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MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The effect of consumer rights awareness on attitude and purchase intention in the hotel industry: Moderating role of demographic characteristics

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Abstract: This study examines the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and consumer intention, the effect of consumer attitude on consumer intention, and the moderating effects of gender, age and education on the effect of consumer rights awareness on both consumer attitude and intention. Using data from a sample of 366 hotel guests, the study employs structural equation modelling and moderated regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. Results indicate that consumer rights awareness has a positive effect on both consumer attitude and intention while consumer attitude has a positive effect on consumer intention. Results further indicate that education moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on both consumer attitude and intention while gender and age do not. The study is among the pioneers to examine the effect of consumer

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Consumers constitute the largest economic group in any economy and business activity. A sound understanding of the behaviour of consumers is inevitable. Despite their importance, consumers often find themselves exposed to unfair business practices. At the centre of consumer protection is consumer rights awareness. Hence, this study unpacks the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and purchase intention, and the moderating role of consumers' demographics on these relationships in the hotel industry. The study demonstrates that consumer rights awareness has a positive effect on consumer attitude and purchase intention towards a hotel. These relationships are stronger among consumers with higher than lower level of education. Therefore, consumer attitude and purchase intentions toward a hotel can be enhanced by increased consumer rights awareness. More so, hoteliers are advised to segment their markets based on the consumers' level of education.

rights awareness on both consumer attitude and behavioural intention and to test the moderating effects of demographic characteristics on these relationships.

Subjects: Testing, Measurement and Assessment; Consumer Psychology; Business, Management and Accounting

Keywords: Consumer action; consumer attitude; consumer intention; consumer rights; consumer rights awareness; knowledge of consumer rights

1. Introduction

Consumers buy various goods and services to fulfil their expectations. They constitute the largest economic group in any economy. The majority of economic activities are centred on consumers. Thus, ultimately any business activities should be geared towards the satisfaction of consumers. A firm without a sound customer base is bound to fail (Hima, 2016; Indirani & Kumar, 2016; Makanyeza & Du Toit, 2015). Similarly, consumers are at the centre of hotel businesses (HOTREC, 2011). Hotels depend on customers' patronage although consumers often find themselves exposed to unfair business practices. This is common in the hotel industry where consumers can easily be manipulated into purchasing services or products that do not offer customer delight. For example, hotels sometimes engage in unfair practices such as overbooking, a practice where hotels confirm more rooms than the hotel's capacity. They do so on the assumption that some guests may not check-in, may cancel their bookings, or may leave earlier than planned. Although the intention is not to disadvantage guests but a precautionary measure, some guests may be denied accommodation if the number of booking cancellations is lower than expected. Such practices have the potential to negatively impact on hotel guests (Mohamed et al., 2017) and as such contrast with the ideals of the implementation of the marketing concept. In some cases, consumers are short-changed; they may buy poor or shoddy goods and services (Indirani & Kumar, 2016).

The fundamental concern of consumerism is the protection of consumer rights. The rights of consumers must be protected (Hima, 2016). In Zimbabwe, the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) is mandated to protect consumers' rights and to educate consumers so that they can get a fair deal at the marketplace (Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, 2019). HOTREC (2011) observed that consumer rights and safety are primarily important in the hospitality industry. Hence, it is necessary to strike a balance between a hotel's business and the rights or aspirations and desires of consumers. Firms are expected to play an active role in protecting consumers. However, sometimes businesses focus more on meeting their financial objectives at the expense of consumer protection. Therefore, consumers should play an active role in protecting themselves against unfair business practices. At the centre of consumer protection is awareness of consumer rights. Consumers should be aware of their rights to protect themselves. Consumers who are aware of their rights are less likely to be abused by businesses. As consumers are aware of their rights, they can make informed decisions at the marketplace; they can protect themselves against exploitation by businesses. Consumers must acquire knowledge and skills so that they make responsible decisions that will benefit the individual consumer and society at large (Barnard, 2015; Consumers International, 2019; Hima, 2016; Larsen & Lawson, 2013; Makanyeza & Du Toit, 2015; Rider & Makela, 2003).

Notwithstanding the critical role played by consumer rights awareness on consumer actions in the marketplace, there is a paucity of empirical evidence in the public domain on the relationship between consumer rights awareness and consumer attitude and purchase intention. Several studies have been conducted on consumer awareness but have not paid particular attention to this aspect. Likewise, there is a scarcity of studies that have examined the moderating role of consumer demographic factors on the relationship between consumer rights awareness and consumer attitude and purchase intention. For example, Beekman (2008) published a paper focusing only on consumer rights to informed choice on the food market. A study by Henry

(2010) also concentrated only on how mainstream consumers think about consumer rights and responsibilities. Another study by Indirani and Kumar (2016) focused on the impact of consumer awareness and knowledge on consumer effective behaviour in Malaysia. They contextualised effective behaviour as appropriate action taken by consumers, in line with the country's regulations, when faced with a particular situation. Makela and Peters (2004) studied the awareness of consumer rights and responsibilities and perceptions of consumer education among secondary school students in Botswana. A study by Anong and Kunovskaya (2013) explored consumer redress in South Africa's mobile financial services sector among unbanked consumers. Based on the aforementioned, this study seeks to narrow this knowledge gap, thereby enriching the consumerism and consumer behaviour literature. Moreover, it has been observed that consumers in developing countries such as Zimbabwe are generally believed to demonstrate a lack of awareness of their rights. As such, when goods and services fail, these consumers are found lacking in how to exercise their rights to seek recourse (Anong & Kunovskaya, 2013). This situation presents the Zimbabwean environment as a fertile ground to conduct this study.

The objectives of the study, therefore, were to determine the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and consumer purchase intention, to test the effect of consumer attitude on consumer purchase intention, and to establish the moderating effects of demographic factors (gender, age and education) on the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and purchase intention in the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. Based on a survey of 366 hotel guests, the study employed structural equation modelling and moderated regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. Results indicate that consumer rights awareness has a positive effect on both consumer attitude and intention, while consumer attitude has a positive effect on consumer intention. Furthermore, it was established that education moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on both consumer attitude and intention, while gender and age do not.

2. Literature review, research hypotheses and conceptual framework

2.1. Theory of planned behaviour

This study is underpinned by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Thus, the relationships between consumer rights awareness, and consumer attitude and purchase intention can be explicated by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). According to Ishak and Zabil (2012), knowledge plays a critical role in influencing human decisions or behaviour. Likewise, in the context of this study consumer awareness of rights can influence the attitude and purchase intention of consumers. The Theory of Planned Behaviour also states that beliefs and attitude toward the behaviour influence the behavioural intention and the actual behaviour. Thus, in this study, purchase intention is influenced by consumer attitude. Despite this common understanding in literature, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between consumer rights awareness, and consumer attitude and purchase intention. More so, the moderating role of consumer demographics on the relationship between consumer rights awareness, and consumer attitude and purchase intention has not been accorded evident scholarly attention. This study was, therefore, conducted to enhance an understanding of these relationships.

2.2. Consumer rights awareness

Consumer rights awareness is a part of the broader concept of consumerism. Consumerism is also known as consumer protection, consumer movement or consumer activism. It is viewed as a major political force in most parts of the world. It refers to activities by various role players aimed at protecting basic consumer rights. Consumerism is a concept in marketing which refers to actions of consumers and their representatives, business, governments and other organised groups to protect consumers' rights and interests. It originated in the USA where it began as social movements which then spread to other parts of the world (Donoghue et al., 2015; Hima, 2016; K.B. Bello et al., 2016).

The historical development of consumer rights dates to 1962. Consumer rights were a result of the promulgation of the four basic consumer rights by President John F. Kennedy in the USA. He promulgated four basic rights, namely the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, and the right to be heard. These basic rights formed the basis for United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection adopted in 1985. The UN expanded the rights to include the right to satisfaction of basic needs (the right to basic needs), the right to redress, the right to consumer education, and the right to a healthy environment. These eight rights form the foundation of consumer legislation in many parts of the world (Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, 2019; Consumers International, 2019; Donoghue et al., 2015; K.B. Bello et al., 2016; Larsen & Lawson, 2013).

The right to safety stipulates that consumers have a right to be protected against marketing activities that are harmful to their health and life. The right to be informed stipulates that consumers have a right to be given enough information to make informed decisions at the marketplace. Thus, consumers should be protected against misleading marketing communications. The right to choose states that consumers have a right to choose goods and services that are of reasonable quality and price. Consumers should be protected from business practices that can potentially prejudice consumers such as unfair pricing, profiteering and artificial shortages. The right to be heard is also known as the right to representation. Consumers have a right to express themselves without fear or favour in influencing government policies that impact on consumer welfare. The right to basic needs is also known as the right to satisfaction of basic needs. Consumers have a right to access goods and services that are deemed necessities of life such as food, shelter and basic education. The right to redress is concerned with the compensation of consumers when they are wronged as a result of unfair business practices. The right to consumer education stipulates that consumers have a right to be educated to gain knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions at the marketplace. The right to a healthy environment requires that consumers live and work in an environment which does not threaten the well-being of consumers (Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, 2019; Consumers International, 2019; K.B. Bello et al., 2016; Makela & Peters, 2004).

The study adopted the ninth consumer right called consumer right to privacy as identified in Guo (2012). The right to privacy is concerned with the protection of consumer privacy when consumers conduct transactions. This is especially important in e-commerce where consumers tend to divulge large amounts of personal information. This is particularly relevant in the hotel industry where consumers provide a lot of personal information, most of which can be provided online. Payments can also be made online using debit and credit cards. Consumers have a right to protection of such valuable information.

At the height of consumerism is consumer rights awareness. Consumer rights awareness refers to the extent to which an individual consumer is knowledgeable and understands his/her rights at the marketplace. Consumer rights awareness is the most critical factor in consumerism. It enables consumers to make informed purchase decisions. It also empowers consumers to pressure companies to produce quality products (K.B. Bello et al., 2016). K. B. Bello et al. (2020) posit that consumers with higher knowledge of rights will be in a better position to make evaluative judgments about a firm and its products/services. Furthermore, consumers will exhibit a high degree of satisfaction and continue to patronize the firm if indeed the firm is concerned about consumer rights. Awareness of consumer rights enables consumers to seek redress whenever they are dissatisfied. When consumers are not aware of their rights it is unlikely that they can seek redress whenever they are dissatisfied (Donoghue et al., 2015). Consumer complaints arise due to dissatisfaction with a company's products/services and if the complaints are not addressed, this will culminate in consumer activism, such as consumer boycotts and mass protests, thereby negatively affecting the company (Anadol et al., 2015). Similarly, Garman et al. (1992) posit that the knowledge of consumer rights is important because it helps consumers make better purchase decisions. As such, it improves the well-being of consumers in the marketplace.

2.3. Consumer attitude

Consumer attitude represents a general evaluation of an object, which can be a product, service, or brand, which is a crucial predictor of behavioural intention. A positive or favourable attitude towards a hotel implies that the consumer likes the hotel. A negative or an unfavourable attitude towards a hotel implies that the consumer does not like the hotel (Makanyeza, 2014). Consumer attitude comprises three elements with hedonic and utilitarian implications, namely beliefs (the cognitive component), feelings (affective component) and behavioural intention (conative component). Beliefs represent knowledge and perceptions that are acquired by consumers through a combination of direct experience with the attitude object and related information from various sources. Consumer beliefs about an object such as a hotel are the characteristics that they ascribe to it. Feelings represent the affect or emotions of consumers toward a particular object such as a hotel. Feelings are believed to be central to the study of consumer attitude because they provide a summary of the consumer's predisposition towards a particular object (Makanyeza, 2014; Yeung & Leung, 2007). Consumer attitude directly influences consumer's behavioural intention to purchase, which in turn directly influences behaviour (Kolkailah et al., 2012; Makanyeza, 2014; Wang et al., 2020).

2.4. Purchase intention

Purchase intention is the third component of an attitude which is also known as behavioural intention. It that refers to an individual's motivation in cognition to expend effort in pursuing and implementing a specific behaviour (Paul et al., 2016). Purchase intention represents the intention to rebuy a product or patronise a hotel. Consumer intention represents what a consumer thinks will purchase in future. It is a consumer's conscious plan to purchase or repurchase a good or service. The promotion of positive behavioural intention of consumers is a pivotal goal of hotel managers since behavioural intention represents the consumer's plans to purchase products/services (Han & Back, 2008). In marketing practice, intention to purchase can be used as the closest substitute of the actual purchase behaviour (Ali et al., 2011; Makanyeza, 2014; Yeung & Leung, 2007). Furthermore, marketers also consider the intention to repurchase a particular product as an important performance outcome since it is more of a continuance intention, as opposed to a new purchase decision (K. B. Bello et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2015). Although consumer attitude encompasses consumer intention, in theory, many studies have treated consumer attitude and consumer intention as separate constructs albeit related to each other (e.g., Ali et al., 2011; Ashton & Scott, 2011; Hong & Cho, 2011; Yeung & Leung, 2007). As such, consumer attitude is known to positively influence consumer intention (Ali et al., 2011; Makanyeza, 2014). Similarly, in this study consumer attitude was posited as a predictor of consumer intention to patronise a hotel.

2.5. Demographic factors

Demographic factors refer to consumers' characteristics such as gender, age, and level of education. These characteristics play a critical role in influencing the behaviour of consumers. They influence consumers' decision making. As such, Alimi and Workneh (2016) observed that consumers' demographic characteristics such as age, education, income and gender can significantly influence the consumption behaviour of consumers. The level of education was shown to have a significant impact on consumer intention (Wang et al., 2020). Likewise, Büyükkaragöz et al. (2014) reported that socio-demographic characteristics such as age, education level and income level influence consumers' awareness and consumption of food products. Besides, demographic factors such as age, gender, and marital status, level of income, education, and occupation affect the decisions of hotel consumers in their selection for hotels and related products/services. These factors are critical since they are acceptable compared to other factors affecting consumer behaviour (Uca et al., 2017). On the contrary, research findings from a study by Wang et al. (2020) showed that age had no significant impact on consumer intention to patronise green hotels in China.

2.6. Research hypotheses

The empirical literature on the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude is scarce. However, the Theory of Planned Behaviour can be used to explain the effect of consumer

rights awareness on consumer attitude. As demonstrated by Ishak and Zabil (2012), knowledge influences consumer behaviour. In this study, it is thus believed that knowledge of consumer rights is critical in influencing consumer behaviour. Consumer rights awareness enables consumers to make sound purchase decisions in the marketplace. Consumers who are aware of their rights can take actions against unfair business practices (Donoghue et al., 2015; Garman et al., 1992; K.B. Bello et al., 2016). Ishak and Zabil (2012) conducted a study in Malaysia and found a positive correlation between consumer rights awareness and consumer actions to be taken in certain circumstances in line with regulations. Based on this discussion, it is posited that:

Hypothesis 1 *Consumer rights awareness has a significant effect on consumer attitude towards a hotel.*

Similarly, there is scanty literature on the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer intention to purchase. However, the Theory of Planned Behaviour attempts to explain this relationship. As observed by Ishak and Zabil (2012), knowledge influences what consumers do. As such, consumers who are knowledgeable of their rights are likely to take responsibility by resisting shoddy business practices (Donoghue et al., 2015; Garman et al., 1992; K.B. Bello et al., 2016). Furthermore, findings from a study in Nigeria by K. B. Bello et al. (2020) confirmed that consumers with higher knowledge of rights have a higher tendency to favourably appraise the product/services and to repeat purchase from a company perceived to be compliant, mostly in corporate social responsibility issues. Therefore, it is logical to assume that:

Hypothesis 2 *Consumer rights awareness has a significant effect on consumer intention to patronise a hotel.*

The Theory of Planned Behaviour states that behavioural intention is shaped by beliefs and attitude. There is overwhelming empirical evidence to support the view that consumer attitude positively influences consumer behavioural intention (Kolkailah et al., 2012; Yeung & Leung, 2007). For example, Rimal (2005) found a positive correlation between consumers' attitude and behavioural intention towards food labels on meat products in the USA. Similarly, studies conducted in Pakistani and China found that consumers' green purchase attitude is positively correlated with green purchase intention (Ali et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020). It was found that customers' green attitudes are significantly correlated with their intentions to visit a green hotel in USA (Han et al., 2011). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 3 *Consumer attitude has a positive effect on consumer intention to patronise a hotel.*

Despite the notion that demographic characteristics such as gender, age and education play a pivotal role on consumer behaviour, studies on the moderating effect of gender, age and education on the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and consumer intention are scarce. Nonetheless, Ishak and Zabil (2012) found that consumer rights awareness was higher among more educated than less educated consumers. A study of university students in Tiruchirappalli City found no significant differences in consumer rights awareness due to gender (Indirani & Kumar, 2016). However, a study by Büyükkaragöz et al. (2014) found that female respondents were almost three times more aware of functional food than male respondents. In Malaysia, Wee et al. (2014) concluded that female consumers had higher purchase intention than male consumers towards organic food products. A study in the USA found that female consumers had higher intentions to visit a green hotel than male consumers (Han et al., 2011). A study in India found that consumers with higher education levels were more aware of their rights than those with lower education levels (Mittal & Gupta, 2013). Similarly, Büyükkaragöz et al. (2014) established that awareness of function food was higher in consumers who had acquired higher education than those with lower education. Consumers with higher education were found to have higher purchase intentions of organic food products in Malaysia than consumers with lower education levels (Wee et al., 2014). A study in the USA found that mean scores in intention to

visit a green hotel were higher in younger consumers than older consumers (Han et al., 2011). The study by Büyükkaragöz et al. (2014) found that older respondents were almost four times more aware of functional food than younger respondents. A study on organic foods in Malaysia established that older consumers had significantly higher scores on the purchase intention of organic food products than younger consumers (Wee et al., 2104). In the USA it was found that consumers with higher education had higher mean scores in intention to visit a green hotel than consumers who were less educated (Han et al., 2011). This discussion shows that gender, age and education all directly impact on consumer rights awareness, attitude and purchase intention. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that these factors can moderate the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and purchase intention. Hence, it is posited that:

Hypothesis 4a *Gender moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude towards a hotel.*

Hypothesis 4b *Age moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude towards a hotel.*

Hypothesis 4c *Education moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude towards a hotel.*

Hypothesis 5a *Gender moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer intention to patronise a hotel.*

Hypothesis 5b *Age moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer intention to patronise a hotel.*

Hypothesis 5c *Education moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer intention to patronise a hotel.*

2.7. Conceptual framework

Based on the foregoing hypothesised relationships, the conceptual framework of the study is proposed as shown in [Figure 1](#).

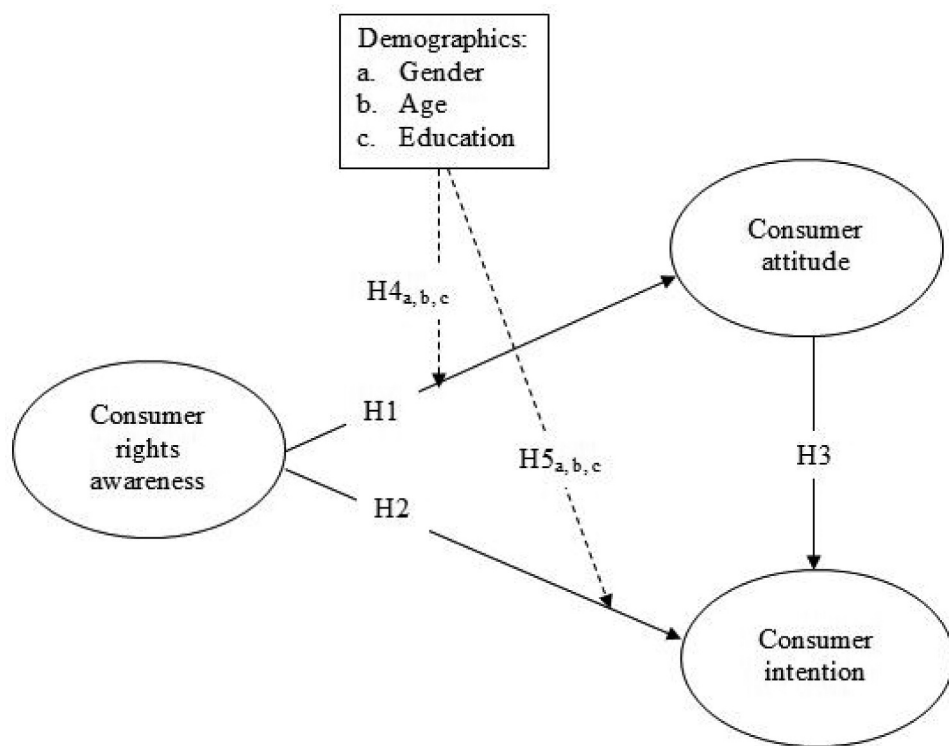
3. Research methods

3.1. Questionnaire design and measures

The questionnaire was divided into four major sections, namely demographic characteristics of the respondents, consumer rights awareness, consumer attitude and consumer intention. Demographic characteristics include gender, age and level of education of the respondents.

Items used to measure constructs were derived from literature. Consumer rights awareness was measured using items adapted from Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (2019), Consumers International (2019), Guo (2012), Ibarra and Revilla (2014), and Makela and Peters (2004). Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they were aware of the following consumer rights: the right to satisfaction of basic needs (Right1), the right to safety (Right2), the right to be informed (Right3), the right to choose (Right4), the right to be heard (Right5), the right to redress (Right6), the right to consumer education (Right7), the right to a healthy environment (Right8) and the right to privacy (Right9). The response points were: 1 = not aware at all, 2 = somewhat aware, 3 = aware, 4 = very aware. Items used to measure consumer attitude included: it is a pleasure to stay at this hotel (Atti1), overall, my experience at this hotel is really good (Atti2), overall, I am satisfied with the services at this hotel (Atti3), overall, the service at this hotel is excellent (Atti4). These items were derived from prior studies (Hong & Cho, 2011; Makanyeza, 2014; Sparks et al., 2013). Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed to these items based on the key: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.



disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Guided by previous studies (Hong & Cho, 2011; Makanyeza, 2014; Sparks et al., 2013), consumer intention was measured based on the following items: I intend to book at this hotel again in future (Inte1), I am willing to visit this hotel again in future (Inte2), I will continue to be a guest at this hotel (Inte3), I would not mind visiting this hotel again (Inte4). Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed to these statements based on the scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

Data were collected from three major hotels in the City of Harare in Zimbabwe between October 2019 and December 2019. The hotels were conveniently selected based on ease of access. The target respondents were guests checking into the hotels. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents based on willingness to participate at the point of checking into the hotel. The respondents were given at least 24 hours to submit the completed questionnaires either by dropping them in at the reception or via email. Convenience sampling was deemed effective in this study because it allowed the use of readily available and willing guests to participate in the study. This saved time and made it cost-effective to collect data. Out of the 400 distributed questionnaires, 366 were returned and usable. This response rate was considered acceptable for surveys of this nature (Saunders et al., 2012). The sample profile is presented in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, there were more female (56.8%) than male (43.2%) respondents. The majority (90%) of the respondents were aged 20 to 59 years. Most of the respondents had attained a tertiary level of education.

Table 1. Sample profile

Firm Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	208	56.8
Male	158	43.2
<i>Age</i>		
≤ 19 years	12	3.3
20–29 years	83	22.7
30–39 years	97	26.5
40–49 years	83	22.7
50–59 years	63	17.2
60+ years	28	7.7
<i>Highest level of education</i>		
Primary	5	1.4
Secondary	109	29.8
Tertiary	252	68.9

4. Analysis and results

4.1. Data validation

Data were validated through assessment of data normality, non-response bias, common method bias (CMB), convergent validity and discriminant validity.

4.1.1. Normality test

Many statistical analyses that involve independent and dependant variables require that data be normally distributed. Using SPSS version 22 in this study, visual observations of normal Q-Q plots, box plots and histograms showed that data were normally distributed. To confirm this, Z values were also computed in SPSS version 22. Results established the same. The Z-scores ($n = 366$) for all the data entries fell within the range -2.58 and $+2.58$ at the 0.01 level of significance (Field et al., 2012; Pallant, 2010; Razali & Wash, 2011).

4.1.2. Non-response bias test

Non-response bias can be a threat to surveys of this nature where data were collected from the respondents over some time. To guard against this threat, a non-response bias assessment was carried out employing the method recommended by Armstrong and Overton (1977). Using this approach, means of each of the last 30 entries of the responses were compared against those of the first 30 of the responses. No significant differences were found in the means for the two waves of the responses. This shows that non-response bias was not a threat to this study.

4.1.3. CMB

CMB can pose a serious validity threat to data collected through single surveys like in the present study. It is, therefore, imperative to guard against CMB to ensure data validity. As such, CMB was evaluated using Harman's single factor test. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted in SPSS version 22. As expected, the solution gave three distinct factors that explained 67.725% of the total variance. The initial factor explained 35.029% of the variance in the data i.e., no single factor explained more than 50% of the variance. Therefore, it was plausible to conclude that CMB was not a threat to data validity in this study (Ankitha & Basri, 2019; Kim et al., 2013; Wu, 2013).

4.1.4. Convergent validity

Convergent validity was evaluated through assessment of measurement model fit indices, Cronbach’s alpha (α) reliability, composite reliability (CR_α), standardised factor loadings (λ), individual item reliabilities (squared multiple correlations) [I_α], critical ratios (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE).

The measurement model was estimated in AMOS version 21. Indices used to assess the measurement model include CMIN/Degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), normed fit index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Table 2 shows that the initial measurement model displayed acceptable fit indices. Values for λ and I_α were inspected to detect potential problem items. Four items (Right6, Right7, Right8 and Right9) were found to have poor (< 0.5) I_α (Kuo et al., 2009). These items were, therefore, eliminated. The measurement model was then re-assessed, and the modified measurement model gave improved fit indices as shown in Table 2.

Table 3 shows that the λ , I_α , CR, α , CR_α and AVE values for the modified measurement model satisfied conditions for convergent validity. All λ values were greater than the minimum recommended value of 0.6 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). I_α values were greater than the minimum cut-off point of 0.5 (Kuo et al., 2009). All critical ratios were large enough ($CR > 2$) and significant at $p < 0.001$ (Segars, 1997). Coefficients for α and CR_α for all constructs were greater than the recommended lowest level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978; Segars, 1997). AVE values were larger than Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended minimum point of 0.5.

4.1.5. Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, constructs correlations, AVE square roots, and collinearity statistics (tolerance and VIF). Results show that conditions for discriminant validity were satisfied.

Table 4 presents means and standard deviations, AVE square roots and correlations for the study constructs. As shown in Table 4, all AVE square roots were greater than their corresponding construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Collinearity statistics (tolerance = 0.970; variance inflation factor = 1.031) show that there was no multiple collinearity among the constructs. This suggests that the constructs were significantly different from each other. Saunders et al. (2012) recommend that a very small tolerance value (≤ 0.1) or a large variance inflation factor (≥ 10) indicates the presence of collinearity.

Fit indices	Initial measurement model	Modified measurement model	Recommended values	Sources
χ^2/df	1.779	1.798	≤ 3.000	Hair et al. (2010)
GFI	.949	.961	> 0.900	Hair et al. (2010)
AGFI	.918	.934	> 0.900	Hair et al. (2010)
NFI	.966	.976	> 0.900	Hair et al. (2010)
TLI	.978	.984	> 0.900	Hooper et al. (2008)
CFI	.985	.989	> 0.900	Hair et al. (2010)
RMSEA	.046	.047	< 0.080	Hair et al. (2010)

Table 3. λ , I_{α} , CR, α , CR_{α} and AVE

Construct	λ	I_{α}	CR	α	CR_{α}	AVE
<i>Consumer rights awareness</i>						
Right1	.800	.640	-	.895	.897	.628
Right2	.774	.600	17.307***			
Right3	.853	.728	16.087***			
Right4	.833	.694	15.746***			
Right5	.691	.477	12.946***			
<i>Consumer attitude</i>						
Atti1	.895	.801	-	.929	.931	.757
Atti2	.861	.741	25.790***			
Atti3	.870	.757	21.175***			
Atti4	.853	.728	19.533***			
<i>Consumer intention</i>						
Inte1	.894	.800	-	.932	.934	.780
Inte2	.937	.879	28.296***			
Inte3	.876	.768	24.403***			
Inte4	.821	.674	19.702***			

Notes:—CR is fixed; ***significant at $p < 0.001$

Table 4. Mean, SD, construct correlation and AVE square root

Construct	Mean \pm SD	Rights	Attitude	Intention
Consumer rights awareness (Rights)	3.200 \pm 0.789	.792		
Consumer attitude (Attitude)	3.645 \pm 1.085	.196***	.962	
Consumer intention (Intention)	3.660 \pm 1.138	.253***	.841***	.883

Notes: SD = standard deviation. Diagonal elements represent the square root of each construct's AVE. Non-diagonal elements represent correlations between constructs. ***significant at $p < 0.001$.

4.2. Structural equation modelling

Research hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 were tested using structural equation modeling in AMOS version 21. The model fit indices were acceptable: $\chi^2/df = 1.847$, GFI = 0.959, AGFI = 0.933, NFI = 0.974, TLI = 0.983, CFI = 0.988, RMSEA = 0.048. Results of hypotheses testing are presented in Table 5.

Results in Table 5 show that consumer rights awareness positively influences consumer attitude towards a hotel. Similarly, consumer rights awareness was found to have a positive effect on consumer intention to patronise a hotel. Consumer attitude towards a hotel was found to positively influence consumer intention to patronise the hotel. Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 were supported.

4.3. Moderated regression models

Moderated regression analysis was used to test H4_{a,b,c} and H5_{a,b,c} in SPSS version 22. Results are summarised in Table 6. Results from Model 1 show that coefficients for the interaction terms

Table 5. H1—H3 testing results

Hypothesis	Hypothesised Relationship	SRW	CR	Remark
H1	Consumer rights awareness → Consumer attitude	.249	2.625***	Supported
H2	Consumer rights awareness → Consumer intention	.151	2.493**	Supported
H3	Consumer attitude → Consumer intention	.824	17.536***	Supported

Notes: SRW = standardised regression weight. CR = critical ratio. **significant at $p < 0.01$. ***significant at $p < 0.001$.

Table 6. H4_{a,b,c} and H5_{a,b,c} testing results

	Variable	Beta	t-statistic
Model 1: Dependent variable: Consumer attitude	Consumer rights awareness × Gender	-.012	-.222 ^{ns}
	Consumer rights awareness × Age	-.032	-.596 ^{ns}
	Consumer rights awareness × Education	.155	2.978**
Model 2: Dependent variable: Consumer intention	Consumer rights awareness × Gender	-.015	-.284 ^{ns}
	Consumer rights awareness × Age	-.058	-1.103 ^{ns}
	Consumer rights awareness × Education	.191	3.695***

Notes: ^{ns} insignificant at $p > 0.05$. **significant at $p < 0.01$. ***significant at $p < 0.001$.

consumer rights awareness × gender (H4_a) and consumer rights awareness × age (H4_b), were insignificant as predictors of consumer attitude. Thus, gender and age did not moderate the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude. Therefore, H4_a and H4_b were not supported. The interaction term consumer rights awareness × education (H4_c) had a significant positive effect on consumer attitude. This suggests that education moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude. Therefore, H4_c was supported.

To illustrate how education moderates this relationship, simple slopes for standardised values were plotted as shown in Figure 2. Figure 2 shows that the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude is stronger in more educated than less educated consumers.

Results from Model 2 show that coefficients for the interaction terms consumer rights awareness × gender (H5_a) and consumer rights awareness × age (H5_b), were insignificant as predictors of consumer intention. Thus, gender and age did not moderate the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer intention. Therefore, H5_a and H5_b were not supported. The interaction term consumer rights awareness × education (H5_c) had a significant positive effect on consumer intention. This suggests that education moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer intention. Thus, H5_c was supported. To illustrate how education moderates this relationship, simple slopes for standardised values were plotted as shown in Figure 3. Figure 3 shows that the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer intention is stronger in more educated than less educated consumers.

Figure 2. Simple slopes for standardised consumer rights awareness on standardised consumer attitude at low and high education.

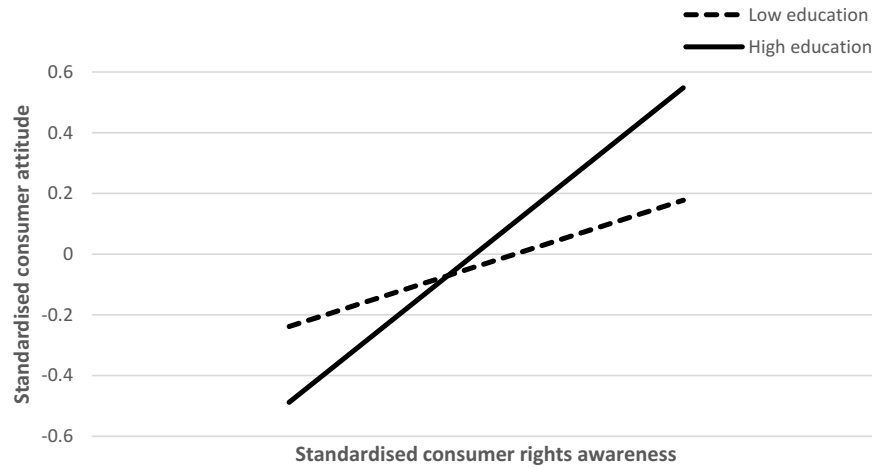
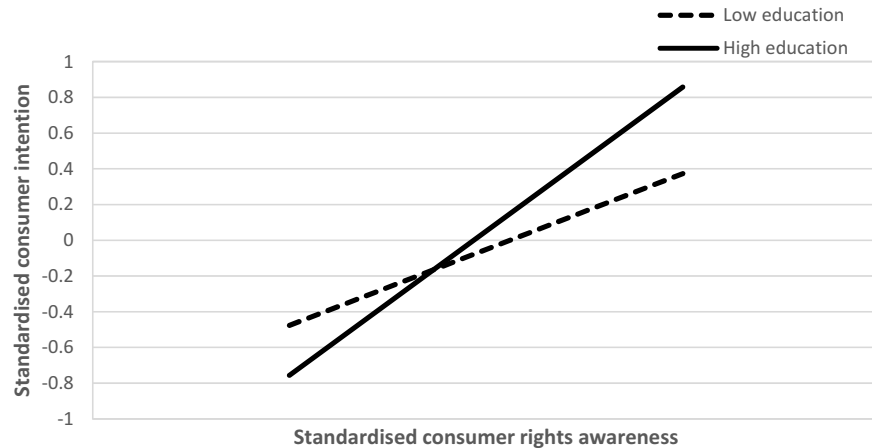


Figure 3. Simple slopes for standardised consumer rights awareness on standardised consumer intention at low and high education.



5. Discussion and implications

The study sought to determine the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and consumer purchase intention. It tested the effect of consumer attitude on consumer purchase intention. The study also sought to establish the moderating effects of gender, age, and education on the effect of consumer rights awareness on consumer attitude and purchase intention in the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. The results of the study have implications for policy, practice and future research.

5.1. Implications for theory

Despite the important role played by consumer rights awareness on influencing consumer actions at the marketplace, studies have overlooked the relationship between consumer rights awareness and consumer attitude and purchase intention (e.g., Beekman, 2008; Henry, 2010; Indirani & Kumar, 2016; Ishak & Zabil, 2012; Makela & Peters, 2004). Similarly, there is a dearth of studies that have examined the moderating role of consumer demographic factors on the relationship between consumer rights awareness and consumer attitude and purchase intention. This study contributes to the existing body consumer behaviour literature by being one of the first to investigate these relationships.

The study established that consumer rights awareness has a positive effect on consumer attitude towards a hotel. This suggests that as consumers become aware of their rights, they are likely to have a positive attitude towards the hotel. This implies that increased consumer rights awareness is beneficial to the hotel as it fosters favourable consumer attitudes. Given the limited empirical evidence on this relationship, this finding provides a significant contribution to the existing body of consumer behaviour literature. Moreover, the finding supports the view held by various scholars that knowledge of consumer rights plays a critical role in influencing consumer behaviour i.e., an awareness of consumer rights enables consumers to make informed purchase decisions in the marketplace (Donoghue et al., 2015; Garman et al., 1992; K.B. Bello et al., 2016). Similarly, Ishak and Zabil (2012) conducted a study in Malaysia and found a positive correlation between consumer rights awareness and consumer actions to be taken in certain circumstances in line with regulations. The finding also enhances an understanding of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) as it applies to the relationship between consumer rights awareness and attitude.

Similarly, it was found that consumer rights awareness has a positive effect on consumer intention to patronise a hotel. The implication of this is that increased consumer rights awareness is likely to increase the likelihood of consumers to patronise a hotel. Thus, it is beneficial for a business like a hotel to have customers who are knowledgeable of their rights as this increases their chances of coming to the hotel. Against the backdrop of limited empirical research on this relationship, this finding makes a novel contribution to consumer behaviour theory. It also enhances an understanding of the Theory of Planned Behaviour as it applies to the relationship between consumer rights awareness and purchase intention (Ajzen, 1985; Donoghue et al., 2015; Garman et al., 1992; Ishak & Zabil, 2012). In Malaysia, it was found that consumer rights awareness is positively correlated with consumer activism (Ishak & Zabil, 2012). A similar study in Nigeria showed that consumers with high knowledge of rights tend to prefer products or services and to repeatedly buy from a company perceived to be compliant, mostly in corporate social responsibility issues (K. B. Bello et al., 2020).

The study found that consumer attitude positively influences consumer intention to patronise a hotel. Thus, consumers with favourable attitudes toward a hotel have a high likelihood of patronising the hotel. This finding supports the common understanding of extant literature (Ajzen, 1985; Kolkailah et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2020; Yeung & Leung, 2007). A study by Rimal (2005) found that consumer attitude has a positive effect on behavioural intention towards food labels on meat products in the USA. Likewise, it was also found that the green purchase attitude positively influences green purchase intention among consumers in Pakistani and China (Ali et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020). In the USA, Han et al. (2011) found that customers' green attitudes are significantly correlated with their intentions to visit a green hotel.

It was established that education moderates the effect of consumer rights awareness on both consumer attitude and consumer intention to patronise a hotel. Precisely, the relationships between consumer rights awareness and both consumer attitude and consumer intention were found to be stronger among more educated than less educated consumers. Nonetheless, gender and age were found to insignificantly influence these relationships. This signifies the fundamental role played by the level of education on the relationships between consumer rights awareness and both consumer attitude and consumer intention within the context of intelligence responsiveness. Thus, educated consumers can be more beneficial to a hotel than less educated consumers (Wang et al., 2020). Given a scarcity of empirical evidence on this relationship, this finding represents a significant contribution that this study makes towards consumer behaviour literature.

5.2. Implications for practice

The outcomes of this study can be used to make decisions by hoteliers. Based on the findings, consumer attitude and purchase intentions toward a hotel can be enhanced by increased consumer rights awareness. Hotel managers are therefore encouraged to inform and educate their customers on their rights in specific situations and circumstances which include direct contacts

with customers. Hotel managers could therefore embark on programmes that focus on consumer education, and the development of educational materials such as brochures, pamphlets and the creation of company websites that contain consumer rights information. Also, governmental organisations and institutions such as schools, colleges and universities should promote education programmes especially in the hospitality sector that are geared towards raising awareness on consumer rights, and raising such issues could result in increased purchase intentions.

The level of education should be taken into consideration by businesses like hotels as it plays a critical role in influencing the relationship between consumer rights awareness, and consumer attitude and consumer intention. Thus, it is advised that hoteliers consider segmenting their markets based on the consumers' level of education. Specific marketing programmes can be directed to each of the customer segments.

6. Conclusion

The study provides unique results in terms of the relationships between consumer rights awareness and both consumer attitude and consumer intention to patronise a hotel, and the moderating effect of gender, age and education on these relationships. Lessons are learnt from the findings of the present study. First, consumer rights awareness is positively correlated with consumer attitude. Second, consumer rights awareness is positively associated with consumer intention. Third, the finding that consumer attitude positively influences consumer intention supports the already existing understanding. Fourth, the relationships between consumer rights awareness and both consumer attitude and consumer intention are stronger among more educated than less educated consumers. Gender and education did not moderate these relationships.

The study was, however, conducted using consumers only from one sector in Zimbabwe. This may limit the generalisability of these findings to other sectors and countries. Results may vary across different cities and countries based on personal preferences, income levels, and cultural differences. As such, it is recommended that future research should be carried out in other sectors and countries to enhance an understanding of this phenomenon. Furthermore, future research could be longitudinal to find out if consumer rights awareness influences both consumer attitude and intention to patronise a hotel over an extended period since the present study was conducted within three months.

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