

CONSUMERS' ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR, CONSUMERS' KNOWLEDGE AND MORAL IDEOLOGY AMONG MINISTRY OF DOMESTIC TRADE, CO-OPERATIVES AND CONSUMERISM, PUTRAJAYA EMPLOYEES

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Introduction

Consumers are major participants in the business process and Rao and Al-Wugayan (2005) pointed out that there is a growing interest in researching consumer ethics. Despite this, there seems to be a dearth of consumer ethics studies in the context of Malaysia. Taylor (1975) defines ethics as the “inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality where the term morality is taken to mean moral judgments, standards and rules of conduct”. Ethical issues involving consumers are as important as ethical issues concerning major corporations as consumers are a major partaker in market interaction. Dodge *et al.* (1996) define consumer ethics as the “rightness as opposed to the wrongness of certain actions on the part of the buyer or potential buyer in consumer situations.” Consumers are able to involve in unethical and illegal consumer behaviour in market place such as shoplifting, buying counterfeit product, changing price-tag on merchandise in store. (Mosclis and Powell, 1986; Albers-Miller, 1999).

Consumers' ethical behaviour could be influenced by several factors which are among others are moral ideology. Forsyth (1992) identified two distinct dimensions of moral ideology which are idealism and relativism. Many researchers have found that idealism and relativism are important ideologies in explaining ethical discrepancies between individuals. Vitell *et al.* (1991) found that ethical ideology is a significant overall determinant of consumers' ethical behaviour.

The issues associated with the consumers are under the purview of the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-Operatives and Consumerism (MDTCC). Among the functions of the ministry are to formulate policies, strategies and

review matters related to the development of domestic trade and consumerism. In the area of consumerism, the task of the ministry is to organise education programs, to strengthen consumer awareness and consumer protection, and to encourage the movement of consumerism. Consumerism department under MDTCC has five divisions which are Consumerism Movement Division, Consumer Research and Policy Division, Enforcement Division, Consumer Standards Division, and Tribunal for Consumer Claims Malaysia. Besides managing consumer-related matters, MDTCC employees are also part of the consumers. Therefore, this study is interested in exploring the ethical behaviour of the employees of the MDTCC since they may be the role models for other consumers.

Significance of research

This research gives knowledge about how ethical behaviour is influenced by several factors such as their legal literacy and moral ideology. This study can help consumers to assess themselves and help them to become civilized consumers in revenue use and disposal.

In addition, this study will assist the government in changing consumer unethical attitudes in the market through the important role of the MDTCC in raising awareness and responsibility among consumers. It also ensures that the relationship between businesses and consumers are in good condition. This effort is made possible through the ministry duties and responsibilities in educating consumers towards the direction of a more responsible consumer, knowledgeable, knowing the rights as a consumer, thus creating an ethical consumer. For example, Consumer Movement Division has conducted consumerism programs to consumers like campaign, seminars and competitions.

Furthermore, this study may also explain the ethical behaviour of MDTCC employees in purchasing and consuming goods in the market, so that they can achieve a better quality of consumer's behaviour and they will educate other consumers about consumerism. The choosing of the MDTCC employees as the samples for the research is based on the assumption that they can be the role models for other consumers. Thus, it is important to determine the factors that can lead to good consumer ethics. The findings can also help the ministry to strategise the educational programs or courses to improve their employees to become the role models for other consumers.

Research objective

The objectives of this paper are to explore the factors that lead to consumers' ethical behaviour, to determine the level of consumers' knowledge relating to their rights, responsibilities and redress mechanism as well as to identify the moral ideology of MTDC employees.

Literature review

Consumer ethics

Muncy and Vitell (1992) define consumer ethics as 'the moral principles and standards that guide behaviour of individuals or groups as they obtain, use and dispose of goods and services.' Consumer ethics have also been described as the 'rightness as opposed to the wrongness of certain actions on the part of the buyer or potential buyer in consumer situations' (Bartels, 1967). Therefore, in this case, consumer ethics refers to the role of consumers in decision making, including the market misconduct (e.g. change price tags, eat or drink in the store without paying for them, buy fake goods and download pirated digital products).

Muncy and Vitell (1992) and Vitell and Muncy (1992) had developed a consumer ethics scale that is able to identify the extent to which consumers believe that certain questionable behaviour are either ethical or unethical. The original consumer ethics scale by Muncy and Vitell consists of four different dimensions: (1) actively benefiting from illegal activities, (2) passively benefiting, (3) actively benefiting from deceptive but legal practices and (4) no harm activities. The research adopts the Muncy and Vitell four dimensions of consumers' ethical behaviours.

The first dimension focus on the behaviour in which the consumers actively taking advantage of a situation at the expense of the seller. For example, a consumer gives the wrong price information to cashier when the price tag has been torn away. The second dimension involved the situation where consumers eventually benefiting themselves due to the seller's mistake. For instance, a customer gets too much of change and does not inform the cashier in charge. The third dimension occurred in the actions of which consumers actively involved in unethical practice but it is not quite illegal. For example, a customer keeps quiet when a waitress serves him first instead of the other customer which ordered or came earlier. The final dimension refers to the harmless of consumers' behaviour. For instance, when a consumer is spending a long time trying different shoes with no intention to purchase even one of it.

Knowledge on consumer rights

According to the Consumer Protection Act, 1999, consumer refers to a person who acquires or uses goods or services of a kind ordinarily acquired for personal use or for purposes of personal, domestic or household. This definition means that the consumer of goods or services is not for commercial purposes but for their own use. As a consumer, we have a right in a business transaction in acquiring goods and services in accordance with the quality and the price paid (Muhammad Hamdan, 2012).

Therefore, the Declaration of the rights of consumers was declared which comprises of the right to safety, the right to information, the right of choice and the right of expression, right to basic needs, rights to get compensated, rights of consumer education and the right to healthy and safe environment. Finally, the principle of 'sovereignty of consumers' and the slogan 'consumer are the king of market' now is not a pillar of strength in the face of giant consumer's market traders. Consumers have always been considered weak who need protection and support at all times. However, the high level of consumer's knowledge on consumer rights is important and should be put into practice in their lives (Jariah *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the persecution of the consumers can be reduced. Consumers should be made aware of their rights, traders should be monitored when dealing with consumers and the government is the backbone of both parties to ensure that the policies and consumers regulations preserved and well-maintained (*Buletin Pengguna*, 2005). Questions related to consumer rights, knowledge and awareness of these rights will need to be inculcated and more particularly among consumers as a whole so that they are more concerned about their rights as a consumer and become a more ethical consumer.

Consumer responsibilities

Additionally, consumers have the rights recognized throughout the world, but at the same time they should perform the responsibilities of being a consumer in order to create balanced and responsible consumers and behave ethically in the marketplace (Azimon *et al.*, 2012). There are five responsibilities listed by the Consumer International which are critical awareness, commitment and action, social responsibility, environmental responsibility and unity.

(i) Awareness to criticize

Consumers should have the awareness to criticize the suppliers if the quality or the price of a goods and services are not satisfactory. Responsible

consumers should not remain silent, but speak out to get the perfect goods and services and match the price.

(ii) Commitment and action

Consumers have to engage in activities that represented the interests of consumers and act to get a fair contract purchase. Consumers are also responsible for reporting on the defective and dangerous goods as well as irregularities in the market to government agencies concerned so that appropriate action is taken.

(iii) Social responsibility

Consumers should be aware and vigilant about the impact of the use of other consumers. Consumers are responsible for playing the role of consumer so that their actions do not affect those who are less fortunate.

(iv) Responsibility for the environment

Consumers have a role to protect the environment from being polluted. Responsible consumers should practice sustainable consumption by buying environmentally friendly goods and dispose of these items in the right way. Consumers should also report any activity that pollutes the environment to the authorities.

(v) Unity

The most effective action to deal with the problem is to unite. This will increase the strength and influence of the consumer's voice. Consumers also should be fair to all parties and act in accordance with the legal provisions available to protect the welfare and interests of consumers.

Consumer redress mechanisms

The Tribunal is a body that was established under Section 85, Part XII of the Consumer Protection Act 1999 which came into force on 15 November 1999. The Tribunal is an independent body to hear and handle consumer claims made under the Act and subject to the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act 1999. Before the establishment of this tribunal, all disputes between a consumer and a supplier or manufacturer had to be brought before a civil court where it involves complicated procedures, high costs and take a long time to resolve. These were some of the reasons why consumers are not interested in making a claim in court against the supplier or manufacturer especially if the amount claimed is small, even at this time there is the Small

Claims Courts in each state to hear the demands of not exceeding RM5,000.00.

The Tribunal has jurisdiction to hear the claim in respect of any matter which has jurisdiction as provided under the Act and the total amount claimed does not exceed RM25,000.00. Therefore, the types of claims that can be submitted to the tribunal is as misleading or deceptive conduct, false representations and unfair practices, safety of goods and services, the rights against the supplier in respect of the implied guarantee in connection with the supply of goods, the rights against the supplier in respect of implicit guarantees associated with the service provider, the rights against a manufacturer with real guarantees relating to the supply of goods and the rights against a manufacturer of implied guarantee in connection with the supply of goods.

In conclusion, the establishment of the Tribunal for Consumer Claims Malaysia is intended to provide an alternative channel other than the Court for consumers to get proper redress from a supplier or a manufacturer. Therefore, the consumers should use the Tribunal fully to protect their rights and interests as consumers.

Moral ideology

Forsyth (1980, 1992) identified two distinct dimensions of moral ideology: realism and idealism. Moral idealism refers to the extent to which a person focuses on the inherent rightness or wrongness of an action regardless of the consequences of that action. For example, stealing food or drinks at the store is the wrong behaviour and should be avoided by every consumer. Those who are less idealistic believe that harm is sometimes necessary to their behaviour and produce well. They are inclined to take a utilitarian perspective, perceiving that an act is right if it produces the greatest benefits for the greatest number of people affected by the action, even though it may be harmful to certain group of people (Forsyth, 1992).

Moral relativism is the belief that all moral standards are relative to the culture in which they take place (Schlenker and Forsyth, 1977). Relativism is the degree to which an individual rejects universal moral rules when making ethical judgments. For example, consumers are willing to be dishonest after breaking bottles in a shop by accident. For a relativist, moral rules cannot be derived from universal principles, but exist as a function of time, place and culture. Relativists weigh the circumstances when evaluating others rather than the ethical principles that were violated. As a result, no set of rules can be formulated to determine what is right and what is wrong for all people.

This moral judgment can differ from person to person and from one situation to another (McGee, 1992).

Most research suggested that idealism is associated with greater ethicality and relativism with lower ethicality. Kenhove *et al.* (2001) reported that individuals with higher scores on idealism tend to have higher ethical behavior. Singhapakdi *et al.* (1995) concluded that idealism positively influences marketers' perceptions on the importance of ethics and social responsibility while relativism had the opposite effect.

In conclusion, the moral ideology is one important measure for determining the behaviour of consumers as well as the level of knowledge and socio-demographics such as gender and education. Consumers who often put the law as a benchmark to an action possess more moral value than those who acts according to the situation, time and culture. Therefore, the consumers should strive towards more moral act to become more ethical consumers.

Methodology

Study location, population and sampling

The research was conducted in Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-Operatives and Consumerism, Putrajaya. For this research, Consumerism Division has been chosen because of employees in this section is particularly responsible to consumer issues. There are five sections under the Consumer Division which are Consumer Operations Division, Research and Consumer Policy, Enforcement, Consumer Standards Division, and the Tribunal for Consumer Claims Malaysia. Survey research is chosen to be the method to be used. This method enables the study to be done on large population by surveying a sample of it. The main advantage of survey design is that researcher will be able to examine the quality of the framework made and the fitness of the hypothesis in order to relate independent and dependent variables. Through the development of questionnaire, it has enable information that relates with this study to be collected. 150 respondents are selected from 460 employees in the selected divisions to ensure the result gain has less margin of error and to reduce the amount of variability in the population. With over than 2 000 employees in 26 different division in MDTCC, Putrajaya, this large number is enough to fulfill the requirement of sample size in order to answer the questionnaire for this research. As this research requires a mixture of gender and education, the employees of MDTCC can fulfill these requirements. For this research, Consumerism Division has been chosen because of employees in this section are particularly responsible to consumer issues. There are five sections under the Consumer Division which are Consumer Operations

Division, Research and Consumer Policy, Enforcement, Consumer Standards Division, and the Tribunal for Consumer Claims Malaysia. Number of respondents for each subdivision has been taken from the list of names under Consumerism Division employees.

For this study, systematic random sampling is used to collect 150 respondents. Systematic random sampling is chosen by selecting a random starting point and then picking every *n*th element in succession from the sampling frame. Systematic samples tend to be easier to draw and execute. The researcher does not have to jump backward and forward through the sampling frame to draw the members to be sampled. A systematic sample may spread the members selected for measurement more evenly across the entire population than simple random sampling. Therefore, in some cases, systematic sampling can be more representative of the population and more precise.

Instrumentation

Through the literature review, researcher has assembled the questionnaire through adoption and adaptation of questions. First section is to measure consumers' knowledge (consumer rights, consumer's responsibilities and redress mechanisms) was collected using self-administered items. Second section is to measure consumer ethics, Muncy-Vitell Questionnaire (MVQ) presented the participants with a set of situations that entailed ethical content. This "consumer ethics" scale was developed by Muncy and Vitell (1989; 1992) and validated by Vitell *et al.* (1991). The last is to measure the moral ideologies (idealism vs. relativism) using Ethical Position Questionnaire (EPQ) developed by Forsyth (1980).

Results and discussion

Socio demography

The total number of respondents participated in this study are 150. Based on table 4.1, it was found that the numbers of male and female respondents are not so much in different that is 52.7% of male and 47.3% of females. It also shows that most of the respondents were Malays (94.0%) who served as support officers who have attained educational level of Diploma / Certificate / STPM (38.0%) and have between 5-10 years working experience in Ministry (40.7%) and has a monthly income of between RM1001-RM2000 (42.7%).

Table 1: Background of Respondents

Demography Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	79	52.7
Female	71	47.3
Ethnicity		
Malay	141	94.0
Chinese	3	2.0
Indian	2	1.3
Others	4	2.7
Occupational category		
Professional	30	20.0
Support Official	120	80.0
Education level		
PMR	8	5.3
SPM	45	30.0
Diploma/Sijil/STPM	57	38.0
Degree	36	24.0
PhD	4	2.7
Work experience at KPDNKK		
<5	40	26.7
5-10	61	40.7
11-15	27	18.0
16-20	15	10.0
>20	7	4.7
Monthly income		
<RM1000	13	8.7
RM1001-RM2000	64	42.7
RM2001-RM3000	46	30.7
RM3001-RM4000	23	15.3
>RM5000	4	2.7

Profile of sample (n = 150)

Knowledge of consumer rights, responsibility and redress mechanisms

According to Table 4.2, the right to choose shows the highest score with 94.0% of the respondents answered the question correctly. The second highest score is the right for a healthy environment which is 93.2%. The third highest score answer correctly by respondents is the right to basic needs and compensation with the total of 92.7%.

Next are the consumers' responsibilities that show the highest score is the item 'consumer should always be aware of the consumer goods and services', with total of 98.0%. Second highest score is the item 'consumer is responsible for environmental sustainability', which at 88.7% followed by the item 'consumers have to make a reasonable and fair claims' of 84.0%.

Finally, the dimension of redress mechanism consists of 13 items i.e. nine items (items number 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 30) shows true statements about consumer redress mechanism and the remaining four items (items number 21, 23, 29, 31 and 32) show false statements about consumer redress mechanism.

Table 2: Knowledge on Consumers' Rights, Responsibilities and Redress Mechanism

Section	No.	Variables	True n(%)	False n(%)
A Consumers Right	1.	Right to basic needs.	139 (92.7)	11 (7.3)
	2.	Right to privacy.	63 (42.0)	87 (58.0)
	3.	Right to safety.	134 (89.3)	16 (10.7)
	4.	Right to credit.	83 (55.3)	67 (44.7)
	5.	Right to be informed.	132 (88.0)	18 (12.0)
	6.	Right to free supply of water and electricity.	104 (69.2)	46 (30.8)
	7.	Right to choose.	141 (94.0)	9 (6.0)
	8.	Right to be heard.	105 (70.0)	45 (30.0)
	9.	Right to redress.	139 (92.7)	11 (7.3)
	10.	Right to consumer education.	133 (88.7)	17 (11.3)
	11.	Right to a healthy and safe environment.	140 (93.2)	10 (6.8)
	12.	Right to annual allowance.	92 (61.3)	58 (38.7)
Total mean score 0.78				
B Consumers Responsibility	13.	Consumers must be alert about the good and services they use.	147 (98.0)	3 (2.0)
	14.	Consumers must act on what they know to be fair and just demands.	126 (84.0)	24 (16.0)
	15.	Consumers must participate in charitable activities to help disadvantages groups.	65 (43.3)	85 (56.7)

Table 2 (continued)

Section	No.	Variables	True n(%)	False n(%)
	16.	Consumers must be concerned about the impact of their consumption behaviour on other citizens.	120 (80.0)	30 (20.0)
	17.	Consumers are responsible for the environmental sustainability.	133 (88.7)	17 (11.3)
	18.	Consumers must act together through the formation of consumer groups.	96 (64.0)	54 (36.0)
	19.	Consumers must always improve their knowledge on consumerism.	18 (12.0)	132 (88.0)
Total mean score 0.67				
C Redress Mechanism	20.	Consumers' claim is time consuming, expensive and procedurally complex.	71 (47.3)	79 (52.7)
	21.	The Tribunal for Consumer Claims which was established to deal with consumers' complaints is a non-governmental body.	126 (84.0)	24 (16.0)
	22.	The Tribunal for Consumer Claims can hear cases relating to online shopping.	107 (71.3)	43 (28.7)
	23.	The maximum claims that can be filed in the Tribunal for Consumer Claims are RM 10,000.	87 (58.0)	63 (42.0)
	24.	Registration of a case in the Tribunal for Consumer Claims can be done via on-line and SMS.	96 (64.0)	54 (36.0)
	25.	Failure to comply with the Tribunal's order is an offence punishable with fine or imprisonment.	123 (82.0)	27 (18.0)
	26.	Consumers' claims on housing matters should be failed at the Tribunal for Homebuyers Claims.	115 (76.8)	35 (23.2)
	27.	The Financial Mediation Bureau (FMB) is an independent body set up to settle disputes between consumers and financial service providers.	98 (65.3)	52 (34.7)
	28.	Consumers can also file a complaint to the National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC).	129 (86.0)	21 (14.0)
	29.	A consumer who can't afford legal fees may get legal aid from the Legal Aid Department.	121 (80.7)	29 (19.3)
	30.	Consumers in Malaysia can file a claim by group action.	47 (31.3)	103 (68.7)
		31.	There is no public complaints bureau in Malaysia to settle consumers' complaint relating to public services.	110 (73.3)
	32.	Communications Forum and Multimedia (CFM) is a body that receive any complaints in the communications and multimedia industry.	109 (72.7)	41 (27.3)
Total mean score 0.68				

Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of knowledge variables (n = 150)

Based on the data obtained, the highest score is for the item number 28 which is at 86.0%, the second highest score was respondents answered correctly on items number 21 (84.0%) and the third highest score for the correct response was the item number 25 of as much as 82.0%. The results also show that the highest total score is for consumers' rights (M=0.78) and the lowest total mean score is for the responsibilities section (M=0.67). Therefore, the findings indicate that the respondents are more knowledgeable on their rights compared to their responsibilities.

Score level of consumers' knowledge

Based on Table 4.3, the largest number of the respondents which was 88 respondents (58.70%) had a moderate level of literacy, 32 respondents (21.30%) had a low literacy level and 30 respondents (20.00%) had a high level of literacy.

With total respondents of 88 (58.70%) who are in moderate level of knowledge, they should be given more exposure in the field of consumer knowledge in order to achieve high literacy on consumerism in the future. It is because researchers have found that high knowledge tending to make more ethical decisions (Goolsby and Hunt, 1992).

Table 3: Score Level of Consumers' Knowledge

No	Score	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Low (0-20)	32	21.30
2.	Moderate (21-26)	88	58.70
3.	High (26-30)	30	20.00

Mean = 22.99

Standard Division = 3.32

Minimum = 14.00

Maximum = 30.00

Consumer ethical behaviour

Based on Table 4.4, the findings of the study showed a very high score items which is the mean for the statement of 'not eating or drinking in the supermarket without paying' (M = 4.56). This value indicates that many respondents strongly agree that this action is not done by them when they are in the supermarket and it shows that not many respondents who commits in dimension 'actively benefiting from illegal activities' (ILLEGAL) act of committing the offense openly. Second highest mean value is for the fact that they strongly agree that when they get more money than they should be obtained from the cashier, they will refund the excess money (M = 4.45), the third highest of respondents who did not lie about the age of children to get a lower price, is (M = 4.44). These findings indicate that not many people do

unethical actions in ‘passively benefiting’ (PASV) category where they get advantage over the offense committed from the weakness of others such as cashiers, vendors and others.

Finally, the dimensions ‘no harm/no foul’ (NO HARM), items obtained a very low mean value is the statement ‘willing to spend time for hours to try a variety of shirts and ended up buying the dress’, (M = 3.64). So, it shows that most of the respondent strongly unethical behaviour for items in dimensions NOHARM.

Table 4: Consumer Ethical Behaviour

No.	Variable	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly Agree n(%)	M
A	ILLEGAL						
1.	Not changing price-tags on merchandise in a store.	2 (1.3)	6 (4.0)	18 (12.0)	33 (22.0)	91 (60.7)	4.36
2.	Not giving misleading price information to a clerk for unprized item.	2 (1.3)	6 (4.0)	11 (7.3)	37 (24.7)	94 (62.7)	4.43
3.	Not eating or drinking in a supermarket without paying for it.	2 (1.3)	6 (2.0)	7 (4.7)	34 (22.7)	104 (69.3)	4.56
B	PASSIVELY BENEFITING						
4.	Not lying about a child's age to get a lower price.	2 (1.3)	6 (4.0)	10 (6.7)	37 (24.7)	95 (63.3)	4.44
5.	Getting too much change and saying something.	5 (3.3)	2 (1.3)	9 (6.0)	38 (25.4)	96 (64.0)	4.45
6.	Saying something when the waitress miscalculates the bill in your favour.	2 (1.3)	3 (2.0)	13 (8.7)	43 (28.7)	89 (59.3)	4.42
C	ACTIVE						
7.	When getting a free coupon, not use it even after the expiry date.	3 (2.0)	1 (0.7)	17 (11.3)	36 (24.0)	93 (62.0)	4.43
8.	Breaking the sauce bottle inadvertently and act accordingly.	3 (2.0)	5 (3.3)	14 (9.3)	37 (24.6)	91 (60.8)	4.38

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Variable	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly Agree n(%)	M
D	NOHARM						
9.	Not using computer software or games did not license.	5 (3.3)	7 (4.7)	21 (14.0)	41 (27.3)	76 (50.7)	4.17
10.	Not downloading film from internet.	6 (4.0)	7 (4.7)	64 (42.6)	25 (16.7)	48 (32.0)	3.68
11.	Tasting grapes in a supermarket and buying any.	5 (3.3)	4 (2.7)	46 (30.7)	35 (23.3)	60 (40.0)	3.94
12.	Not taking something or other "souvenir" from a hotel or restaurant.	5 (3.3)	4 (2.7)	53 (35.3)	29 (19.3)	59 (39.4)	3.88
13.	Not spending over an hour trying on different dresses without purchasing any.	6 (4.0)	9 (6.0)	66 (44.0)	21 (14.0)	48 (32.0)	3.64

Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of ethical behaviour variables (n = 150)

Note: The higher the mean indicates that the respondents believe the act are more unethical

Score for consumer ethics behaviour

Table 4.5 shows the scores of consumer ethics. The scores were classified into negative and positive ethical behaviour. Scores for negative behaviour is 0 to 49 and positive behaviour is 50 to 100. It was found that only 60 respondents (40%) had a negative behaviour. A total of 90 respondents (60%) had a positive behaviour in which they do not change the price tag on stuff and do not eat or drink in the supermarket without paying for them. It can be concluded that the majority of the respondents who practise ethical behaviour but there are still a number of respondents who do not practice proper etiquette as consumers such as buying clothes in a supermarket without buying and downloading movies from the internet.

Table 5: Score for Consumer Ethical Behaviour

No.	Score	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Negative (0-49)	60	40
2.	Positive (50-100)	90	60

Mean = 50.58

Standard Deviation = 9.16

Minimum = 16.00

Maximum = 100.00

Moral ideology

Based on Table 4.6, the result of this study found that the highest mean value of the item is the fifth item which was ‘one should not do anything that interferes with the welfare of others’, (M = 4.04), the second highest belong to fourth and sixth items which were ‘one should not do anything which may harm others, whether psychological or physical harm’ and ‘if a matter of innocent people, it should not be done’, (M = 4.02), respectively, and the third highest is the first item which was ‘a person should ensure that their actions will not harm even the slightest to others’. The results of the study also shows that the total mean value for idealism is higher (M=3.79) compared to total mean for relativism (M=3.34). Thus, it shows that the respondents are more idealism compared to relativism. This is a good moral ideology since it shows that the respondents are more tendencies to follow the laws compared to taking the ethical issues in their own hand. This finding is similar to findings of Vitell (1991) in which the moral ideology of Austrian consumers is higher on a scale of idealism and low on relativism scale.

Table 6: Moral Ideology

No.	Variable	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly Agree n(%)	M
A	Idealism						
1.	A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree.	2 (1.3)	17 (11.3)	17 (11.3)	55 (36.7)	59 (39.4)	4.01
2.	Risks to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risks might be.	5 (3.3)	25 (16.7)	46 (30.7)	32 (21.3)	42 (28.0)	3.54
3.	The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained.	3 (2.0)	21 (14.0)	52 (34.7)	33 (22.0)	41 (27.3)	3.58
4.	One should never psychologically or physically harm another person.	4 (2.7)	10 (6.7)	25 (16.7)	51 (34.0)	60 (40.0)	4.02

Table 6 (continued)

No.	Variable	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly Agree n(%)	M
5.	One should not perform an action which might in any way threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual.	4 (2.7)	10 (6.7)	21 (14.0)	56 (37.3)	59 (39.3)	4.04
6.	If an action could harm an innocent person, it should not be done.	4 (2.7)	8 (5.3)	28 (18.7)	50 (33.3)	60 (40.0)	4.02
7.	Deciding whether or not to perform an act by balancing the positive consequences against the negative consequences is immoral.	6 (4.0)	21 (14.0)	47 (31.3)	30 (20.0)	46 (30.7)	3.58
8.	The dignity and welfare of people should be the most important concern in any society.	5 (3.3)	10 (6.7)	38 (25.3)	55 (36.7)	42 (28.0)	3.79
9.	Strict ethical system can control behaviour in the community.	5 (3.3)	16 (10.7)	43 (28.7)	59 (39.3)	27 (18.0)	3.58
Total Mean idealism 3.79							
B	Relativism						
10.	It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.	10 (6.7)	36 (24.0)	36 (24.0)	33 (22.0)	35 (23.3)	3.31
11.	What was considered to be done differently from one community to another community.	6 (4.0)	35 (23.3)	43 (28.7)	42 (28.0)	24 (16.0)	3.29
12.	There are no ethical principles so important that they should be a part of an ethical code.	5 (3.3)	42 (28.0)	53 (35.4)	29 (19.3)	21 (14.0)	3.13
13.	What is ethical varies from one situation to another.	6 (4.0)	21 (14.0)	35 (23.3)	59 (39.4)	29 (19.3)	3.56

Table 6 (continued)

No.	Variable	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly Agree n(%)	M
14.	Moral standards are individualistic; what one person considers being moral may seem immoral to another.	7 (4.7)	34 (22.7)	39 (26.0)	43 (28.7)	27 (18.0)	3.33
15.	Different types of moralities cannot be compared as to the "rightness."	10 (6.6)	32 (21.3)	39 (26.0)	42 (28.0)	27 (18.0)	3.29
16.	What is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual.	6 (4.0)	26 (17.2)	40 (26.6)	47 (31.6)	31 (20.6)	3.47
17.	Moral standards are simply personal rules which indicate how a person should behave, and are not to be applied in making judgments of others.	6 (4.0)	37 (24.7)	38 (25.3)	42 (28.0)	27 (18.0)	3.31
18.	Ethical considerations in interpersonal relations are so complex that individuals should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes.	7 (4.7)	30 (20.0)	39 (26.0)	45 (30.0)	29 (19.3)	3.39
19.	No rule concerning lying can be formulated; whether a lie is permissible or not totally depends upon the situation.	11 (7.3)	24 (16.0)	37 (24.7)	49 (32.7)	29 (19.3)	3.41
20.	Whether a lie is judged to be moral or immoral depends upon the circumstances surrounding the action.	12 (8.0)	32 (21.3)	42 (28.1)	32 (21.3)	32 (21.3)	3.27
Total Mean relativism 3.34							

Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of moral ideology variables (n = 150)

Conclusions and recommendations

This study was conducted among MDTCC employees, Putrajaya. There are five selected parts of MDTCC, Putrajaya. The general aim of the study is to explore consumer ethical behaviour, consumer knowledge and moral ideology among MDTCC employees. It is expected that the respondents are to be ethical consumers in market as well as respected by traders.

This study is deductive and involves a cross-study using questionnaires. The selected study site is at the MDTCC, Putrajaya as it is the headquarters of MDTCC in Malaysia. Systematic random sampling is used and this study used the names of employees in each section as the structure of the respondents. There are 460 employees in the selected parts but only 150 respondents are chosen in this study.

This research shows that the majority of respondents have a moderate level of consumers' knowledge, moral ideology of respondents is idealism and the level of ethical behaviour of MDTCC employees, Putrajaya is positive.

Government should ensure that consumers' policy is always enhanced to prioritize the consumers' rights and balance these rights with their responsibilities as well. The educational programs should also be organised among the MDTCC especially to emphasize on the responsibilities compared to rights so that they can be the role models for other consumers. The laws and regulation also need to be strengthened since the moral ideology of the consumers are idealism which mean the ethical values are shaped and determined by the laws and community.

For future studies, it is suggested that more variables can be created for testing as predictive factors to consumers' ethical behaviours. Sampling of this study should not be limited to MDTCC employees, Putrajaya but throughout Malaysia. Last but not least, for future research other variables in the model can be adapted to such as culture, government incentives and other variables so that more accurate result can be obtained.

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