers with 143 questionnaires returned that were properly answered and considered.

In the Philippines, the survey was conducted in San Pablo City, one of the country's oldest cities in the Province of Laguna with a population of 237,259 (2007 Philippine Census Information). The total number of population is comparable to the population of Guam. The participants of the study composed of consumers from four selected supermarkets in San Pablo City. The researchers utilized purposive sampling in the selection of supermarket with over 2,300 customer-volumes per day. Participants were selected based on their willingness to answer the survey. The sample size of 440 was determined using the Slovin's formula at 10% margin of error. Number of questionnaires used was limited to 500.

Responses were tabulated and weighted. The computed weighted means determined the level of agreement and awareness. Two-population hypothesis t-test, assuming unequal variances exist, was used considering the eight rights as the variables. The computed P value determined the level of significance.

RESULTS

The degree of consumers' awareness on their eight (8) basic rights is presented below. The scale ranges and equivalent of the responses are presented in Appendix B. This will facilitate interpretation and analysis of the data gathered.

The five statements to test consumers' awareness on their right to basic needs and five statements to determine consumers' awareness pertaining to safety are presented in Table 1. Both groups showed a

moderate awareness to right to basic goods; Filipinos in the country had a higher mean of 3.76 as against 3.5 of Filipinos in Guam. Both groups of respondents show “low” awareness on their right to safety with an equal weighted mean of 3.12 for Filipinos in Guam and in the Philippines respectively.

Table 1. Right to Basic Needs and Right to Safety

		GUAM (n=143)		PHILIPPINES (n=440)	
A. RIGHT TO BASIC NEEDS		WM	Degree of Awareness	WM	Degree of Awareness
A1	Store offers the basic goods that you need.	4.14	Moderate	4.27	High
A2	Store offers the basic goods at a fair price.	3.50	Moderate	4.01	Moderate
A3	Store is able to raise the prices of goods anytime they want to.	3.18	Low	3.44	Moderate
A4	You can complain to the store if they do not have what you need.	3.21	Low	3.46	Moderate
A5	You can complain to the store if their prices are unreasonable.	3.49	Moderate	3.63	Moderate
Average		3.50	Moderate	3.76	Moderate
B. RIGHT TO SAFETY					
B1	Majority of the goods that you buy have safety precautions.	3.75	Moderate	3.82	Moderate
B2	There are goods in the store that are harmful to health.	1.96	Very low	2.66	Low
B3	You can return goods to the store that are expired or obsolete.	3.38	Low	3.68	Moderate
B4	Store sells substandard products that wear out/expire easily.	3.40	Low	2.72	Low
B5	You do not know if the products you are buying are safe or not.			2.73	Low
Average		3.12	Low	3.12	Low

This table shows the weighted mean (WM) and the degree of awareness of the respondents to the statements pertaining to "right to basic needs" and "right to safety". The questions were structured using the Likert format. Responses were given weight from 1 to 4 points. Scales are shown in appendix B. B5 was considered "sensitive" question in Guam and was omitted in the questionnaire.

Filipino consumers in Guam agreed on three statements: that stores offer a wide variety of basic goods at fair prices and that they can complain if the prices are unreasonable. They were not certain if the stores can raise the prices of goods anytime they want to or they can complain to the store if they do not have what they need. Consumers in the Philippines strongly agreed that stores offer a wide variety of basic goods they need basically at a fair price. They even concurred that they can complain if the stores do not have what they need and if the prices are unreasonable. Almost half of the participants believed that the stores can raise the prices of goods anytime.

Both groups agreed that goods in the stores have safety precautions as shown in Table 1. Filipino consumers in Guam agreed that there are goods in the stores that are harmful to their health. They are not sure if they can return goods to the store that are expired or obsolete and are also uncertain if stores sell substandard products that wear out or expire easily. Consumers in the Philippines believed that the goods they buy have safety precautions and confirmed that they can return goods to the store if found expired or obsolete. They were not aware if stores sell products that are detrimental to health and sell low quality products that deteriorate or expire easily. Filipino consumers were unsure if the products they buy are safe or not while Filipino consumers in Guam provided no definite answer.

The five statements to find out the consumers' awareness on their right to information and five statements to check the consumers' awareness on their right to choose are shown in Table 2. The degree of awareness to right to information of Filipino consumers in Guam is "low" as compared to "moderate" by Filipino consumers in the Philippines. Filipinos consumers in Guam show "low" awareness to right to choose with a weighted mean of 3.38 while Filipinos consumers in the Philippines manifest "moderate" awareness to this right with a weighted mean of 3.65.

Table 2 Right to Information and Right to Choose

		GUAM (n=143)		PHILIPPINES (n=440)	
C. RIGHT TO INFORMATION		WM	Degree of Awareness	WM	Degree of Awareness
C1	Goods/products are properly labeled (expiration date, etc.) and contents properly indicated.	3.87	Moderate	3.93	Moderate
C2	The label gives enough facts and information about the products to enable consumer to make wise decision in purchasing.	3.76	Moderate	3.85	Moderate
C3	Advertisement usually presents a true picture of the products advertised.	2.61	Very low	3.50	Moderate
C4	Advertised products are generally more dependable than unadvertised products.	2.94	Low	3.45	Moderate
C5	Product warranties or guaranties are properly explained to you.	2.94	Low	3.38	Low
Average		3.23	Low	3.62	Moderate
D. RIGHT TO CHOOSE					
D1	Store offers wide variety of product for consumers to choose from.	3.75	Moderate	4.13	Moderate
D2	Wide variety of products makes intelligent buying difficult.	3.02	Low	3.58	Moderate
D3	You choose highly priced goods because they are better in quality.	3.22	Low	3.53	Moderate
D4	Advertisement influences your choice of what goods to buy.	3.80	Moderate	3.68	Moderate
D5	Store's salesperson influences your choice.	3.10	Low	3.35	Low
Average		3.38	Low	3.65	Moderate

This table shows the weighted mean (WM) and the degree of awareness of the respondents to the statements pertaining to "right to information" and "right to choose". Both rights show differences in the degree of awareness: "Low" for Guam and "moderate" for Filipinos in the Philippines.

Table 2 shows that both groups believed that stores have done their part to ensure proper product labeling. The respondents disclosed that goods/products are properly labeled and contents properly indicated, and that labels give enough facts and information about the products to enable them to buy wisely. Filipino consumers in Guam, however, do not agree that advertisements present the true picture of the products advertised. They were not convinced that products advertised are generally more dependable than unadvertised products. They were not even certain that product warranties are properly explained to them. Filipinos in the Philippines manifested the same uncertainty with regard to this statement. The moderate responses of Filipinos in the Philippines for statements C3 and C4 signified their belief that advertisement usually presents a true picture of the products advertised and advertised products are more dependable than unadvertised ones.

Table 2 further shows that both group of consumers believed that stores offer wide variety of products to choose from and advertisements influence their choice of what goods to buy rather than the "sales talk" that they normally receive from the store's salesperson. Filipinos consumers in Guam and in the Philippines differed in their responses to two statements. Consumers in Guam were not convinced that a wide variety of products makes intelligent buying difficult and that they will choose highly priced goods because they are better in quality. Filipino consumers in the Philippines were in agreement that the stores offer wide variety of product for consumers to choose from; however, this made it difficult for them to buy wisely. Majority of the respondents favored high quality products even if these goods command higher price.

The six statements to assess the consumers' awareness on their right to representation and four statements to measure the consumers' awareness on their right to redress are enumerated in Table 3. Filipino consumers in Guam and in the Philippines show "moderate" awareness of the right to representation, with

3.50 weighted mean and 3.61 respectively. Both groups manifest the same level of awareness on right to redress with Filipino consumers in the Philippines showing a slightly higher weighted mean.

Table 3 Right to Representation and Right to Redress

		GUAM (n=143)		PHILIPPINES (n=440)	
E. RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION		WM	Degree of Awareness	WM	Degree of Awareness
E1	You know where to go if you have a complaint.	3.73	Moderate	3.70	Moderate
E2	You know what to do if you have a complaint.	3.62	Moderate	3.66	Moderate
E3	Store is more sensitive to consumers' complaints now than in the past.	3.65	Moderate	3.56	Moderate
E4	When you have problems with products you have purchased, it is usually easy to return them.	3.12	Low	3.51	Moderate
E5	The store's policy in handling complaints and settling grievances of consumers are satisfactory.	3.34	Low	3.52	Moderate
E6	Store has "Consumers' Service Desk."	3.57	Moderate	3.70	Moderate
Average		3.50	Moderate	3.61	Moderate
F. RIGHT TO REDRESS					
F1	Store encourages return of products if consumers are not satisfied.	3.02	Low	3.42	Moderate
F2	The quality of service provided by store to complaining customers is getting better.	3.45	Moderate	3.60	Moderate
F3	Store is willing to replace defective product complained about.	3.67	Moderate	3.63	Moderate
F4	You are generally satisfied with the store's response when complaining about defective product and ask for reimbursement of your money.	3.57	Moderate	3.43	Moderate
Average		3.43	Moderate	3.52	Moderate

This table shows the responses to "right to representation" and "right o redress"; weighted mean (WM) for both rights show "moderate" as their level of awareness.

Table 3 shows that respondents are in agreement with the four statements under this right. All the four statements under this right have moderate degree of awareness. Apparently, the participants have been mindful of their rights in the market place since they know where to go and what to do if they have a complaint. Likewise, the participants' observed that the stores are more sensitive to consumers' complaints now than in the past. They concurred that the stores have "Consumers' Service Desk" indicating the stores' compliance with regulatory requirements. Guam and Philippine respondents, however, differed in two statements. Filipino consumers in the Philippines agreed that when they have problems with products they purchase, it is usually easy for them to return it while Filipino consumers in Guam are not certain they can return the products. Respondents from the Philippines believed that stores policies in handling complaints and grievances are satisfactory while respondents from Guam are not sure at all.

As to their right to redress, Filipino consumers in Guam are not certain if stores encourage return of products if consumers are not satisfied with the products, while Filipinos agree that stores in the Philippines encourage consumers to return products if they are not satisfied. Both group of consumers acknowledged that the quality of service provided by store to complaining customers is improving; respondents also agreed that stores are willing to replace defective product complained about. Majority of the participants were satisfied with the store's response when they complain about defective product and when asking for a refund.

The two statements to evaluate the consumers' awareness on their right to consumer education and three statements to gauge consumers' awareness on their right to a healthy environment are detailed in Table 4. Both groups of consumers manifest "moderate" awareness of the right to consumer education and show the same level of "moderate" awareness to right to a healthy environment.

Table 4 Right to Consumer Education and Right to Healthy Environment

		GUAM (n=143)		PHILIPPINES (n=440)	
G. RIGHT TO CONSUMER EDUCATION		WM	Degree of Awareness	WM	Degree of Awareness
G1	You welcome laws that will protect consumers against malpractices in the market place.	4.29	High	4.07	Moderate
G2	You will participate in seminars on consumers' education.	3.38	Low	3.87	Moderate
Average		3.84	Moderate	3.97	Moderate
H. RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT					
H1	You consider environmental pollution a major responsibility of the business establishments.	4.10	Moderate	4.04	Moderate
H2	You will pay higher prices for products that will cause less environment pollution.	3.40	Low	3.40	Low
H3	Business establishments are concerned about environmental pollution.	3.04	Low	3.79	Moderate
Average		3.52	Moderate	3.74	Moderate

This table shows the responses to "right to consumer education" and "right to healthy environment"; weighted mean (WM) shows "moderate" as their level of awareness. Although both groups of consumers manifest "moderate" awareness to right to consumer education, each shows different degree of awareness to some statements.

As shown in Table 4, Filipinos consumers in Guam strongly welcomed laws that will protect consumers against malpractices in the market place, while Filipino consumers in the Philippines merely agreed to the statement and supported consumer advocacy as evidenced by their willingness to participate in seminars on consumer education. Filipino consumers in Guam were not decided if they will participate in this type of seminars.

Table 4 further shows that both groups of Filipinos show the same level of "moderate" awareness to right to a healthy environment; Filipinos at 3.74 weighted mean, while 3.52 weighted mean for Filipinos in Guam. Filipinos confirmed that environmental pollution is a major responsibility of the business establishments, but were uncertain if they are willing to pay higher prices for products that will cause less environmental pollution. Filipinos likewise believed that business establishments are concerned about environmental pollution. However, Filipinos in Guam are not sure if the same concern applies to business establishments in Guam.

Table 5 summarizes the overall degree of consumers' awareness of Filipino consumers in Guam and in the Philippines on their eight (8) basic rights. Both group of consumers show "Moderate" awareness with an average weighted mean of 3.49 and 3.67 respectively.

As shown in Table 5, in the Philippines the rights to consumer education and safety got the highest and lowest weighted mean of 3.97 and 3.12, respectively. While in Guam, the right to clean environment got the highest mean of 3.52 and the right to safety is the lowest at 3.12. Although the overall degree of consumers' awareness is "moderate" there is difference in their perceptions to two rights; namely, right to information and right to choose.

To measure the differences in the degree of consumers' awareness a two-population hypothesis t-test, assuming unequal variances exist, was used considering the eight rights as the variables. The computed P

value determined the level of significance. Table 6 shows the P-value and the level of differences at 5% to test the hypothesis that: "No significant differences exist in the degree of awareness between Filipinos in the Philippines and Filipinos residing in Guam on their eight basic consumer rights".

Table 5: Overall Degree of Consumers' Awareness

Rights	GUAM (n=143)		PHILIPPINES (n=440)	
	WM	Degree of Awareness	WM	Degree of Awareness
A. Basic needs	3.50	Moderate	3.76	Moderate
B. Safety	3.12	Low	3.12	Low
C. Information	3.23	Low	3.62	Moderate
D. Choose	3.38	Low	3.65	Moderate
E. Representation	3.50	Moderate	3.61	Moderate
F. Redress	3.43	Moderate	3.52	Moderate
G. Consumer education	3.51	Moderate	3.97	Moderate
H. Clean environment	3.52	Moderate	3.74	Moderate
Average	3.49	Moderate	3.67	Moderate

This table summarized the overall awareness of both group of consumers. Note the differences in the awareness on "right to information and right to choose.

Table 6: Overall Awareness to the Basic Consumer Rights

Two-tail t-test on hypothesis (n= 583)			
Consumer Rights		P-value	Differences
A.	Basic needs	0.019	Significant *
B.	Safety	0.967	Insignificant
C.	Information	0.001	Significant *
D.	Choose	0.021	Significant *
E.	Representation	0.373	Insignificant
F.	Redress	0.368	Insignificant
G.	Consumer education	0.18	Insignificant
H.	Clean environment	0.14	Insignificant
Overall		0.159	Insignificant

*5% level of significance, however the level of differences in the overall degree of respondents' awareness is insignificant with a P-value of 0.159.

Although there are no significant differences in the overall awareness, significant differences in the respondents' degree of awareness were present in three basic rights namely: Right to basic needs, right to information and right to choose with a P-value of 0.019, 0.001 and 0.021, respectively. Insignificant differences in the respondents' degree of awareness were evident in the following rights: Right to safety, representation, redress, consumer education, and clean environment with a computed P-value of 0.967, 0.373, 0.368, 0.18 and 0.14, respectively.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This study focused on the degree of consumers' awareness of their eight basic rights between Filipinos residing in the Philippines and in Guam. A survey was conducted among 143 Filipinos in Guam and 440

Filipinos in the Philippines, using Likert type questions. Responses were tabulated and weighted. The computed weighted means determined the level of agreement and awareness. Two-population hypothesis t-test, assuming unequal variances exist, was used considering the eight rights as the variables. The computed P value determined the level of significance. Due to time constraint sample size was limited to 10% margin of error using "Slovin's formula".

Results showed that the overall degree of awareness for Filipino consumers in Guam and in the Philippines were both "moderate". Consumers agree to most of the statements, but there was an evident disparity of perception on two rights namely information and choose. Filipino consumers in Guam were uncertain in these two rights while Filipino consumers in the Philippines agreed to both rights. Results show significant differences in the degree of awareness between the two consumer groups on the three rights namely basic needs, information, and choose.

Significant difference in the degree of consumers' awareness was implied in two statements on right to basic needs: Filipino consumers in Guam were not certain if the stores are able to raise the prices of goods and if they can complain if stores do not have the goods they need. Filipino consumers in the Philippines otherwise agreed with both statements. Likewise, significant difference in the degree of consumers' awareness to right to information was manifested in two statements. Filipino consumers in Guam disagreed that advertisements present the true picture of the products and were not sure that products advertised are generally more dependable.

Filipinos in the Philippines agreed otherwise to both statements. As to right to choose, significant difference in the degree of consumers' awareness was observed in two statements. Filipino consumers in Guam were uncertain that a wide variety of products makes intelligent buying difficult and if they will choose highly priced goods because they are better in quality. On the other hand, Filipino consumers in the Philippines agreed to both statements.

Apparently, consumers have power and influence in the marketplace yet they should be wary and vigilant. The best protection a consumer has is to be well informed about his rights and responsibilities. Consumers should be ready to secure, protect, and assert their rights in the marketplace while trading and transacting business to obtain fair value at all times. Alongside, consumers have the responsibility to obtain, assess and utilize available information on products and services that will help them make wise buying decision.

This study called for collaborative efforts of all sectors of society to highlight more programs on consumer awareness to build knowledge, competence, values, and skills geared towards the development of an aware and responsible consumer. A consumer education program should be developed as a means to waken or re-awaken the consumers over and over until the message of full awareness on their basic rights is realized. Another study on consumers' constraints in exercising their rights and more study on worldwide basis on consumers awareness to the eight basic rights will not only add value to the literature but will promote empowered consumers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Respondents' Profile

	Filipinos in Philippines		Filipinos in Guam		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Age						
18 -29	175	40%	103	72%	278	48%
30-49	193	44%	26	18%	219	37%
50-above	72	16%	14	10%	86	15%
Total	440	100%	143	100%	583	100%
Gender						
Male	175	40%	66	46%	241	41%
Female	265	60%	77	54%	342	59%
Total	440	100%	143	100%	583	100%
Civil Status						
Single	198	45%	98	69%	296	51%
Married	242	55%	45	30%	287	49%
Total	440	100%	143	100%	583	100%
Educational Attainment						
Completed high school/ Some high school/Some college/vocational	207	47%	89	62%	296	51%
	233	53%	54	38%	287	49%
Completed college/Some post graduate/Completed post graduate						
Total	440	100%	143	100%	583	100%

Appendix B. Range of Values, Interpretations

Range of Values		Degree of Awareness	Verbal Interpretations	
			Positive Questions	Negative Questions
4.21	5.00	High	Strongly Agree	Strongly disagree
3.41	4.20	Moderate	Agree	Disagree
2.61	3.40	Low	Uncertain	Uncertain
1.81	2.60	Very Low	Disagree	Agree
1.00	1.80	No Awareness	Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree

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