

ABSTRACT

ARE CONSUMERS KNOWLEDGEABLE?

Dr. Samuel H. Himes, Jr.
Assistant Professor of Marketing

Dr. E.H. Bonfield
Assistant Professor of Marketing
and Behavioral Science

The University of Alabama

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the state of consumer knowledge. Such a determination is necessary if appropriate priorities are to be established for protecting the interests of the consumer, government, and business.

The authors supervised the interviewing of 229 adult consumers in a metropolitan area of more than 100,000 people. The respondents were asked a series of questions concerning products and services which they might reasonably encounter as consumers. The questions were of the multiple-choice type, and the respondent was asked to choose his answer from among four alternatives. The authors then analyzed the data by appropriate statistical tests in order to determine whether any significant differences in consumer knowledge existed among consumers of different sexes or races.

The conclusions reached by the authors were that no significant differences in consumer knowledge existed by sex, but that the differences between whites and blacks were meaningful. The authors noted that the overall level of consumer knowledge among all groups was low, and urged increased efforts in consumer education aimed at increasing that knowledge. The authors believed that consumer education provides a more effective long-run solution to the consumer problem than does legal action on the consumer's behalf.