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UNRAVELING THE MULTIFACETED TAPESTRY: EXPLORING THE SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF CONSUMERS IN THE PROVINCE OF ISABELA

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Abstract

The consumer is considered to be the most important aspect economic activities as they ae considered to be the biggest economic group. The connection between consumers' sociodemographic characteristics and their rights is an intricate and diverse element of both consumer behavior and societal dynamics. Elements such as age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, and occupation can have a substantial impact on consumers' access to information, their ability to make decisions, and their capacity to assert their rights in the market. This study aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the sociodemographic profile of consumers in Isabela Province, Philippines and explore on the various socio-demographic factors of the consumers. To achieve the stated objectives questionnaire designed and developed by DTI to measure the consumers' awareness level of their rights and responsibilities. There are 712 samples of respondents; Convenience sampling technique was applied to collect the data. The collected data were properly edited coded and computed and subjected to statistical tests such as frequency, percentages. The results have indicated clearly that most of the consumers' highest educational attainment is elementary and family income level is below the poverty line.

Keywords: Sociodemographic, Consumers, Consumer Awareness, Protection, Responsibilities, Income, Educational Attainment

INTRODUCTION

In any nation, consumers constitute the largest economic group, and economic activities revolve around them. The primary objective of conceptualizing, producing, distributing, and marketing all products is to ensure consumer satisfaction. Unfortunately, consumer exploitation is widespread, involving practices such as unfair trade practices and misbranding. Hence, consumers need to remain vigilant and be aware of potential shortcomings or deceit.

The crucial question however is whether consumers are aware when they are being shortchanged or deceived. To protect their interests, consumers must acquaint themselves with the rights provided to them by the law. Consumer awareness as described by Agustin et al (2023) involves comprehending different methods of seeking compensation, the laws that safeguard consumers, and the rights they possess. These rights encompass protection from inferior products and services, the entitlement to health safeguards, and the right to be informed about the attributes of products, such as quality, price, potency, purity, and standard. Additionally, consumers have the right to choose from various alternatives, the right to be represented when needed, and the right to pursue remedies when confronted with unjust trade practices.

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In countries such as the Philippines, which are categorized as developing nations, the awareness of consumer rights is often lacking and overlooked. It is challenging to estimate the percentage of Filipinos who are knowledgeable about their rights as consumers due to the prevailing issue of rights being ignored or not given due importance. Although there is a growing concern for safeguarding consumers' well-being and interests within the country, there is a scarcity of comprehensive data regarding the general public's perception of their fundamental consumer rights (Melad, et al.2023).

This is where the various government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) comes in. DTI plays a crucial role in promoting consumer welfare within the country. Not only is it dedicated to safeguarding the rights and interests of consumers, but it also focuses on developing policies and initiatives that contribute to the sustained growth and progress of the Philippine economy. As part of its responsibility to protect consumers, the DTI operates its Consumer Protection Group (CPG), which is led by one of its undersecretaries. The CPG is responsible for enforcing laws that safeguard consumers, conducting consumer education initiatives, and fostering the formation of consumer groups. Furthermore, the DTI ensures the effective implementation and enforcement of trade regulations and fair trade laws, while also prioritizing the protection of consumers through various education and information dissemination programs. To enhance consumer awareness, various stakeholders such as social media, mass media, print media, and government institutions can play a significant role. In March 2023, DTI has partnered with different transport agencies as well as private companies such as Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA), Land Transportation Office, Manila International Airport Authority, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Metro Rail Transit, and other private partners in order to raise consumer awareness. There had been other campaigns made by DTI with the objective of leveraging social media to effectively inform, educate, and engage the public in its advocacy campaign regarding consumer rights and responsibilities.

Consumer protection laws and regulations aim to safeguard consumers from unfair practices, deceptive advertising, and product defects. However, certain sociodemographic groups may be more vulnerable to exploitation due to information asymmetry, limited financial resources, or lack of access to legal remedies. Teo and Yeow (2014) said that the elderly consumers particularly those facing cognitive challenges or living in isolation are more susceptible to scams and fraud. Their vulnerability can be attributed to their reduced ability to process complex information and the social isolation that makes them easier targets for manipulation.

The relationship between the sociodemographic profiles of consumers and their rights is a complex and multifaceted aspect of consumer behavior and societal dynamics. Sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, and occupation can significantly influence consumers' access to information, decision-making power, and the ability to assert their rights in the marketplace.

Katiyar & Katiyar (2014) opined that consumer awareness is among the crucial factors influencing consumer preference. Hence, ensuring that customers are aware of a company's brand holds utmost significance. To which Keller (2003) agreed saying Brand recognition and brand recall performances are the two significant components of brand awareness. Keller

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(2003) explained that brand recognition refers to consumers' capability to recognize a brand based on prior exposure, while brand recall is the ability of consumers to retrieve the brand from memory. Therefore, brand awareness measures the extent to which consumers accurately link a brand to their knowledge.

Regardless of how much effort the government will put into consumer awareness of their rights as well responsibilities, and how much effort companies would put in in their brand recall, the sociodemographic profile of consumers' matter. Examining consumers' attributes can influence the choice to purchase food through any platform. Exploring this aspect holds significance as it offers empirical data to researchers, enabling them to comprehend why consumers behave the way they economically behave be it online market or in the traditional platforms.

Several studies the influence of socio-demographic variables on online food shopping in different countries have focused on have provided contrasting conclusions on the effect and significance of the demographic factors were cited by Dominici, Andrea, et al (2021) (This includes Finotto et al., 2020; Hamad and Schmitz, 2019; Hood et al., 2020; Hui and Wan, 2009; Naseri and Elliott, 2011; Van Droogenbroeck and Van Hove, 2017; Wang and Somogyi, 2019). Indeed, studies are focused on the relationship between demographic variables and product recall but the association between awareness and demographics is rarely found. In modern days, due to the social media and smart phoned, demography plays a vital role in the awareness of consumers as sociodemographic factors affect priorities as well choices of consumers. Hence this study focuses on the in-depth analysis of the sociodemographic profile of consumers in Isabela Province, Philippines and explore on the various socio-demographic factors of the consumers.

Objective of the Study

This study aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the sociodemographic profile of consumers in Isabela Province, Philippines and explore on the various socio-demographic factors of the consumers. Specifically, it sought to answer:

1. What is the socio-demographic profile of the respondent-consumers in terms of:

    1.1 sex

    1.2 marital status

    1.3 sectoral affiliation

    1.4 age

    1.5 highest educational attainment

    1.6 religious affiliation

    1.7 family size

    1.8 family income

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive-normative method of research which employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from various municipalities and barangays within Isabela Province. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and secondary data were also sourced from governmental agencies, research institutions, and industry reports. A large and diverse sample size were targeted to ensure the study's reliability and validity. The descriptive statistics was used to summarize the profile of the respondents like percentages, frequency counts using statistical tools like SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Distribution of Participants in terms of Municipality

Municipality	Frequency	Percentage
Alicia	69	9.7
Cabagan	48	6.7
Cauayan City	122	17.1
Ilagan City	136	19.1
Naguilian	30	4.2
Roxas	58	8.1
San Mateo	61	8.6
Santiago	126	17.7
Tumauini	62	8.7
Total	712	100.0

According to the statistics, the City of Ilagan has the greatest frequency (136, or 19.1 percent), indicating that the majority of respondents who took part were residents of that city. The results suggest that Ilagan City has the most participation, taking into account that it also has the largest population in the entire province, according to data from the Isabela Profile - Cities and Municipalities Competitive Index of 2020.

Table 2: Distribution of Participants in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
female	445	62.5
male	267	37.5
Total	712	100.0

The frequency and percentage distribution of participants by sex is shown in Table 2. According to the table, there are 267 male participants and 445 female participants, or 62.5 percent and 37.50 percent, respectively. This statistic is in line with a Bloomberg analysis that asserts women make up over 85% of consumer purchases in the US and have a 95% total sway over the volume of goods and services bought. Additionally, a woman's purchasing strategy is deeply ingrained in her identity; it is a part of her DNA. According to a 2007 survey by the AMP Agency, a woman will shop in the same way she does when she is 18 years old—until she is 43 years old. It is a persistent mindset. Brennan claims that concurrently, B. who agreed with this finding (2009), women make up the bulk of the consumer population in general and

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the market for personal care products in particular. K. Dweck, & Haimovitz, C. S. (2017). Again, insist that a woman who is aware of her rights will instill this mindset in her children, family, and community. As a consequence, society becomes stronger and women are given the power to help bridge the gender gap at the most fundamental levels of society. This also helps consumers become more aware of their rights. According to a recent analysis of the Department of Education's "Condition of Education 2009" by AAUW (formerly known as the American Association of University Women), business is the most popular college major for women. This just serves to explain why women make up the majority of responders, as seen in the figures above. This suggests that the results of the study may place greater emphasis on the replies of female respondents than on those of male respondents.

Table 3: Distribution of Participants in terms of Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	389	54.6
Solo parent	18	2.5
Married	263	36.9
Widow/Widower	38	5.3
Legally Separated	4	.6
Total	712	100.0

The frequency and percentage distribution of individuals' marital status is shown in Table 3 for the sample. As can be seen from the table, the majority of participants are single, with a frequency of 389 (389), or 54.60 percent, while the legally separated have the lowest frequency, at 4 (4, or.60 percent). The statistics suggest that the vast majority of participants were single young adults who made up the study's youth segment. According to research from ConsumersInternational.org, single people make an effort to lead active lifestyles and combat feelings of loneliness. This may lead to a variety of marketing initiatives. Furthermore, the country has 34.8 million single or divorced persons, or 44% of all adults aged 10 and older, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority's February 2020 report.

Table 4: Distribution of Participants in terms of Sector

Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Housewife	67	9.4
Farmers/fisherfolks	63	8.8
Government/Private Employees	98	13.8
Persons with Disability	32	4.5
Business Sector	89	12.5
College/ High School Students	266	37.4
OSYs/ Unemployed	30	4.2
Senior Citizens	67	9.4
Total	712	100.0

Table 4 displays the frequency and percentage distribution of participation by sector. According to the data, OSYs/Unemployed have the lowest frequency at thirty (30), or 4.20 percent, while High School/College students have the highest frequency at two hundred and sixty-six (266), or 37.40 percent. The information provided demonstrated that all relevant industries were

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covered in the execution of this investigation. This is consistent with statistics provided by the Philippine Statistics Authority in April 2020, which highlighted the anticipated 73.7 million population of people aged 15 and older.

Table 5: Distribution of Participants in terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
10-18 years old (youth)	200	28.1
19-59 years old (middle age)	412	57.9
60 years old and above (old)	100	14.0
Total	712	100.0

One of the most crucial factors in determining the participants' perspectives on a given issue—which may reflect a person's level of maturity—is their age. Table 5 displays the frequency and percentage distribution of participants by age. The participants in the middle age group (19-59 years old), as shown in the table, had the highest frequency of 412, or 57.9 percent. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) also discovered that of the 108.67 million households in the nation, 33.4 million, or 30.70% of the total household population, were under the age of 15, 69.40 million, or 63.90%, were between the ages of 15 and 64, and 5.86 million, or 5.40%, were 65 and older.

Table 6: Distribution of Participants in terms of Highest Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary Level	57	8.0
Elementary Graduate	201	28.2
High School Level	142	19.9
High School Graduate	50	7.0
Bachelor Level	18	2.5
Bachelor's Degree Graduate	26	3.7
Graduate Level	76	10.7
Completed Graduate Studies	124	17.4
Technical/Vocational	18	2.5
Total	712	100.0

One of the most significant factors influencing a person's opinions, perspective, and capacity to comprehend any given social issue is their education. The frequency and percentage distribution of participants by highest level of education is shown in Table 6. The frequency of primary graduates is greatest, at 200, or 28.20 percent, as shown in the table. The results supported a report on poverty in the Philippines that claimed the majority of Filipino households only had access to elementary education because all the participants had attended formal school, enabling them to recognize their rights as customers. The results of Mittal, I., and Gupta's study run counter to this outcome. (2013) discovered that respondents with higher incomes and educational backgrounds were more knowledgeable than respondents with lower incomes and educational backgrounds. It was surprising to discover that despite widespread awareness of consumer rights; they weren't being fully utilized.

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Table 7: Distribution of Participants in terms of Religious Affiliation

Religious Affiliation	Frequency	Percentage
Roman Catholic	499	70.0
Iglesia ni Cristo	51	7.2
Johova's Witnesses	10	1.4
Protestant	9	1.3
Evangelical	5	.7
Born-Again Christian	68	9.6
Muslim	4	.6
JIL Movement	2	.3
Seventh Day Adventist	5	.7
Baptist	17	2.4
Others (pls. specify)	42	6.0
Total	712	100.0

Table 7 displays the participants' religious affiliation. The bulk of the participants, as seen in the table, are Roman Catholics, with a frequency of 499, or 70.00 percent. This suggests that despite the country's three centuries of Spanish occupation, Roman Catholicism is still the majority religion there. Both a Center for Global Education article about religion in the Philippines and a Stanford University research, which estimates that 80.9 percent of Filipinos identify as Roman Catholic, corroborate the claim that more than 86 percent of the population is Roman Catholic

Table 8: Distribution of Participants in terms of Family size

Family Size	Frequency	Percentage
less than 4	175	24.6
4-6	434	61.0
7 and up	103	14.5
Total	712	100.0

A person's values, beliefs, and conduct are significantly influenced by the size of his or her family, which may, in turn, alter how he or she views a given issue. The frequency and percentage distribution of the participants' family size is shown in Table 8 for each participant. The majority of the participants, as shown in the table, belonged to a medium-sized family of 4-6 people, which suggests that most of the participants are acutely aware of the benefits of having a small number of family members. The results are in line with a Statista analysis that looked at typical household sizes in the Philippines from 2000 to 2020 and found that there were 4.1 individuals in each family on average. According to a comparable survey by ArcGIS Online, there are 4.4 individuals on average per family nationwide.

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Table 9: Distribution of Participants in terms of Monthly Family Income

Monthly Family Income	Frequency	Percent
30,000 and below	592	83.1
30,001-60,000	77	10.8
60,001-90,000	22	3.1
90,001-120,000	7	1.0
120,001 and above	14	2.0
Total	712	100.0

One of the most valuable family resources, income has a significant impact on a person's financial situation and, in turn, is likely to have an impact on how that person feels about the problems he or she is facing. Table 9 makes it clear that the majority of participants earn $30,000 or less per month, which indicates that most of them fall below the poverty line, which indicates the minimal income required to cover the basic food and non-food needs of an average family. The results are in line with a Statista study on average family income in the Philippines from 2012 to 2021, which indicated that in the first half of that year, households there were making an average of 149.98 thousand Philippine pesos, or around P25,000.00 per month.

Summary of Findings

Based from the research conducted, the following conclusions were realized.

1. The family monthly income of majority of the respondents is below the poverty line based on National Economic Development Authority bulletin.
2. The family size falls under the average family size in the Philippines which is 4 – 6 members.
3. From the different significant sectors under study, majority of the consumer respondents belong to the elementary students.
4. Majority of the consumer-respondents fall in the middle age (19-59 years old).
5. Majority of the consumer-respondents are Roman Catholic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings, the researchers have the following recommendations to offer:

1. Additional studies should be conducted to determine other variables and make use of more respondents to strengthen the results.
2. Employ other important variables to determine the socio-demographic status of the respondents that would enhance the results.

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