

CONSUMER INFORMATION: TOWARD AN APPROACH FOR
EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

Stephen W. Brown
Assistant Professor of Marketing
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

Parks B. Dimsdale, Jr.
Executive Vice President
Purcell Consulting Associates, Inc.
Decatur, Georgia

An Abstract of a Paper

Knowledgeable buyers are the key to making business more responsive to the true needs of their existing and potential customers. Consumers may become more sophisticated buyers through trial and error or through programs of consumer education. The latter is obviously the favored alternative. Unfortunately, however, most consumer educational campaigns fall short of their intended goals.

The paper argues that educational programs are unsuccessful because of the consumer educator's lack of understanding of the behavior of consumers. Consumers are individuals who approach the marketplace with different levels of experience in consumption, different wants and desires, different expectations from their purchases, and different needs for information and advice in order to adequately perform as consumers. Yet, consumer education efforts up to this time have given little recognition to this idea. All too much emphasis has been placed on assisting the "generalized consumer" who is profiled as a rational man. This result of this overemphasis is that far less has been achieved with consumer programs and legislation than has been sought.

The authors contend that effective educational programs must be based on (a) determining what the consumer needs to know and (b) determining how best to communicate this information to him. The paper concludes with a brief outline of a potential program for effective knowledge dissemination for consumers.