

## Consumerism Behaviour of Indonesian Consumer: The Role of Self-Sufficiency and Information-Seeking

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the influence of information-seeking, knowledge, and self-sufficiency on Indonesian consumerism behaviour. There were 2.100 data determined by using systematic random sampling. Data analyses applied *Structural Equation Modeling* using LISREL 8.7. The results confirmed that information-seeking significantly influence consumers' knowledge. However, consumers' self-sufficiency did not considerably affect information-seeking. It also revealed a significant positive effect of information-seeking and self-sufficiency toward consumerism behaviour, but no significant impact between consumers' knowledge and consumerism behaviour. The government and consumer protection institutions need to be more intensive in conducting socialization to increase consumer knowledge and consumerism behaviour.

**JEL Classification:** M31, M380, M390

**Keywords:** Consumerism behaviour, consumers' knowledge, information-seeking, self-sufficiency.

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## INTRODUCTION

The consumer must fight for their rights since they have an obligation that they need to fulfill; thus, they could work together to make a social movement to protect their rights. This movement refers to consumerism. Consumerism is a steady movement to preserve and improve consumer rights relating to various marketing practices (Rajitha, 2012). The low levels of consumerism can be caused by several factors such as the low awareness among the consumer about their rights, the absence of competition, the imbalance of purchasing behaviour, the high levels of poverty, the loss of good leadership quality, and the inequality of media activity (Oko & Linus, 2013).

Consumers and the environment are affecting one another directly or indirectly (Delafrooz *et al.*, 2014). This act is also followed by the emergence of green issues, which positively influenced consumer behaviour since 1970 (Alwitt & Pitts, 1996). The green consumers' term refers to the act of consumers to choose and buy products that are less likely to harm their health and environmentally friendly (Xie *et al.*, 2014). Sixty-three percent of Indonesian consumers are willing to purchase eco-label products even at different prices (WWF, 2017). Further, by implementing the green marketing system, the company was indirectly helping to protect the consumers' rights, including its components and product labels, as well as eco-label (Chan, 2001; Chan & Lau, 2000).

The previous empirical studies (Dania & Yuliati, 2018; Njuguna *et al.*, 2014) mentioned that consumer independence and awareness of their rights indirectly influenced consumerism behaviour. The higher the level of consumer self-reliance and understanding of their rights, the higher the consumerism behaviour. The awareness of a person was positively correlated with their education level and knowledge. Therefore, consumers' knowledge level can be increased through socialization by the consumer institution or by conducting scanning and information-seeking (Jeon *et al.*, 2006; Ouellette & Haley, 2011). These acts are also playing an essential role in the implementation process of the Consumer Protection Act (Shim *et al.*, 2006; Agustina, 2005).

The theoretical approach used in this research is the theory of consumer behavior where internal factors in consumers include self-sufficiency, knowledge, and information-seeking that affect consumerism behavior. According to Assael (2001), two main factors influence consumer decisions, namely individual and environmental factors. Consumerism behavior in this study is included in consumer decisions. Thus, a theoretical proof study that will be carried out is among the three individual factors studied, which variables most influence consumerism behavior.

The topic of this research is essential to be analyzed for it is the novelty of the previous study. Besides, there were no specific research studies related to consumerism behaviour in Indonesia. Also, to examine its effects on the consumers' knowledge, the influence of information-seeking, consumers' knowledge of laws and consumer protection institutions, and self-sufficiency consumers toward the consumerism behaviour in Indonesia. Figure 1 presents the research framework.

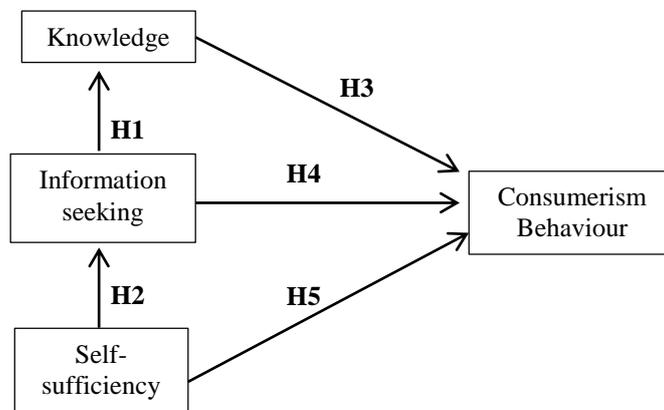


Figure 1. Research framework

## **Review of Literature**

### Information-seeking

Information-seeking is a critical stage in initiating the purchasing process of a customer (Shim *et al.*, 2001; Hodgkinson *et al.*, 2000; Haubl & Trifts, 2000). Information-seeking is an essential factor in the buying process of a customer to achieve satisfaction (Freiden & Goldsmith, 1989). Searching for information has a significant relationship with the task, discipline, and the operation of the research, uncertainty, cognitive style, personal knowledge, and individual differences (Khosrowjerdi & Iranshahi, 2011). Consumers who have good insight can make the right decision or further action (GongLizieri & Bao, 2019).

### Consumer Knowledge

Consumer knowledge is several experiences and information related to a particular product or service of a person. The three types of knowledge owned by a consumer (Dodd *et al.*, 2005) include objective knowledge, subjective knowledge, and experience. Objective knowledge is the current information of that knowledge; meanwhile, subjective knowledge is the consumer's perception of something. The experience refers to a set of consumer memories about a product or service in past consumption activities. It includes searching for information related to the product class, using a product, and ownership (Alba & Hutchinson, 1988). Tze's *et al.* (2021) study has added to the knowledge of brand awareness, with the findings revealing that the knowledge of brand awareness mediates the link between perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) image and consumer's store visit intention.

### Theory of Self and Self-sufficiency

Self-sufficiency stands for description to state that a person is said to be an independent person and capable of being responsible for himself (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983). The definition of self is related to the sense of self-learning that also becomes the process of distinguishing someone from others visually (visions), auditory (hearing), and other perception models (Baumeister & Vohs, 2012). Besides, the self also plays an active role in decision making and sorting out useless information.

Self consists of several aspects. The aspect of self initiates an action. It also determines someone's choice, called the executive function (Baumeister, 1999). The scope of this aspect includes self-regulation, self-defeating behaviour, and alternative and decision-making. Further, there was a reflexive consciousness aspect. People consciously focus their attention to find out about themselves. Self cannot be seen directly by the person. It reflects the actions or social interactions of someone with their surrounding. Therefore, the knowledge of self is harder to understand compared to general knowledge. Self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-consciousness, and self-esteem are the parts of this aspect. Furthermore, the element of interpersonal elements explains the way of self, as a part of a group, to interact and engage with others. The aspects of interpersonal include self-presentation, self-perceptions, and how the self is formed into interaction and relationship (Clark, 2006). Self-sufficiency has a positive effect on consumer independence (Warrener *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, self-efficacy is an essential indicator in the formation of self-sufficiency. Self-efficacy is a belief in oneself in doing something, while self-sufficiency is a belief in self adequacy. The big concepts of self are still interrelated; therefore, this study refers to the self literature in general due to the very limited concept of self adequacy (Bandura, 2010).

### Consumerism Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is a social movement that aimed to protect, enhancing the rights and power of consumers in practice with business parties (Ebitu, 2014). Consumerism is the culmination of consumer awareness of their rights and criticism and disappointment about dissatisfaction in the use of products and services (Agbonifoh *et al.*, 2007). Consumerism behaviour refers to an organized movement conducted by consumers and in cooperation with governments to promote, protect, and strengthen its rights as consumers (Nandi, 2016).

Individuals due to exposure to media, and influence of their peer's groups and perceived self-image turns to repetitive buying which leads to compulsive and addictive buying behavior (Jalees & Raza, 2017). Therefore, the marketers while promoting consumerism should balance

their messages by communicating positives and negative aspects of consumerism (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004). Consumer behaviour is the increasing demand for high-quality products manufactured according to procedures, at the right price, and safe. Consumer behaviour also pressures business parties to produce and operate goods and services following the public's wishes (Sensuse & Widiatmika, 2008).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The design of primary data research used a combination of two types of data analysis techniques, namely, descriptive study and explanatory research. Fourteen provinces in Indonesia (Bengkulu, Riau Islands, DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, West Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, West Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, North Maluku, and West Papua) became the location of this research. The study was conducted in 14 out of 34 provinces in Indonesia due to limited funding and research time. The selection of these provinces was considered to represent the archipelago in Indonesia.

The population in this study was Indonesian families spread across 14 provinces, both rural and urban areas. The respondents were consumers who had worked (earning) or were married and aged 17-60 years who can make their own decisions. The sampling area in this study was the district. The data collection used the household approach with systemic random sampling. The method in determining the respondents used the kish grid method.

Total of respondents involved in this study were 2.100 people, with each province involving 150 people. Data collection applied direct interviews with respondents using a structured questionnaire and supported by in-depth online interviews that were used as additional data to enrich the results of the study. An in-depth interview was conducted via WhatsApp free call because of the social distancing regulation (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar/PSBB*) to reduce the COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia. Data were processed using Microsoft Excel 2016, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 25.0 for Windows, and LISREL 8.70.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Model Fitting Test

The Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method with the LISREL program for the SEM model was applied. The validity and reliability test of the measurement model was performed by analyzing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Construct Reliability or Composite Reliability (CR). Good AVE and CR values are shown by  $CR \geq 0,7$  and  $AVE \geq 0,5$  (35). The validity and reliability analyzed the AVE and CR (Table 1).

Table 1. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) dan Construct Reliability (CR)

Latent Variables	AVE	CR
Consumer Knowledge	1,00	1,00
Information-seeking	0,84	0,87
Self-sufficiency	0,50	0,94
Consumerism Behavior	0,57	0,79

Based on Table 1, the AVE value after the elimination for information-seeking, self-sufficiency, and consumerism behaviour are qualified (AVE value  $\geq 0,5$ ). In contrast, the CR value on the latent variable self-sufficiency after the previous elimination has qualified the reliability with a CR value greater than or equal to 0,7. The value indicates that the measurement model has been valid and reliable.

Assessing the overall model is not only based on one fit index but requires a complex assessment (Puspitasari, 2010). The overall goodness of fit on a model was assessed based on a few fit indices. According to Table 2, the entire model is considered a good fit.

Table 2. The results of the overall model fit criteria

Goodness-of-Fit	Cut-off-Value	Result	Conclusions
Root mean square residual (RMR)	$\leq 0,1$	0,061	Good fit
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	$0,8 \leq \text{GFI} < 0,90$	0,96	Marginal fit
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	$\leq 0,08$	0,067	Good fit
Adjusted goodness of fit of index (AGFI)	$\geq 0,90$	0,96	Good fit
Incremental fit index (IFI)	$\geq 0,90$	0,97	Good fit
Normal fit index (NFI)	$0,8 \leq \text{NFI} < 0,90$	0,96	Marginal fit
Comparative fit index (CFI)	$\geq 0,90$	0,97	Good fit

### Hypothesis Test

The details related to the direct influence test result of information-seeking, knowledge, and self-sufficiency on consumerism behaviour are presented in Table 3. The test results accepted H1, H4, and H6 with t-statistics above 1,96. The H1 test results were in line with the hypothesis that information-seeking had a positive and significant effect on knowledge with the path coefficient of 0,21. It means that the more a person does the searches for information, the higher his/her knowledge, and vice versa. Furthermore, the results of the H4 and H6 tests also indicated that information-seeking and self-sufficiency had a positive and significant influence on consumerism with the path coefficient of 0,20 and 0,19, respectively. The results also showed that H2 and H3 were rejected. Self-sufficiency did not influence the search for information with a path coefficient of 0,21. Hypothesis 2 was also rejected with the path coefficient of -0,01.

Table 3. The result of SEM

Path	Path coefficient	t-values	Conclusions
Information-seeking → Knowledge (H1)	0,21	8,98	Accepted
Self-sufficiency → Information-seeking (H2)	-0,01	-0,39	Rejected
Knowledge → Consumerism Behavior (H3)	0,04	1,68	Rejected
Information-seeking → Consumerism Behavior (H4)	0,20	7,37	Accepted
Self-sufficiency → Consumerism Behavior (H5)	0,19	7,56	Accepted
Information-seeking → Knowledge → Consumer Behavior (H6)	0,01	1,66	Rejected
Self-sufficiency → Information-seeking → Consumer Behavior (H7)	0,00	-0,39	Rejected

The result showed that self-sufficiency had no significant effect on consumerism behaviour; thus, H5 was not supported. Also, H6 and H7 could not be proven. Information-seeking did not have any impact on consumerism behaviour through the consumers' knowledge (H6). Consumer self-sufficiency did not affect consumerism behaviour through information-seeking (H7).

Thus, only 3 out of 7 hypotheses were accepted. This will be explained in detail in the discussion section. But in general, the tendency of the data to be homogeneous or the absence of variation will make the effect insignificant. Thus, of the three variables that directly influence consumerism behavior, only information-seeking and self-sufficiency confirms the theory put forward by Assael (2001) that internal factors influence consumer decisions.

### The Effects of Information-Seeking on Knowledge (H1)

This study showed a significant positive influence of information-seeking on consumers' knowledge. The high rate of information-seeking means the consumer has a lot of knowledge and information. The people that aware of being good consumers had good knowledge and information access to it. There is a strong relationship between information-seeking and knowledge because every newly obtained information will become the knowledge for that person (Yuliati *et al.*, 2019). An in-depth interview supports this result. It shows the respondents usually think they have a higher level of knowledge than the first time searching for new information. Thus, there is a process from not knowing something to an understanding about it. The sources

of information chosen by the respondents are the internet because of the speed and the easiness of accessing the information. This statement is in line with earlier researchers which the easiness of accessing information impacts one's knowledge (Mishra & Kumar, 2011; Locander & Hermann, 1979).

### **The Effect of Self-sufficiency on Information-Seeking (H2)**

The self-sufficiency in this study did not give any influence to the information-seeking. It means consumers' self-sufficiency did not influence someone's activity of information-seeking. The result of an in-depth interview showed that information-seeking activity could be done without being influenced by the self-concept because seeking the information was focused before the decision to purchase or use things or services. Some of the respondents said that the reasons for searching the information were easy to access to the internet and to avoid fraud by producers. Moreover, consumers tend to be careful before purchasing electronic items because it needs significant costs and usually used for a long time. However, the earlier finding was contradictive with this statement in which the specific self-confidence had a significant relationship with the information-seeking (Hong, 2006). Other research also found the relationship between self-efficacy and information-seeking activity (Ajzen *et al.*, 2011). In this case, it may happen because, at this time, there is no related research about self-sufficiency with the information-seeking activity before purchasing the products or services.

### **The Effect of Knowledge on Consumer Behaviour (H3)**

This study showed that consumer knowledge did not have any significant influences on consumerism behaviour. It is more influenced by one's beliefs or self-principles (Kollmus & Agyeman, 2002). The aspect of knowledge is not enough to convince the consumer to act. In this study, the knowledge is about consumer protection acts. Therefore, this knowledge is not strong enough to make the consumer do the act of consumerism.

Moreover, motivation has an essential role in regulating someone's behaviour (Bergek & Mignon, 2017; Huber & Gillaspay, 2011). According to in-depth interview results, several factors caused the respondents to be reluctant to act further in voicing their rights, such as having not too significant losses (physical loss or costs), have no much time and interest to voice their opinion directly (boycotts, demonstrations, or going to court), and the complicated complain procedures. These findings contradict previous studies that stated that the consumers who had knowledge and awareness related to their rights influenced their actions to defend their rights (Zhu & Sarkis, 2016; Heo *et al.*, 2007). However, that study is in contrast with the studies that concluded the knowledge and the behaviour of ones do not have any influence on that (Fabrigar *et al.*, 2006; Pirouznia, 2000; Donoghue *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, a previous study also stated that sometimes consumers knew their rights; however, they tended to trust and rely on the government without taking any actions (Pilgrim *et al.*, 2007).

### **The Effect of Information-Seeking on Consumer Behaviour (H4 dan H5)**

Information-seeking is known to have a significant positive influence on consumerism behaviour. However, information-seeking was not significant enough to influence consumerism behaviour through knowledge. It means the high rate of information-seeking by the consumer could influence consumerism behaviour. Nonetheless, the information-seeking merely increased the consumer's knowledge without affecting the actions taken by the consumers. Information that has been obtained by the consumers can be used to measure the understanding extent of the consumers in issues related to green consumerism (Edwards *et al.*, 2009). The in-depth interviews results found that some respondents who sought information before purchasing something had the willingness to complain to the seller and trying to remind their relatives not to buy the goods/services from the bad seller. Besides, some of the consumers were willing to join the

organization or forum of the consumer. Respondents who seek information tend to be more critical because they can find the previous information-seeking difference. These findings strongly support the previous study that noted the role of the high rate of information-seeking on one's movement. On the other hand, the low rate of information-seeking can make it difficult for consumers to make any movement (Howells, 2005; Rai & Lin, 2019).

### **The Indirect Effect of Self-sufficiency and Information-Seeking on Consumer Behaviour (H6 dan H7)**

There was a significant positive influence on consumerism behaviour. However, there was no correlation between self-sufficiency and consumerism behaviour through information-seeking. These findings indicate that the increase of consumerism behaviour will develop consumerism behaviour by the consumers themselves. Nonetheless, the high rate of self-sufficiency did not affect the rise in information-seeking. Therefore, it is not enough to influence as the mediator to develop consumerism behaviour. It is caused by the consumers' confidence in their abilities. The output is produced in affirmative action (Bartels & Onwezen, 2013). One indicator of self-sufficiency in this study is feeling more capable compared to others. Based on the in-depth interview result, the respondents with low self-sufficiency tended to be reluctant to engage in consumerism because somehow they felt that other people would be better at doing it. Also, the respondents believed that their votes did not mean a lot to improve the situation and being pessimistic about winning in court. Overall, these results support the findings of earlier researchers (Bartels & Hoogendam, 2011; Hustvedt & Dickson, 2009; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008) which found that self-sufficiency that has pro-environmental awareness (self-identity) has positive implications for organic consumerism. Besides, other findings also stated that self-identity was found to correlate with green consumerism (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992).

Based on theoretical base, this study confirmed that individual factor partially directly influence the consumer decision. Only information-seeking and self-sufficiency confirms the theory. Otherwise, knowledge did not affect the consumer decision.

### **CONCLUSION**

The results found that information-seeking significantly influence consumers' knowledge. However, consumers' self-sufficiency did not significantly influence information-seeking. It also revealed a significant positive effect of information-seeking and self-sufficiency toward consumerism behaviour, but no significant influence was found between consumers' knowledge and consumerism behaviour. The government and consumer protection institutions need to be more intensive in conducting socialization to increase consumer knowledge and consumerism behaviour.

Based on the results, the government can work together with consumer protection institutions and universities in Indonesia. This socialization is related to consumer protection to promote or introduce consumer protection institutions. Then consumer rights and obligations can make the consumers understand the concept of consumerism itself. The socialization must be as attractive way as possible so the consumers will be interested in participating. If possible, the government may create a community that will help consumers through mass or social media. It should be done everywhere and free for everyone to be accessed. Also, the government may promote or introduce the institutions providing services for the consumers to file a complaint through attractive advertisements shown at certain hours on national TV. Due to the lack of information about consumerism behaviour and consumer protection institutions among housewives who spend much time at home, this type of advertisement should be encouraged by the government.

For educational institutions, especially those institutions that are closely related to consumer protection can help the government by providing information on consumer protection and consumer behaviour as attractive as possible to reach all levels of the society in Indonesia.

More than 600 respondents from this study were housewives and already married. Families are expected to develop an awareness of consumerism behaviour from this research. Families are also likely to increase the knowledge about consumer protection and desire to find the information first before purchasing something. For individuals, especially Indonesian females, have to be more confident and more active in voicing their complaints if they suffer from losses. Furthermore, Indonesian male has to be more willing to act further in defending their rights apart from the direct complains. It can be done by more active in finding information related to the importance of consumers' rights.

The findings of this research suggest further research to conduct the examination or research related to the other factors that may influence consumerism behaviour. The results of this study show that self-sufficiency could influence consumerism behaviour. In the future, the researcher may want to incorporate the variable self-sufficiency in the context of consumer self-sufficiency because this research is yet scarce. Furthermore, the researcher may analyze consumerism behaviour based on the other categories of this study's characteristics.

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