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THE COVERAGE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS NEWS BY
MICHIGAN'S DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND ATTITUDES
AND OPINIONS TOWARD THE COVERAGE AMONG THE
GATEKEEPERS AND CONSUMER LEADERS: A SYSTEMIC STUDY.
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Linda Lawson

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By

Linda Lawson

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ABSTRACT

THE COVERAGE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS NEWS BY MICHIGAN'S DAILY NEWSPAPERS AND ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS TOWARD THE COVERAGE AMONG THE GATEKEEPERS AND CONSUMER LEADERS: A SYSTEMIC STUDY

By

Linda Lawson

The study analyzed the role of the consumer reporter in Michigan's daily newspapers and compared the attitudes and opinions of the gatekeepers and consumer leaders in the state toward the coverage of consumer news.

In the execution of the study, the author utilized both analytical and documentary techniques of historical and mail survey research methods. Separate questionnaires were developed and mailed to the following three target groups: the managing editors of Michigan's daily newspapers, the consumer reporters for the same newspapers and the leaders of consumer agencies and organizations in the state. Return rates for the three questionnaires were excellent.

The findings indicate that (1) few Michigan dailies have regular consumer reporters; (2) most reporters who cover consumer stories are also responsible for a variety of other beats; (3) most consumer reporters have not been

professionally educated or trained in consumer affairs;

(4) most editors, reporters and consumer leaders agree that consumer reporting is inadequate and that the American

public wants and needs more consumer news stories; and

(5) most reporters and editors acknowledge pressures from advertisers but state that the pressure does not influence

their treatment of consumer stories while most consumer

leaders think advertisers are indeed influential in the

coverage of consumer news. These are only some of the

findings generated from the questionnaires.

Additional statistical research is needed to determine the tenability as well as the non-tenability of the findings.

Accepted by the faculty of the School of Journalism,
College of Communication Arts and Sciences, Michigan State
University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Master of Arts degree.

V. M. Mishra

Director of Thesis

To my Mother

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Consumerism: A Brief Socio-Political Economical and Historical Introduction

"Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment in meteyard, in weights or in measures. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah (about 4-1/2 pecks), and a just hin (about 1-1/2 gallons), shall ye have."¹

As Moses illustrated in his command to Old Testament merchants, the need for consumer protection was evident as far back as Biblical times. However, little actual legal protection was given consumers until the 20th century. Instead, caveat emptor--let the buyer beware--was generally the ruling doctrine of the marketplace and consumers were expected to suffer in silence.

Of course, there were some exceptions. In the Roman Empire, for instance, sellers were held responsible for their goods; a sharp contrast to the traditional market concept. Both Greek and Roman laws also specifically prohibited adulterations of wine with water.

¹Holy Bible, King James Version, Leviticus 19:35-36.

In England, King John may have proclaimed the first protective food law in 1202 when he set official standards for bread. He also issued a number of assizes or royal decrees requiring local boards to set prices on various products such as bread and ale. These boards had the authority to punish cases of profiteering with such deterrents as the pillory for bakers (who were usually men) and the dunking stool for brewers (who were usually women).²

One historian also reported a most unusual punishment for merchants who adulterated their wine. According to his research, "In 1364 one John Penrose, a publican of Middlesex, was found guilty of watering his wine, for which offense he was condemned to stand in the pillory, to drink all of the adulterated wine he could hold (no question here of the water torture), and to have the rest of it poured over his head." Merchant guilds in Medieval Great Britain also were involved in a limited form of consumer protection. These guilds strictly regulated their membership and established standards for weights and measures and sales conditions, including prices.³ In fact, the first food inspectors were probably introduced in the Middle Ages by the pepperers' guild, which was worried about what some of its unscrupulous members were grinding into their pepper. The inspectors, who later

²Jonathon A. Sheldon, and George J. Zweibel, Survey of Consumer Fraud Law (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, 1978), p. 4.

³Ibid., p. 5.

became the arm of the British Crown responsible for weights and measures, discovered such unsavory things as iron ore, coconut shells, olive pits and nut shells ground into the pepper.

Early American leaders did not seem to be particularly concerned about consumer protection. In fact, only four consumer protection laws--three at the state level and one at the federal level--were passed through the Civil War. The laws dealt with flour inspection, the importation of adulterated drugs and the purity of food and liquor.⁴ Many historians feel that the nation's first major consumer protection law was passed in 1872 which made it a federal crime to defraud through the use of the mails.⁵

As industrialization engulfed the United States and the railroads created the possibility of nationwide markets, consumer concerns became increasingly less important.⁶ Many merchants and manufacturers were only interested in profits and expansion, not in the consumers who were buying their goods. Industrialist William Vanderbilt seemed to accurately describe the prevailing attitude with his famous words, "The public be damned." Even the U. S. Supreme Court seemed to

⁴Alvin Wolf, American Consumers: Is Their Anger Justified? (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977), p. 9.

⁵Ralph M. Gaedeke and Warren W. Etcheson, Consumerism: Viewpoints from Business, Government and the Public Interest (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972), p. 57.

⁶Sheldon and Zweibel, Survey of Consumer Fraud Law, p. 14.

align itself with this view with its decision in 1895 to remove the threat of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act from almost all major corporations. By distinguishing between manufacturers and commerce, the court decided that monopolies fell beyond the scope of the law because they were not literally vehicles of commerce themselves.⁷

However, the public was not without its defenders. Harvey W. Wiley, chief chemist in the U. S. Department of Agriculture from 1893 to 1912, repeatedly tried to get federal legislation passed prohibiting the adulteration of food. Although his staff had cataloged 1,400 pages of documented cases of adulteration, the Congress steadfastly failed to move on the issue.⁸ America's first consumer advocate even created poison squads, volunteer groups of healthy young men who were fed food adulterants in order to determine their effects, to publicize the need for such legislation. Finally, with the help of Upton Sinclair's book, The Jungle published in February 1906, and editorials in McClure's and Collier's Weekly, the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act were passed on June 30, 1906.

During this time, reformers began to join together to help improve market and labor conditions at the local level. The first Consumers' League, formed in New York City

⁷Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order: 1877-1920 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), p. 92.

⁸Wolf, American Consumers: Is Their Anger Justified? p. 19.

in 1891, decided selective retail patronage was one of the most effective ways to influence merchants. It prepared and publicized a "white list" of shops which paid minimum fair wages, had reasonable hours and decent sanitary conditions.⁹ Influenced by the success of the Consumers' League in New York City, other cities formed similar citizen groups and joined together in 1898 to form the first national consumer federation, the National Consumers' League. By 1903, the League had grown to 64 branches in 20 states but its membership steadily diminished after World War One.¹⁰

With the beginning of the Depression years, emphasis turned toward the overwhelming need for consumer education. Not only was money tight, but consumers were suddenly deluged with a wide variety of new products all advertised in glowing terms. As Stuart Chase and F. J. Schlink described in their book, Your Money's Worth, subtitled "A Study in the Waste of the Consumer's Dollar," published in 1927, the American consumer was like "Alice in a wonderland of conflicting claims, bright promises, fancy packages, soaring words and almost impenetrable ignorance." The book quickly became a best-seller with total sales of more than 100,000

⁹Robert O. Hermann, "The Consumer Movement in Historical Perspective," Paper prepared for the Council on Trends and Perspectives, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, February 1970, p. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 3.

copies.¹¹ Chase and Schlink called for the formation of a consumer-sponsored organization which would independently test products and report its findings. Two years after the book was published Schlink organized Consumers' Research Inc. which eventually evolved into the Consumers Union in 1935.

As the Depression years lengthened, consumers increasingly blamed advertising--business' most visible practice--as the cause of much of their problems. According to many of its critics, advertising encouraged wasteful proliferation of brands, unwise spending, increased costs and provided little useful information. Several popular books including 100,000,000 Guinea Pigs, Skin Deep, Partners in Plunder and Eat, Drink and Be Wary voiced these concerns and advocated the debunking of nationally advertised products.

Worried about the effects of such public opinion, the Advertising Research Foundation commissioned a national survey by George Gallup. Gallup reported in 1940 that about one-fourth of those questioned had read at least one of these books and about one-half of this group had changed their buying habits because of what they had read.¹²

¹¹David A. Aaker and George S. Day, Consumerism: Search for the Consumer Interest, 3rd ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 25.

¹²Hermann, Citing George Gallup in "The Consumer Movement in Historical Perspective," p. 17.

Although some progress was made during the 1930s, including the passage of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act in 1938, World War Two diverted all attention to the problem of human survival. The federal Office of Price Administration, however, did act decisively during the war to combat inflation by setting maximum prices which could be charged for several thousand consumer items and rent for housing.¹³ As soon as the war was over, both business and consumers eagerly plunged themselves into the world of material goods and profits. Not until the late 1950s did they seem to recognize the inherent consumer problems connected with such a proliferation of merchandise. A book about the influence of advertising again seemed to provide the impetus to fuel public debate. Vance Packard's book, The Hidden Persuaders, dramatized the almost unavoidable manipulative effects of advertising on the consumer. As people discussed the advertising issue, they also started verbalizing their other consumer problems such as excessive prices, undependable quality, unreliable warranties, product safety hazards, dangers of easy credit and obsolete or non-existent consumer protection laws.¹⁴

Not until President John Kennedy gave his 1962 consumer message to Congress, however, did the consumer movement

¹³Wolf, American Consumers: Is Their Anger Justified? p. 25.

¹⁴Sidney Margolius, "The Consumer's New Concerns," AFL-CIO American Federalist, September, 1978, p. 3.

begin to regain its momentum. Kennedy outlined four basic consumer rights: (1) the right to safety, (2) the right to be informed, (3) the right to choose, and (4) the right to be heard. Shortly after his speech, he also created a Consumer Advisory Council, chaired by Helen Canoyer, dean of the home economics department at Cornell University, mandated to comprehensively study consumer needs.

Two years later President Lyndon Johnson appointed Esther Peterson as the first White House consumer advisor. She had the responsibility to serve as the consumer advocate before Congress, as the primary publicist for the Johnson Administration's program of consumer legislation and as the chief promoter of local consumer organizations. Partly because of her influence twenty-nine state consumer organizations and nine metropolitan ones were in operation by 1969.¹⁵

Federal legislative gains were also made during the 1960s in the areas of auto safety and packaging and labeling. Due in part because of Ralph Nader's book, Unsafe at Any Speed, which exposed how faulty engineering, construction and design in automobiles caused many accidents, the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act was approved in 1966 by Congress. The act authorized the U. S. Department of Transportation to establish compulsory safety standards for new and used automobiles and tires. After more than five

¹⁵Hermann, "The Consumer Movement in Historical Perspective," p. 24.

years of Congressional inaction, Sen. Phillip Hart's (D-Mich.) "Truth-in-Packaging" bill was also passed and signed into law in late 1966. The act, officially named the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act, regulates the packaging and labeling of consumer goods and provides for voluntary uniform packaging standards established by the industry.

Highlights of other federal consumer legislation or regulations approved in the last 10 years include:

- *The Consumer Credit Protection Act of 1968 (Truth-in-Lending Act) which requires disclosure of annual interest rates and other finance charges on consumer loans including revolving charge accounts.
- *The Child Protection and Toy Safety Act of 1969 which protects children from electrical, mechanical and thermal hazards of toys or other articles.
- *The Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970 which regulates credit reporting agencies and the use of their credit reports.
- *The Consumer Product Safety Commission Act of 1972 which creates a commission to protect the public from hazardous products.
- *The Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1975 which prohibits discrimination in the granting of credit.
- *The Magnusson-Moss Warranty Act of 1975 which regulates warranty provisions.
- *The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Mail Order Merchandise Rule of 1975 which regulates mail order businesses.
- *The FTC's Holder-In-Due-Course Rule of 1976 which provides legal recourse for consumers who are paying third-party lenders through installment contracts for merchandise which is defective.
- *The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act of 1977 which regulates debt collection agencies.

*The Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 which reduces government control of commercial airlines by establishing price flexibility, allowing airlines to adopt and drop routes easily and reducing barriers to entry into the industry.

*The National Consumer Co-operative Bank Act of 1978 which creates a bank to make loans to establish new co-operatives and to expand existing ones.

*The Consumer Product Safety Commission Extension Act of 1978 which extends the commission for three more years.

*The Electronic Funds Transfer Act of 1978 which provides some protection for consumers who use debit cards.

While the preceding list may look impressive, consumer activists have not been pleased with Congressional action on consumer issues. Business lobbying efforts seem to be generally successful in the blockage or weakening of consumer legislation.¹⁶ Consumer leaders especially point to the repeated failure of Congress to approve legislation which would create a federal agency to represent consumers even though a Louis Harris poll showed in 1978 that 58 percent of the public favored such an agency while 28 percent opposed the legislation.¹⁷ It is an accepted fact that an intensive, wide-reaching business lobbying effort killed the bill.¹⁸

¹⁶"Business Lobbying: Threat to the Consumer Interest," Consumer Reports (September 1978), p. 526.

¹⁷Arthur Woodstone, "The Consumer Army: Rebels With a Cause," Parade (November 12, 1978), p. 10.

¹⁸"Business Lobbying: Threat to the Consumer Interest," p. 529.

However, according to Ralph Nader, one of the nation's best known consumer advocates, "that was just one defeat. You can't put a cap on consumer interest. Every time someone goes into a store or into a clinic or into a deal and gets rooked--that's the stuff of which the consumer movement is made."¹⁹ Esther Peterson, once again the special White House assistant for consumer affairs in the Carter Administration, concurred with Nader's observation. "People are simply not afraid to complain anymore," Peterson said. "Consumerism is broader and deeper than it ever was, even among the unaffiliated people."²⁰ The headline of a recent U.S. News & World Report article entitled, "Consumers Are Gripping Louder Than Ever," also points to the validity and visibility of their contention.²¹

Another evidence of the trend toward consumer assertiveness is shown in the expansion of the number and size of organized consumer groups in the United States. Ralph Nader alone has created or is related to at least twenty-five different consumer organizations not including the large number of student-based groups on the nation's

¹⁹Woodstone, "The Consumer Army: Rebels With A Cause," p. 12.

²⁰Ibid., p. 10.

²¹"Consumers Are Gripping Louder Than Ever," U.S. News & World Report (September 18, 1978), pp. 72-73.

university and college campuses.²² The 1978 edition of the two-volume Consumer Sourcebook also listed sixty-one different consumer groups under its heading for national consumer affairs organizations.²³ Finally, a 1976 study conducted by the Center for Consumer Affairs: University of Wisconsin-Extension has shown that there were thirty-five state consumer governmental agencies and 190 city and county consumer agencies in existence that year.²⁴

A Media Perspective

Before industrialization and large urban areas became prevalent in the United States and Western Europe, consumer transactions in the marketplace were mostly conducted between buyers and sellers who lived in the same neighborhoods and had common friends and acquaintances. For relatively large purchases, in fact, the agreements were often sealed with livery of seisin (i.e., offering a twig or clod of dust) and later with a handshake in front of witnesses.²⁵ Because of

²²Barbara O'Reilly, "'Guru' Amid Changes," State Journal, April 8, 1977, p. A-7.

²³Paul Wasserman and Jean Morgan, eds., Consumer Soucebook, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1978), pp. 81-94.

²⁴Christopher Kashnig, "Date of Origin, Budget, Number of Staff and Legal Authority of 161 Consumer Agencies in State and Local Government," paper presented at the Fourth National Seminar for Directors of Consumer Agencies in State and Local Government, Milwaukee, Wis., July 8-10, 1976.

²⁵Charles M. Haar and Lance Liebman, Property and Law (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1977), p. 147.

this high degree of visibility surrounding the sales transactions and the merchant's direct accountability for his or her goods and services, most merchants were deterred from taking advantage of local citizens.²⁶ Even if they were tempted to mislead or deceive a customer, they knew that public awareness of their deceptive practices would probably quickly put them out of business. Under the impact of sequential processes of literacy, urbanization, political participation, media participation and industrialization-modernization of the populace, word-of-mouth communication was not as effective in protecting consumers against fraudulent businesses.²⁷ Since information and education are the best weapons to fight consumer rip-offs, the print media were naturally expected to take a larger role in the responsibility of keeping the public informed about the marketplace.

According to the critics, however, the press has severely neglected its social responsibility to inform and educate the public opinion on consumer affairs throughout most of the twentieth century. In an 1974 article on consumer reporting, George Seldes, sometimes called "America's Muckraker Emeritus," noted that daily newspapers, even during

²⁶ Sheldon and Zweibel, Survey of Consumer Fraud Law, p. 3.

²⁷ See Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society (Glenco: Free Press, 1958).

the famous muckraking years in the early 1900s, "not only overlooked the consumer issues the muckrakers were investigating, they were active members themselves of the national financial corruption that was prejudicing news coverage."²⁸ Famous reformers like Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Will Irvin and Upton Sinclair could not get the findings of their investigations printed in the newspapers with large circulations; instead they had to resort to weekly and monthly magazines or publish books at their own expense.²⁹ Upton Sinclair's difficulty in getting newspaper coverage for his research may be one of the reasons for his disgusted comment, "You can't get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks and department stores . . ."³⁰

This frustration of Sinclair might very well be moored into the operation of the gatekeepers' function in the average news room. In this context, the concept of gatekeepers, which was propounded by Kurt Lewin, received further refinements through the works of White, Carter and others. Essentially, it refers to those who control the

²⁸George Seldes, "Recollections of George Seldes: When the American Press Sold Itself Out--Lock, Stock and Barrel--to the Advertisers," Media & Consumer (September 1974), p. 7.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Francis Pollock, "Toward Protecting Consumers," Columbia Journalism Review (March/April 1974), p. 22.

flow of news from its source to its ultimate audience. In this sense, reporters, editors and even consumers of news may be generally characterized as gatekeepers. In any event, they tend to exert at least three basic influences on the processes of news transmission: (1) levelling; (2) sharpening; and (3) assimilating. It is assumed that these gatekeepers' influences may be operative even in the coverage of consumer affairs news.

Another journalist, Mark Sullivan, found evidence in 1905 that at least partially justify Sinclair's condemnation of the newspaper industry. In his Collier's article, "The Patent Medicine Conspiracy Against the Press," Sullivan exposed a "contract of silence" which many publishers had signed with the Proprietary Association of America, a collection of drug manufacturers, doctors and chemists.³¹ The contract usually consisted of a short paragraph in red ink which stated that all advertising by the association would be cancelled if any governmental body took any negative action against the drug industry. Sullivan climaxed the article with highlights of a transcript of a confidential speech given by Frank Cheney, presiding officer of the association, to some drugmakers. According to the transcript, Cheney told the meeting,

³¹Seldes, "Recollections of George Seldes . . .," Media & Consumer, p. 7.

I, inside of the last two years, have made contracts with between 15 and 16,000 newspapers, and never had but one man refuse to sign the contract. This is what I have in every contract I make: "It is hereby agreed that should your state, or the U.S. government, pass any law that would interfere with or restrict the sale of proprietary medicines, this contract shall become void."³²

The results of these contracts was total opposition by the press to all public health bills from the 1900s to the 1930s. In addition to editorial opposition, most newspapers refused to print the Federal Trade Commission's fraud orders against advertisers of bad medicine.³³

While the investigations of the muckrakers (President Theodore Roosevelt's label for the investigative journalists of that time)³⁴ did not appear in the nation's largest newspapers, their exposés eventually reached the public and showed it that "its food was adulterated, its insurance funds misused, its stocks watered, and its government full of graft."³⁵ In part, because of the influential effect of these exposés, some legislative reforms did occur to help protect consumers in the marketplace and in the work force.

The outbreak of World War One, however, drew the nation's attention from domestic problems to the

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴"Have We Been Here Before?" Forbes, May 15, 1972, p. 52.

³⁵David Mark Chalmers, The Muckrake Years (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1974), p. 65.

international crisis.³⁶ Furthermore, with a brief hiatus during the Depression years, there was virtually no reporting on consumer issues in the media. In fact, between 1938 and 1962, the magazine, Consumer Reports, was like a "voice in the wilderness" with consumer news.³⁷

Not until the modern-day muckraker, Ralph Nader, wrote Unsafe At Any Speed, an exposé on the automobile industry in 1966, did national and subsequently media attention return to the area of consumer protection. The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature illustrates this point. Under the category of "Consumer Protection," thirty-three articles were listed from 1963 through 1966; 128 articles from 1967 through 1970.³⁸ It appears, however, that newspapers still were not interested in reporting about investigations which showed businesses in a negative light. When Bell-McClure Syndicate offered serialization of Unsafe At Any Speed to more than 700 newspapers, not one paper decided to print the series.³⁹

As the public started to demand more consumer information and protection in the middle 1960s, critics began

³⁶"Have We Been Here Before?" Forbes, p. 56.

³⁷Wolf, American Consumer: Is Their Anger Justified? p. 25.

³⁸Ibid., p. 29.

³⁹Arthur E. Rowse, "Consumer News: A Mixed Report," Columbia Journalism Review, Spring 1967, p. 30.

to closely examine the media's coverage of consumer affairs. While they were looking for in-depth investigations on consumer products and hard-hitting analyses on advertising and deceptive business practices, they found instead newspaper policies which prohibited the naming of businesses and product brands in news stories and speciality sections like real estate, business and food which primarily served advertisers with puff stories about their goods and services.⁴⁰ Critics, both inside and outside the journalism field, were appalled to discover the influence of advertisers who often were able to dictate what stories were printed and what facts were included in them. In reenforcement of their findings, they also found out that some newspapers, including the New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor, were so anxious to please their advertisers that they refused to carry advertisements for Consumer Reports because its ads may be offensive to their other advertisers.⁴¹

Based on these facts, it is not surprising that consumer reporting has been called "journalism's most embarrassing problem."⁴² Because of the criticism surrounding

⁴⁰ Francis Pollock, "Consumer Reporting: Underdeveloped Region," Columbia Journalism Review, May/June 1971, p. 37.

⁴¹ Francis Pollock, keynote address at Gaining Access: A Seminar for Those Making and Reporting Consumer News, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 17, 1979.

⁴² "A Note to Our Readers," Media & Consumer, September, 1974, p. 16.

the lack of consumer reporting and the increased public demand for consumer news, the news media began to reevaluate their policies on the coverage of consumer affairs. By 1970, about fifty news media saw the need to assign a specific reporter to cover consumer affairs stories. In a little more than a year, that number had increased to 200⁴³ and by 1974 there were about 500 full-time consumer reporters in the nation's news media.⁴⁴ In addition, several newspapers created consumer editor positions to see that the consumer's needs were served by all sections of the paper. The New York Times appointed a consumer editor in 1973 describing his or her responsibilities in part as follows:

He [sic] will be in charge of organizing and directing the coverage of consumer news . . . pull together as best as possible the enormous variety of consumer stories . . . suggest stories across the whole range of consumer affairs to other editors. . . . We all feel that it is extremely important to have one editor-reporter in the area of consumer affairs . . . who will make it his [sic] work to follow the developments wherever they may occur, and to act as a stimulant for all the desks.⁴⁵

Showing evidence of the increased coverage and importance of consumer news, Media & Consumer, a monthly

⁴³Pollock, "Consumer Reporting: Underdeveloped Region," p. 37.

⁴⁴Pollock, "Toward Protecting Consumers," p. 22.

⁴⁵Robert N. Katz, Protecting the Consumer Interest: Private Initiative and Public Response (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1976), p. 92.

tabloid devoted to consumer journalism, was created in 1972. As Francis Pollock, editor of the publication, stated in its premier issue,

This publication is possible because conscientious journalists have succeeded in their insistence that the news media must begin to live up to their responsibilities to the citizen in his [sic] role as consumer. Evidence that their efforts are bearing fruit is to be found in these pages.⁴⁶

In its two and one-half years of existence before it went out of business, Media & Consumer reprinted consumer stories which "represent the best and most innovative in consumer journalism." It also provided a forum for journalists to discuss their problems as consumer reporters. As publicity was given to the outrageous successes of advertisers in censoring the news, many newspapers grew more aggressive in reporting consumer stories. It became almost common to see businesses and product brands identified in news stories. More newspaper managements also seemed interested in putting some integrity into the speciality sections of their newspapers.

Consumer reporters, however, still complained about the almost constant pressure they faced in their position. According to these reporters, they repeatedly had to defend their objectivity and fairness to newspaper management and advertisers whenever they reported some negative facts about a business. They also had to endure regular battles with

⁴⁶"To Mirror the Best and Worst in Consumer Journalism," Media & Consumer, April 1972, p. 2.

editors over the newsworthiness or appropriateness to print of their consumer stories. But as the ranks of consumer reporters increased nationally, the battles became easier to win. By 1974, many journalists and critics agreed that the news media "are on the threshold of a genuine change for the better."⁴⁷

Another indication that consumer reporting had become a recognized beat was the creation in 1973 of the National Press Club's Annual Award for Excellence in Consumer Journalism.⁴⁸ The award is still being given at this time.

The number of consumer reporters, however, has decreased since 1974. A May 1979 conference on consumer reporting held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was attended by only twenty-one newspaper consumer reporters and editors. In his keynote address to the conference's participants, Francis Pollock, former editor of Media & Consumer, acknowledged that there are less consumer reporters in the news media today than there were five years ago. Although there are more marketplace stories in the news media than ever before, Pollock stressed that consumer reporters are still working under several handicaps including the advertiser's threat of lost revenues, the management's hesitation to print about unfair, while legal, business practices and the reporter's

⁴⁷Pollock, "Toward Protecting Consumers," p. 22.

⁴⁸"Consumer Awards Given," Media & Consumer, November 1974, p. 11.

tendency to follow fads and not become involved in follow-up stories or long-term investigations. Many reporters at the conference seemed to concur with Pollock's observations. Some also indicated a fear that, because the consumer movement may be losing its public appeal, newspaper management may decide to reduce or eliminate its consumer beat.

If these reporters are voicing a legitimate fear and newspaper managements are considering cutting back on their consumer news coverage, they may not have a good understanding of what the public wants to read in a newspaper. According to a number of public opinion surveys, the American public wants more and better consumer news reporting. One poll, "Consumerism at the Crossroads," a national opinion research survey conducted in late 1976 by Marketing Sciences Institute and commissioned by the Sentry Insurance Company, showed 54 percent of the 1,510 adults surveyed said not enough attention was being given by newspapers, magazines and television to consumer affairs. Only 6 percent said too much attention was being given.⁴⁹ Survey respondents also indicated their skepticism for using magazine and newspaper articles as an accurate and reliable source of consumer information. Only 10 percent of those polled considered these articles to be the most accurate or reliable information.⁵⁰ Forty-seven percent of the

⁴⁹"Media Business Coverage: Unbiased But Unreliable," Editor & Publisher, May 28, 1977, p. 44.

⁵⁰Ibid.

respondents, however, believed the news media cover business and consumer affairs news in an unbiased matter while 25 percent believed that the media are biased toward business and 2 percent said the media was biased toward consumers.⁵¹

Another study conducted in 1974 by Samuel Himes Jr. of the University of Alabama for the Southern Newspaper Publications Association Foundation indicated a similar nature of public opinion. In a survey of 1,200 persons, chosen randomly from the telephone directories of three cities, 81 percent of the respondents reported that newspapers should give stronger editorial support to the consumer. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents also reported that articles about consumer problems were "designed not to offend advertisers."⁵²

If the findings of these two studies are any indication of the current public opinion toward the reporting of consumer news, then Thomas W. Pew Jr., editor and publisher of the Troy (Ohio) Daily News in 1973, may be correct in his observation that newspaper subscriber-consumers are beginning to expect and demand more from their newspapers. In a column printed in Media & Consumer, he stated:

There appears to be a growing sense of outrage-- usually the first step to demanding consumer reporting . . . maybe the clamor of outrage will reach the editors in their ivory towers and the publishers in the bars . . . before the news business sells out altogether

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Katz, Protecting the Consumer Interest: Private Initiative and Public Response, p. 88.

as a service industry. With a little help from our readers, we can go forward . . . toward consumer journalism that's active rather than reactive, preventive rather than curative, building rather than repairing.⁵³

Ralph Nader and his associates agree with Pew's contention. They assert that this type of reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper.⁵⁴

The Michigan Scene

Taking a broad perspective, Michigan's first consumer protection agency was probably vested in the Office of the Attorney General, created in 1807 when Michigan was still a territory.⁵⁵ The office was authorized "to prosecute and defend all suits, both civil and criminal, for and against the United States or the territory, and to perform all official duties required by the legislature, the governor and the courts."⁵⁶ When Michigan became a state in 1837, the office was continued under the new constitution. Gradually becoming more powerful, the attorney general's office in 1937 was empowered "to intervene in any judicial action

⁵³Thomas W. Pew Jr., "Getting Better Performance from the News Media," Media & Consumer, February 1973, p. 16.

⁵⁴David Bollier, How to Appraise and Improve Your Daily Newspaper: A Manual for Readers (Washington, D.C.: Ralph Nader Associates, 1978), p. 64.

⁵⁵"The Role of the Michigan Attorney General in Consumer and Environmental Protection," Michigan Law Review, April 1974, p. 1032.

⁵⁶Ibid.

in order to protect the rights or interests of the state or the people in the state."⁵⁷

As the state's chief law enforcement officer, the attorney general has the authority to represent all state boards and agencies, to initiate cases to protect the public interest and to intervene in litigation where it is necessary to protect the public interest."⁵⁸ Because of the very nature of its widesweeping powers, however, the office is limited in its consumer advocacy role.

Consequently, the Michigan Legislature in 1966 created the Michigan Consumers Council to represent the consumer's interest in the legislative process and to inform the public on consumer issues.⁵⁹ The Council, housed in the legislative branch of government, is a nine-member policy-making board which meets once a month to direct its staff on consumer issues and informational and educational programs. Three of the Council members are appointed by the Legislature, three are appointed by the Governor and three are public officials--the Secretary of State, the Attorney General and the director of the Department of Commerce.

While created in 1966, the Council was not funded until 1969. Given a budget of \$12,000 at that time, the

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 1033.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹"Background of the Michigan Consumers Council," prepared by the Michigan Consumers Council, May 1979.

Council hired its first executive director, Dianne McKaig, and its first staff person, Andrew Eiler.⁶⁰ The office itself consisted of two desks and two chairs. From that beginning, the Council has grown to a staff of twenty with an 1978-1979 budget of \$530,000.

In the past decade, partially because of the Council's efforts, Michigan has become a national leader in the area of consumer protection. More than forty important consumer protection laws have been enacted since 1970; several more far-reaching than federal consumer statutes and regulations. The most comprehensive of these laws is the Michigan Consumer Protection Act, Public Act 331 of 1976. This act, which became effective April 1, 1977, prohibits twenty-nine deceptive trade practices, allows consumers to file class action suits against businesses and gives the attorney general's office and county prosecutors the authority to investigate and prosecute violators of the act.

Highlights of other state consumer protection statutes enacted in the 1970s include:

- *Public Act 218 of 1972 as amended which creates a system of no-fault auto insurance.
- *Public Act 348 of 1972 which regulates the amount and use of security deposits on apartments and rental units and establishes procedures for the return of the deposits.
- *Public Act 300 of 1974 as amended which requires written estimates on automotive repairs and provides for

⁶⁰ "We've Come A Long Way, Consumers," Consumer News & Views, July/August 1976, p. 4.

licensing of auto mechanics and registering of auto repair facilities.

*Public Act 361 of 1974 as amended which licenses and regulates debt collection agencies.

*Public Act 367 of 1974 which prohibits odometer tampering and requires a written mileage statement at the time of transfer.

*Public Act 148 of 1975 which licenses and regulates debt management companies.

*Public Act 195 of 1976 which requires the recommended last day of sale to be stamped on meat, fish, seafood and other perishable food items.

*Public Act 273 of 1976 which defines and prohibits deceptive insurance trade practices.

*Public Act 419 of 1976 which establishes a Mobile Home Commission within the Department of Commerce to develop a uniform policy for every phrase of the mobile home business.

*Public Act 449 of 1976 which requires prices to be stamped on most individual sales items and prohibits deceptive advertising.

*Public Act 135 of 1977 which prohibits redlining on home loans by financial institutions and provides for disclosure of mortgage information.

*Public Act 59 of 1978 which regulates the sale and construction of condominiums.

*Public Act 116 of 1978 which creates a state toxic control commission and prescribes its powers and duties.

*Public Act 120 of 1978 which extends the warranty while goods are under repair.

*Public Act 149 of 1978 which modifies the holder-in-due-course doctrine for auto sales.

*Public Act 152 of 1978 which prohibits using a recorded message in telephone solicitations.

*Public Act 286 of 1978 which allows for the creation of a toll-free telephone service within the Michigan Consumers Council.

*Public Act 322 of 1978 which provides consumer protection for users of electronic banking systems and sets up procedures for settling disputes.

*Public Act 454 of 1978 which prohibits certain unconscionable clauses in rental leases.

*Public Act 496 of 1978 which increases the jurisdictional limit of small claims court to \$600.

Since 1970, several consumer protection agencies in Michigan have also been developed on the local level. Seven county prosecutor's offices have special consumer protection divisions while Detroit and Dearborn have established consumer offices in their city governments.⁶¹ Business-sponsored consumer groups have also been created in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Jackson, and Kalamazoo.

Volunteer consumer groups such as the Michigan Citizens Lobby and PIRGIM (Public Interest Research Group in Michigan) have also been organized on a statewide basis to lobby for consumer issues. There are also consumer groups in Michigan which are active on specific issues such as nursing home care, redlining and tenant rights.

While Michigan consumers are now more protected than ever before, the state's daily newspapers have shown both successes and failures in the area of consumer reporting. As early as 1968, the Detroit Free Press became one of the first newspapers in the country to hire a reporter

⁶¹Counties with consumer divisions in prosecutor's offices include Bay, Genesee, Ingham, Kalamazoo, Macomb, Muskegon, and Washtenaw.

to exclusively cover consumer issues.⁶² Because of Trudy Lieberman's success as Michigan's first and only consumer reporter, the Detroit News started a consumer beat in 1972 and assigned Louis Mleczo to the position.⁶³ Both reporters aggressively reported on local and state consumer issues such as the short-weighing on some food items, generic drug substitution and the holder-in-due-course doctrine in installment contracts. In recognition of the excellence of their reporting, some of their stories were reprinted in Media & Consumer, the monthly publication devoted to the coverage of consumer reporting.

According to Mleczo, problems did not start until 1973 when both Lieberman and he started to investigate automobile dealers and auto repair facilities. They discovered and reported on many outrageously deceptive and fraudulent business practices conducted by several Detroit-area auto dealers. While both newspapers carried the reporters' stories on their front pages, the Detroit News printed the names and addresses of the dealers who were involved in the deceptive practices; the Free Press did not.⁶⁴ The automobile dealers, who advertised heavily in both newspapers,

⁶²"Media Power," Consumer News & Views, July/August 1976, p. 4.

⁶³Louis Mleczo, "Obstacles to Consumer Reporting: Advertisers and Other Pressures," a panel discussion at Gaining Access: A Seminar for Those Making and Reporting Consumer News, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 18, 1979.

⁶⁴Ibid.

were naturally very unhappy about the stories and threatened to withdraw their advertisements. Ford Motor Company and the Michigan Auto Dealers Association actually did withdraw their advertisements because of the stories.

Although the stories of both reporters were accurate and eventually were influential in the passage of Michigan's Auto Repair Act in 1974, newspaper management, especially at the Detroit Free Press, started to pressure Lieberman and Mleczko to tone down their stories and to report on other consumer issues.⁶⁵ In fact, according to Mleczko, his editor praised him for his reporting but warned him if he made one mistake both he and the editor would be looking for new jobs. While the effect of the advertisers' pressure was not immediate, by the end of 1974 both the Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News had discontinued their consumer beats.⁶⁶ For the next four years, neither newspaper did much consumer reporting. After changes in newspaper management at both newspapers, however, the Detroit Free Press again hired a consumer reporter in 1978 and the Detroit News reassigned Louis Mleczko to the consumer beat as of January 1, 1979.

Outside the Detroit area, few daily newspapers have assigned specific reporters to cover consumer affairs. This observation is based on an analysis of the Michigan Consumers Council's media contact cards. As part of its information program, the Council annually updates its list of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

consumer reporters by telephoning daily newspapers in the state and asking for the names of reporters who regularly cover consumer affairs stories. In May 1977, sixteen newspapers reported that they had specific reporters who regularly cover consumer affairs stories. Most of these reporters, however, must also cover a variety of other assignments including business, community services, family living and sports. As an indication of how confusing it must be for the reporter to keep all of his or her responsibilities straight, one reporter from a middle-sized newspaper said he would have to check with the editor to see who was the consumer reporters for the newspaper. After a short time, he came back on the telephone and said, "You're not going to believe it, but it's me."

When a Council intern telephoned the newspapers again in May 1978 for the annual update, thirteen newspapers indicated they had regular consumer reporters. In comparison to the 1977 figures, nine newspapers continued to assign consumer stories to a specific reporter; seven newspapers dropped their policy of assigning consumer stories to a particular reporter; and four newspapers adopted the policy.

According to the Council's January 1979 update, twelve newspapers indicated they have regular consumer reporters; a drop of one from 1978. Comparing these findings to the 1978 figures, seven newspapers dropped the designation of consumer reporter while nine newspapers added the

designation; only three newspapers continued the consumer reporter designation.

As these estimates indicate, management in Michigan's daily newspapers appears to frequently change or revise its policies on covering consumer affairs news. In fact, not one newspaper followed the same policy for all three years.

While these estimates are admittedly based on informal conversations and are thus subject to error and misinterpretation, they are useful in setting the framework for the indepth analysis of consumer reporting in the state which follows in the succeeding chapters of this study.

Background Assumptions

On the basis of the preceding discussion, the following background assumptions regarding this study can be made.

It can be assumed that:

1. The gatekeepers of Michigan's daily newspapers as well as the leaders of Michigan's consumer agencies and organizations are generally aware of the increased public, government and business interest in the area of consumer affairs.
2. The gatekeepers of Michigan's daily newspapers would have opinions about the importance of consumer reporting and the role of the consumer reporter.
3. The leaders of Michigan's consumer agencies and organizations would have opinions about the importance of consumer reporting and the role of the consumer reporter.

4. The gatekeepers of Michigan's daily newspapers would generally be more positive in their assessment of the current situation of consumer reporting in the state than the consumer leaders.

In summary, the author has assumed that the three target groups of the study⁶⁷ are generally familiar with the areas of consumer affairs and consumer reporting and that they have definite opinions on the subjects which are subsequently reflected in their work. However, these assumptions need to be tested. It is hoped that an examination of these audiences would yield statistical data on the status of consumer reporters in the state as well as provide insight into the attitudes and opinions among these groups regarding consumer reporting.

Rationale for Study

The study is important on both the historical and procedural and/or policy levels. Historically, the study will help document a field of reporting which has received little research nationally and no known research on the Michigan situation. Not only will it provide descriptive statistical data on the status of consumer reporters in the state, it will also offer descriptive insight into the attitudes and opinions of consumer and journalistic leaders in

⁶⁷As fully explained in Chapter III of this study, the three target groups are the managing editors and designated consumer reporters of the daily newspapers in the state and the leaders of Michigan's consumer agencies and organizations.

the state. Consequently, it should help form a foundation for additional research in the area.

On the procedural and/or policy levels, the author hopes the findings will be used by journalists, academicians, and consumer affairs professionals to re-examine their views on the importance of consumer affairs reporting and the role of the consumer reporter.

It is also hoped that this study will contribute toward better relations and increased understanding between journalists and the state's consumer leaders.

CHAPTER II

THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives of the Study

The basic objective of the study centered around the problem question involving the coverage of consumer news in Michigan's daily newspapers and the attitudes and opinions of the coverage and scope among the gatekeepers and state consumer leaders.

Specifically, the study was designed:

1. To compile demographic and psychographic data on consumer affairs reporters in Michigan's daily newspapers including such facts as the number of reporters, their educational backgrounds and professional training and their responsibilities on the newspapers.
2. To examine the nature and pattern of coverage of consumer affairs stories printed in the newspapers and the play assigned to these stories.
3. To ascertain the types of sources used by reporters and editors in the coverage of consumer affairs stories.

4. To describe the influences of advertisers on the reporting of consumer affairs stories.
5. To compare the attitudes and opinions of three aforesaid influential groups toward consumer affairs reporting.
6. To assess the three aforesaid influential groups' knowledge of and sensitivity for important consumer problems.
7. To compare the three aforesaid influential groups' views on and awareness of consumer laws and necessary consumer legislation, if any.
8. To generate some conclusions and recommendations regarding the coverage of consumer news and the role of the consumer reporter.

Concerns of the Study

The study was concerned with the examination of the following problem questions:

1. How many daily newspapers in Michigan have regular, designated consumer reporters? What types of educational background and professional training do these reporters have? How did they become consumer reporters for the newspapers? What are their responsibilities on the newspapers? What type of consumer stories have they covered in the last year?
2. What play is assigned to most of the consumer stories placed in Michigan's daily newspapers?

3. What type of news sources do editors and reporters mostly use in the reporting of consumer stories?
4. How much influence do advertisers and/or businesses have in the reporting and/or printing of consumer stories?
5. How do the three groups surveyed compare or differ in their attitudes and opinions toward consumer reporting?
6. How do the three groups surveyed compare or differ in their perceptions of what are the major consumer problems facing people in this country?
7. How do the three groups surveyed compare or differ in their views on important consumer laws and necessary consumer legislation?

These are only some of the major problem questions addressed in the study. It is hoped that the findings of the research will provide some data for building a foundation for additional research as well as provide a stimulus for newspaper management and university journalism departments to review their policies and courses in regard to consumer reporting.

Definition of Terms

In order to avoid any possible linguistic confusion, certain terms have been defined in alphabetical order for the purpose of this study in the following fashion.

Consumer.--The term describes a person who buys goods or services in the marketplace.

Consumer Affairs.--The term refers to the events or actions relating to or resulting from a consumer transaction.

Consumer Affairs Stories or Consumer Stories.--These two terms have been used interchangeably to describe consumer news stories actually researched, covered and written by a staff reporter for a particular newspaper and by this definition the terms exclude syndicated columns.

Consumer Affairs Reporters or Consumer Reporters.--The two terms have been defined interchangeably to refer to reporters who have been designated by newspaper management to cover consumer stories including the reporters who exclusively cover consumer stories with the inclusion of their byline title.

Gatekeepers.--The term describes the people in news rooms, particularly the managing editors and/or reporters who are responsible for making the decision that effect the flow of news and information about consumer affairs to the public.

Organization of Remainder of the Study

The remainder of the study is organized into three additional chapters, eight appendices and a bibliography.

Chapter III discusses the methodology of the study.

Chapter IV reports the findings of the study.

Chapter V provides the conclusions and offers some generalizations from the study.

Appendices consist of the cover letters for the mail questionnaires, the three mail questionnaires and the tabulations for the study.

A comprehensive bibliography follows the appendices.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Hypotheses

Based on background assumptions and the author's experience in the consumer reporting area, the following descriptive hypotheses of general nature have been formulated:

- H₁ Most Michigan daily newspapers do not have full-time consumer reporters nor reporters who specialize in covering consumer stories.
- H₂ Most Michigan daily newspapers do not have an "action-line" type consumer affairs column.
- H₃ Newspapers with consumer reporters cover more consumer stories while newspapers without reporters specializing in consumer affairs rely primarily on news releases and wire stories for their coverage of consumer stories.
- H₄ Most consumer stories are placed in the women/family living section of the newspaper.
- H₅ Most consumer reporters have no special training in consumer affairs nor previous newspaper experience in covering consumer stories.

- H₆ Most editors and reporters have had unfavorable reactions from advertisers whose businesses were mentioned in consumer-related stories.
- H₇ Editors, reporters and consumer leaders have different definitions for the term, consumer affairs.
- H₈ Editors and reporters (to a lesser extent) are not very familiar with recent state and federal consumer laws.
- H₉ Editors, reporters and leaders have different opinions on what are the problems facing consumers in the market place.
- H₁₀ Most consumer leaders are unhappy with newspapers' coverage of consumer stories.
- H₁₁ Most editors and reporters feel that consumer reporting has improved in the last five years while most consumer leaders do not see any improvements.
- H₁₂ Most consumer leaders and reporters feel that the American public wants more and better consumer reporting while most editors feel their readers are not especially interested in consumer affairs.
- H₁₃ Most editors, reporters and consumer leaders feel that it is a mark of a good newspaper to feature aggressive consumer reporting.
- H₁₄ Most editors, reporters and consumer leaders do not feel that businesses have been unfairly treated by newspapers.

- H₁₅ Most consumer leaders feel that newspapers are heavily influenced by advertising demands while most editors and reporters feel they are immune to such pressures.
- H₁₆ Most editors say they have never stopped a consumer story from being printed in their newspapers.
- H₁₇ Most consumer leaders feel that newspapers do not name local businesses in their stories while reporters and editors say they usually name them when appropriate.
- H₁₈ Most consumer reporters feel they were not very well trained to cover consumer stories.
- H₁₉ Most editors and reporters emphasize journalistic training for prospective consumer reporters while most consumer leaders think reporters need more training in the consumer fields.
- H₂₀ Editors, reporters and leaders have differing opinions on what courses and resources would be most beneficial to consumer reporters.
- H₂₁ Most consumer leaders feel "action-line" type columns are not very beneficial to consumers.
- H₂₂ The majority of editors feel there is no need for additional consumer legislation while most reporters and consumer leaders feel more consumer laws are necessary.

The Method of Research

In the execution of the study, the author utilized both analytical and documentary techniques of historical and mail survey research methods. The historical research was used to establish the foundation, time frame, rationale and background assumptions for the study. Many of the techniques used for this portion of the research were derived from William Rivers' book, Finding Facts,⁶⁸ and various journal articles such as Mildred Hillestad's "Writing a Research Report" printed in the Business Education Forum.⁶⁹ A computer search was also conducted through the Michigan State University library in order to obtain all relevant citations and sources.

The quantitative research technique used was the mail survey. The method has certain advantages and limitations.

The advantages of this method include the ability to generate substantial data at a relatively low cost⁷⁰ and

⁶⁸William Rivers, Finding Facts (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1975).

⁶⁹Mildred Hillestad, "Writing a Research Report," Business Education Forum, February 1972, pp. 27-39.

⁷⁰Roy E. Carter, Jr., "Field Methods in Communication Research," in Introduction to Mass Communications Research, eds. Ralph O. Nafziger and David M. White (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), p. 110.

the generally accepted reliability of such data.⁷¹ Much research has been conducted concerning the limitations of mail surveys in order to help perfect the research technique.

The potential limitations include:

1. Inadequate or incomplete population categories for mail surveys.⁷²
2. Misleading or poorly worded questions on mail questionnaires which may invalidate data.⁷³
3. Notoriously poor response rates for mail questionnaires with common percentages of returns in the less than 50 to 40 percent response range.⁷⁴
4. Predictable characteristics of respondents and non-respondents of mail surveys which may hinder the formulation of valid generalizations.⁷⁵

⁷¹Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), p. 422.

⁷²Carter, "Field Methods in Communication Research," p. 111.

⁷³Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research, p. 486.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 414.

⁷⁵Carter, "Field Methods in Communication Research," p. 111.

5. A different respondent to the mail survey than the intended person.⁷⁶
6. Uncontrollable sequence of stimuli for respondent of mail questionnaire which may result in incomplete answers and unanswered questions.⁷⁷
7. Little opportunity to probe a respondent's answer.⁷⁸
8. No immediate research findings because of the time-consuming nature of data processing and analysis.⁷⁹

Recognizing the inherent limitations of mail survey research, the author minimized them by using the following techniques listed in the same order as the limitations were originally presented.

1. Inadequate or incomplete population categories.

The author surveyed the entire universe of the audience categories obtained by highly reliable sources.⁸⁰ Consequently, most of the errors related to sampling techniques were avoided.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 111.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research, p. 422.

⁸⁰The author used the 1978 Michigan Press Association's Yearbook for the names and addresses of Michigan daily newspapers and the 1978 list of Michigan consumer groups compiled by the Michigan Consumers Council, the state's consumer agency, for the names and addresses of consumer leaders in the state.

2. Misleading or poorly worded questions. The author designed the questionnaire questions under the guidelines presented in Stanley Payne's book, The Art of Asking Questions.⁸¹ She also carefully studied other research papers and questionnaires and followed the basic questionnaires structure and format presented in them.⁸² In addition, she pre-tested the questionnaires with similar audiences to detect any possible problem areas before mailing them to the appropriate audiences. In general, most of the questions were of structured nature and schematically so designed as to be filled out in a short period of time.
3. Notoriously poor response rates. The author used many techniques to encourage responses including

⁸¹ Stanley Payne, The Art of Asking Questions (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951).

⁸² Research papers studied included the following theses approved by the School of Journalism at Michigan State University: Alexander's "Survey of the Educational and Media Background of Michigan Television News Personnel" (1976); Brenner's "The Religion Writers and the Secular Press: An Analytical and Interactional Study of the Religion Writer's Role Perceived by Writers, Superiors and Religious Leaders" (1970); Denton's "An Analysis of the Educational and Professional Background of Newspaper Film Critics and the Influence These Critics Wield on Readers" (1976); Small's "Training of the Science Writer" (1964); and Reddick's "Press Councils in Canada: Their Funding, Function and Future" (1976).

personalized,⁸³ carefully written cover letters;⁸⁴ commemorative stamps;⁸⁵ offer to send summary of findings to respondents;⁸⁶ detailed instructions and assurance of anonymity;⁸⁷ separate numbering for each subsection of questionnaire;⁸⁸ no precoding of questionnaires;⁸⁹ provision of stamped, self-addressed envelope;⁹⁰ and a follow-up remainder mailing.⁹¹

4. Predictable characteristics of respondents and non-respondents. In the scope of this study, the knowledge of predictable characteristics may, in reality, increase the validity of the generalizations and conclusions extrapolated from the findings.⁹²

⁸³Edwin N. Carpenter, "Personalizing Mail Surveys: A Replication and Reassessment," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 38 (1974), pp. 122-123.

⁸⁴Carter, "Field Methods of Behavioral Research," p. 112.

⁸⁵Wayne E. Hensley, "Increasing Response Rate by Choice of Postage Stamps," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 38 (1974), p. 283.

⁸⁶Phillip Meyer, Precision Journalism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 312.

⁸⁷Carter, "Field Methods of Behavioral Research," p. 112.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 116.

5. A different respondent. Because the study is primarily concerned with the organizational, rather than the personal perceptions of the respondents toward consumer reporting, it was not essential that the originally requested respondent actually answer the questionnaire as long as he or she delegated the task to someone who could answer appropriately for the newspaper or organization. It is gratifying to note that because of almost daily interaction with many of the aforesaid reporters and consumer leaders as a part of the researcher's job for the Michigan Consumers Council for the State of Michigan an excellent rapport existed between the aforesaid groups and the researcher which yielded excellent return rates of the questionnaires.
6. Uncontrollable sequence of stimuli. Because the questionnaire has been designed to study many areas of consumer reporting, an incomplete questionnaire would still generate valuable data and insights into the areas which were completed.
7. Little opportunity to probe. To facilitate additional comments, the questionnaire has been designed to include several open-ended questions as well as extra space on the final page for extemporaneous remarks.⁹³

⁹³Ibid., p. 114.

8. No immediate research findings. The purpose of the study was not to obtain instant data but rather to develop a foundation for additional research and to stimulate a re-evaluation of the policies of newspapers and university journalism departments in regard to the importance of consumer reporting and the role of the consumer reporter.

Sampling Considerations

The study did not involve any sampling procedures.

The following target groups were included in the survey: managing editors of Michigan's daily newspapers, consumer reporters for the same newspapers, and leaders of consumer agencies and organizations in the state. The survey instruments were mailed to all the elements in the three aforesaid universes negating the need for sampling.

An editor's questionnaire was sent to the managing editors of the fifty-three daily newspapers listed in the 1978 Michigan Press Association's Yearbook. A reporter's questionnaire was sent to twelve specific reporters who were designated "consumer reporters" by their newspapers in January 1979 when the author telephoned all of the daily newspapers in the state. Questionnaires addressed to the position of "consumer reporter" were sent to the remaining newspapers.

A consumer leader questionnaire was sent to the directors or chairpersons of the twenty-seven consumer groups and agencies listed in the 1978 state directory of these groups compiled by the Michigan Consumers Council, the state's consumer agency.

The Questionnaire

In order to compare the attitudes and opinions of the three aforestated target groups toward the coverage and scope of consumer affairs reporting, the author developed three separate questionnaires. (Please see Appendices A, B, and C.) Many items were common to all three questionnaires. However, each of the questionnaires contained independent items which were designed to translate the objectives of the study.

Every attempt was made to personalize the survey instruments. The cover letters and envelopes were typed and individually addressed to the appropriate persons. The cover letters were also carefully written to encourage responses by outlining the purpose and importance of the study, by promising anonymity for the respondents and by offering a summary of the study's results to all respondents who request a copy. In addition, each cover letter was typed on stationery from the School of Journalism at Michigan State University and was signed by the author. (Please see Appendix D for a copy of the cover letter.)

Mailing Procedures

The author sent a cover letter, the appropriate questionnaire and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to each person in the three target groups. A follow-up letter was mailed seven days after the mail survey instruments were sent to encourage responses. (Please see Appendix E for a copy of the follow-up letter.) No material inducement was provided to encourage completion and return of the mail questionnaires.

It was gratifying to note that the questionnaire design and the mailing procedures yielded more than satisfactory return rates. The first mailing to 27 consumer leaders generated 21 responses--a return rate of 78 percent. Although the return rates for the editor's and reporter's questionnaires were lower than anticipated in the first mailing, the second mailing to these two groups yielded satisfactory return rates. The second mailing for editors generated 33 out of 53 possible responses--a return rate of 62 percent. The second mailing for reporters yielded 20 responses out of a possible 53 by the cut-off reply date for a return rate of 39 percent.⁹⁴ While a 39 universe return rate was not as satisfactory as the other return rates, one should remember that forty-one newspapers, by their own acknowledgment, did not employ a consumer reporter.

⁹⁴Fred D. Schrier, Modern Marketing Research: A Behavioral Science Approach (Belmont: Wardsworth Publishing Co., 1968), p. 138.

Of the twelve newspapers which did have designated consumer reporters, the return rate was nearly 100 percent. Consequently, the return rate for the reporter's questionnaire was excellent when it is regarded from this perspective.

Data Processing and Analysis

Three separate codebooks were constructed for the three questionnaires. The responses were coded with the help of these codebooks. The coding was done and checked for errors by the author. No coding errors were found, according for 100 percent coding efficiency.

The computerized processing and analysis of the data were completed with the help of CDC 6500 Computing System at Michigan State University.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings have been reported here under the following sections: (1) A comparative profile of the demographic characteristics of the three groups of respondents in the study; (2) the nature and pattern of consumer affairs reporting in Michigan's daily newspapers and the commitments about such reporting among the respondents; (3) the patterns of actual and desired professional training and education of consumer affairs reporters as reported by the respondents; (4) attitudes and opinions toward consumer affairs reporting among the respondents; and (5) the knowledge and awareness of consumer issues among the respondents.

As stated earlier in the study, the findings have been reported here mainly in descriptive statistical terms.

Demographic Characteristics of All Respondents

Age and Sex Characteristics

Editors who responded to the questionnaire were noticeably older with a preponderance of males. In comparison, the respondents in the consumer leader and reporter

groups were younger in age. For, 50 percent of the editor respondents indicated that they were 45 years of age or older while about 21 percent of the respondents in the reporter target group and 30 percent of the consumer leaders reported that they were in the aforesaid age ranges. Not surprisingly, more than 88 percent of the responding editors and 70 percent of the reporters were male. However, more than 52 percent of the consumer leaders were female.

Consumer reporters were without a doubt the youngest group of people with more than 78 percent of the respondents reporting that they were thirty-five years of age or younger. Only a little more than 25 percent of the responding editors fell into that age group while 40 percent of the consumer leader respondents were thirty-five years of age or younger.

Educational Background

Almost all respondents were highly educated. Most of them held college degrees and had pursued post-graduate work. In fact, all of the responding reporters were college graduates with 47 percent of them doing post-graduate work. More than 80 percent of the consumer leader respondents were college graduates with 57 percent either possessing advanced degrees or working toward such degrees. Additionally, more than 70 percent of the responding editors were college graduates and 12 percent of them had pursued post-graduate work.

Circulation and Type of
Consumer Agencies

The breakdown of circulation sizes for the newspapers of the responding editors and reporters were generally representative of the state of the industry in Michigan as reported in the 1978 Michigan Press Association's Yearbook, adding to the reliability of this finding. Seventy-five percent of the responding editors worked at newspapers with circulations of less than 50,000 while 70 percent of the reporters fell under that category. However, the single largest category of responding editors (33%) was employed at newspapers with circulations ranging from 10,000 to 24,999 while the circulation range for the single largest category of reporter respondents (30%) worked for newspapers with circulations ranging from 25,000 to 49,999. Fifteen percent of the responding reporters worked for newspapers with circulations of more than 100,000 while 12 percent of the editor respondents checked the more than 100,000 circulation category.

Likewise, the consumer leader respondents indicated by their responses that they formed a representative cross-section of the state's consumer leaders according to the 1978 Michigan consumer groups list prepared by the Michigan Consumers Council. Again, this finding was found reliable since it compared favorably with the Council's list.

Forty percent of the respondents were leaders in volunteer consumer affairs organizations while 35 percent

directed or chaired a governmental consumer agency. Twenty percent of the consumer leader respondents indicated they were involved with a business consumer affairs office.

Length of Time in Position

The consumer reporters who responded to the questionnaire were without a doubt the newest to their jobs of the three groups. Sixty percent of the respondents indicated they had held reporting positions on the newspaper for three years or less. Of this 60 percent, 25 percent said they had been on the job for less than one year. When asked how long they have been covering consumer affairs at their newspapers, the responding reporters indicated even a shorter period of time. More than 47 percent of them had been covering consumer news for less than one year while the same percentage had been covering it for one to three years.

These figures varied noticeably from the other two groups, especially the consumer leaders. Of the consumer leaders who responded to the questionnaire, about 31 percent indicated they had held their leadership role in consumer affairs for three years or less; only a little more than 15 percent indicated they had been consumer leaders for less than one year. On the other hand, 48 percent of the responding editors had been gatekeepers at their newspapers for three years or less with the highest percentage of that figure (32%) serving as editors for one to three years. The second highest percentage for the length of time as

editor at the newspaper was 26 percent in the more than ten years category.

Nature and Concerns About Consumer Affairs
Reporting in Michigan's Dailies

Assignment and Placement of
Consumer Affairs Stories

Only 11 percent of the responding editors stated that their newspaper had one reporter who regularly covered consumer affairs stories while more than 50 percent of them indicated they assigned consumer stories to three or more different reporters on their staff. This finding, however, did not surprise the consumer leader respondents since 90 percent of them thought that less than 25 percent of the daily newspapers in the state had a regular consumer reporter. In fact, one leader wrote, "I know of only two."

More than 75 percent of the responding reporters who covered consumer affairs indicated that they were also responsible for covering many other types of stories. About 23 percent of that percentage said they were also business reporters while the remaining reporter respondents said they covered such beats as women or family living, general assignment, sports and photography. One reporter explained that "The women's section gets some of the consumer news releases and runs them verbatim on 'as space allows' basis while the business section gets some consumer wire stories too. Neither department does investigation."

According to the largest single category of the responding reporters, they became consumer reporters at their editor's discretion (35%). A substantial percentage (24%) also said consumer reporting was "part of the job" and "somebody had to do it." Only a little more than 15 percent of the responding reporters said they were hired specifically to cover consumer affairs and even those reporters did not have experience as a consumer reporter from another newspaper.

On the other hand, responding editors and consumer leaders seemed to agree on the criteria that editors used to assign consumer stories to their reporters. Both groups indicated that the expertise of the reporter and the reporter's workload were the two top considerations for assigning consumer affairs stories when the newspaper did not have a regular consumer reporter. Two consumer leaders, however, cynically wrote that the only time a consumer news story was printed was "when space needs to be filled between ads."

Interestingly, respondents of the three groups did not agree on where most consumer affairs stories were placed in the newspaper. While more than 50 percent of the responding consumer leaders and 35 percent of the responding reporters indicated that they thought most consumer stories were placed in the women/family living section, most responding editors (43%) reported that the stories were routinely placed throughout the newspaper wherever they were appropriate.

Consumer leader respondents, however, disagreed with the editors' assertion. Slightly more than 44 percent of them, in fact, stated that consumer stories were not often placed in the appropriate place.

"Action-line" Type Columns

While the "action-line" type of consumer column has not been previously discussed in this study, the author thought it was necessary to briefly address the subject in the questionnaires to assess its role in relation to the consumer reporters in Michigan's daily newspapers. Slightly more than 40 percent of the responding editors stated that their newspapers had an "action-line" type column for their readers. Twenty percent of the editor respondents reported that their newspaper's column had existed for six to seven years while a little more than 12 percent indicated that their column had been in existence for one to five years. An equal number of editors stated that the column was run either daily or three times a week averaging between 10 to 25 complaints or 101 to 200 complaints per week. Again, the same number of editors reported that their newspaper had either one part-time person or between two to five persons working on the column. On a side note, slightly more than 25 percent of the responding reporters indicated that they spent some of their time working on their newspaper's column. When asked about the effectiveness of "action-line" type consumer columns, 55 percent of the responding

consumer leaders stated that the column was somewhat helpful to consumers. Several leaders, however, emphasized that the columns were not that helpful to the majority of consumers because they usually only handle the unusual complaint.

Newspapers' Policies on
Consumer Stories

According to both responding editors (81%) and reporters (76%), many different types of consumer stories were printed in their newspapers in the last year. The majority of those stories, the responding reporters and editors stated, usually or always mentioned names of businesses. More than 73 percent of the editor respondents and more than 65 percent of the reporter respondents indicated their freedom to mention names. However, 45 percent of the responding leaders stated that newspapers seldom or never name businesses.

While a large percentage of all responding editors (87%) reported that advertisers had complained to them about some of their newspaper's consumer affairs stories, only 10 percent reported that they had stopped a consumer story from being printed. The reasons given for the stoppage were an irresponsible source, need for additional data and an up-coming trial. In addition, more than a majority of responding reporters (57%) had experienced pressures from advertisers although only one reporter stated that the pressure actually stopped a consumer story from being printed. That reporter explained that the "consumer beat

was dropped for four years because of my series on auto repair problems."

Most responding reporters and editors seemed to feel philosophical about the problems with advertisers. As an editor wrote, "There is always a businessman who feels anything other than his press releases are negative." Another said, "We get complaints about almost everything we write, there's nothing new about this." Other editors' comments included, "If identified, (they) always respond"; "they (advertisers) don't like them (consumer stories)"; and "in nearly every consumer-oriented story there is some negative reaction."

According to a number of reporters, advertisers also complained when they were not mentioned in a consumer story. As one reporter wrote, "Some advertisers who complain are miffed we didn't mention their business in survey." Another explained, "One store mentioned in a product story wanted more prominent reference. The retailer seemed confused about the difference between ads and news stories."

Responding reporters and editors indicated that they seemed to follow generally the same procedures for using news releases from government consumer agencies, volunteer consumer groups and businesses. However, news releases from governmental agencies may have a slightly higher usage rate. The highest percentage of responding editors (39%) indicated that they usually localized the governmental releases while both editors and reporters

stated that they usually verified and/or tossed the news releases from volunteer groups and businesses. According to consumer leader respondents, most of their news releases were usually used by the newspapers. In fact, one governmental leader stated that almost all of her agency's news releases were either printed verbatim or became wire stories. Only about 15 percent of the responding consumer leaders indicated that newspapers usually tossed their news releases.

Finally, while more than 80 percent of the responding editors and reporters stated that they thought consumer affairs reporting was and should be important to their readers, 50 percent of the consumer leader respondents felt that newspapers did not consider consumer news that important. Interestingly, both editor and reporter respondents, by as much as 10 percent, reported that consumer news should be even more important to their readers than they thought it actually was.

Consumer Reporters' Education and Training in Consumer Affairs

More than 55 percent of the responding reporters had not taken any formal consumer affairs courses while about 37 percent of them who had taken at least one consumer course reported that it was either worthwhile or very worthwhile. The majority of reporter respondents, however, indicated that they were at least partially prepared professionally to cover consumer affairs stories. Of the respondents, 12 percent reported that they felt they

were prepared quite well; 53 percent partially prepared; 24 percent not very well prepared; and 12 percent not prepared at all.

Responding editors and consumer leaders seemed to recognize the desirability of having a consumer reporter who had specialized to some degree in consumer affairs and journalism. More than 61 percent of the editor respondents and 55 percent of the responding consumer leaders would recommend a dual background in both consumer affairs and journalism to prospective consumer reporters. One consumer leader, however, stressed the journalism background stating "(consumer affairs is) an OK addition, but certainly not necessary." Another consumer leader instead suggested training and courses in government, political science, law and economics.

As expected, respondents of the three groups placed different degrees of importance on a list of seven academic courses. The list included courses in (1) economics, (2) business, (3) political science, (4) consumer affairs, (5) family living, (6) law, and (7) newswriting. Responding editors selected economics, newswriting and business in that order as their top three courses while responding reporters selected newswriting, business and consumer affairs respectively as the courses they felt were most important to the prospective consumer reporter. On the other hand, responding leaders selected consumer affairs, economics and law

as their top courses. All of the groups, however, agreed with the selection of the least important class--family living.

When it actually came down to hiring a reporter to cover consumer affairs, however, 29 percent of the responding editors reported that they would first consider a prospective reporter's previous news experience rather than his or her interest in consumer affairs (19%). Two of the editor respondents changed the "interest in consumer affairs" entry before checking it; one deleted the word "affairs" while the other added the word "knowledgeable" before the word, "consumer." Interestingly, this finding differs with the responding editor's previously indicated preference for a dual background of journalism and consumer affairs for prospective consumer reporters.

In sharp contrast, responding consumer leaders emphasized interest in consumer affairs as the most important criterion for hiring a consumer reporter. Fifty percent of them marked that entry while 25 percent selected the "job-related training in consumer affairs" entry and 15 percent chose the "educational training in consumer affairs" one. Consequently, 90 percent of the consumer leader respondents indicated that they felt consumer affairs knowledge and experience were essential for the consumer reporter.

Respondents in the three groups again disagreed with the importance of various resources available to the training of a consumer affairs reporter. The list of resources

included consumer affairs seminars, consumer affairs associations, college journalism courses, field reporting, college consumer affairs courses, conventions, editors, colleagues, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, top consumer leadership and lay consumers. The top three selections in order of importance of the responding editors were field reporting, consumer affairs seminars and college journalism courses. The editors also selected radio, television and conventions as the least important resources available to the consumer reporter. The responding reporters chose field reporting, newspapers and magazines as their top three selections in order of importance. Interestingly, television, top consumer leadership and conventions were chosen as their least important resources. Consumer leader respondents selected consumer affairs seminars, top consumer leadership and lay consumers as their top choices and chose conventions, editors, colleagues and radio (the last three were tied) as the three least important resources for consumer reporters.

Attitudes and Opinions Toward Consumer Reporting

The attitudes and opinions toward consumer reporting were measured through a set of attitude and opinion statements. These statements were drawn from a set of valid and reliable attitudinal and opinion items offered by such authorities as Francis Pollock, David Bollier and the

Marketing Sciences Institute which conducted the "Consumerism at the Crossroads" public opinion survey for Sentry Insurance.

The findings indicate that while a large majority of respondents in all three groups agreed with the statement, "Many newspapers do an inadequate job of consumer reporting," surprisingly, the newspaper-associated groups were noticeably more critical of their performance than the consumer leaders. For, more than 80 percent of the responding reporters agreed that many newspapers did an inadequate job of consumer reporting; of this percentage, about 18 percent strongly agreed with the statement. As one reporter explained, "Many newspapers do not designate some one to do consumer reporting. Consequently, it is done haphazardly by people who neither have the time nor experience to do it." In addition, about 76 percent of the editor respondents also admitted an inadequacy in consumer news reporting in newspapers.

Of the responding consumer leaders, about 63 percent agreed with the aforesaid statement. Two consumer leader respondents explained their agreement by stating that the newspapers reported "mostly on new products" and that "they avoid discussing the political-economic patterns of consumer abuse."

More than 75 percent of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Aggressive reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper because it shows that a paper recognizes its obligation to expose unseemly business practices,

despite the possibility of economic reprisal by advertisers." About 85 percent of the consumer leader respondents agreed that aggressive consumer reporting was important; of this percentage, 54 percent strongly agreed. Of the responding editors, about 79 percent agreed with the statement about aggressive reporting although two editors qualified their agreement. One editor wrote, "if not overdone," while another one stated, "Good consumer reporting is not always negative. Positive recognition of good things also benefits consumers." About 75 percent of the responding reporters indicated they also agreed with the statement.

The majority of respondents in all three groups agreed with the statement, "Many ethical papers run articles that offend major advertisers yet remain as profitable as papers that purposely favor advertisers in their news columns." Less than 10 percent of any group disagreed with it. More than 69 percent of the responding consumer leaders indicated their agreement; of this percentage, 32 percent reported that they strongly agreed. Two consumer leader respondents, however, disagreed with the first word of the sentence, "many." As one leader stated, "I don't know about the 'many' but the rest is true."

More than 69 percent of the responding editors also agreed with the aforesaid statement while 17 percent strongly agreed and 7 percent disagreed. Almost 21 percent of the editor respondents did not seem to have any opinion. Of the responding reporters, 53 percent agreed with the

statement while 41 percent of that total strongly agreed and 6 percent disagreed. More than 41 percent of the reporter respondents, however, indicated that they did not have an opinion about the statement.

Responding editors and reporters totally disagreed with the statement, "You cannot get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks and department stores, while only about 10 percent of the consumer leader respondents indicated their agreement. More than 93 percent of the editor respondents disagreed with 45 percent of that total in strong disagreement. One editor, who strongly disagreed, however, qualified his opinion by stating, "This depends on the newspaper. I answered for mine." All of the responding reporters disagreed with the aforesaid statement while 29 percent of them strongly disagreed with it. Although about 63 percent of the consumer leader respondents indicated their disagreement, 26 percent did not seem to express any opinion. As one leader, who checked the neutral response category, explained, "Sometimes (the statement) is true, especially for chain-owned media."

More than 70 percent of the consumer leader respondents agreed that the "American people are crying out for consumer news--reported without fear or favor." Surprisingly, 16 percent also disagreed with the statement. This fact might be explained, however, by one leader who explained that American consumers should be demanding more and better

consumer news but they do not. Almost two-thirds of the responding editors (65%) and almost three-fourths of the reporters (73%) also agreed that the American public wanted more consumer news. However, some editors commented in a similar fashion as the aforesaid consumer leader. One wrote, "They should be," while another stated, "The public cries [sic] out for little, if any, categories of news." Another editor, agreeing with the statement, commented, "Our surveys, however, indicate some lack of interest." Interestingly, the only editor, who strongly disagreed with the statement, wrote, "Some media making this seem true."

Responding editors reported the highest level of disagreement with the statement, "There's a business movement about to harness the power of the press on consumer issues," with more than 79 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. In fact, one editor expressed an opposite opinion with this warning, ". . . we must not develop a consumer cause mentality." A little more than 40 percent of both reporter and consumer leader respondents also indicated that they disagreed with the statement. A substantial number of both groups, (35 percent of the responding reporters and 21 percent of the responding consumer leaders), however, indicated that they did not have an opinion about the aforesaid statement. Almost one-third of the responding leaders reported that they believed such a business movement was in existence. One leader, who strongly agreed with the statement, wrote that the business movement was primarily involved in "buying newspapers."

Surprisingly, more responding editors agreed with the statement, "Many consumer writers chafe at obstacles such as the tradition of not 'naming names' (businesses)," than reporters or consumer leaders but less than 15 percent of any group disagreed with it. More than 68 percent of the editor respondents indicated that they felt consumer writers were often frustrated by obstacles while 60 percent of the responding leaders and 47 percent of the reporter respondents also agreed. Many responding reporters (41%), however, did not express an opinion about the statement. The consumer leader group had the most respondents (15%) disagreeing. This disagreement may be partially explained by one leader's comment, "Many avoid names but I seldom see the chafing."

As expected, most responding consumer leaders (80%) agreed that "There is little investigative consumer reporting. Most consumer stories are either wire stories or news releases," while only about 39 percent of the editor respondents reported their agreement. Fifty-eight percent of the responding reporters also agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 46 percent of the editor respondents and 29 percent of the responding reporters disagreed with the statement. One editor, however, divided his response by stating he disagreed with the statement when it was applied to large papers and agreed with it when it referred to small-town papers. Another editor, after crossing out the

last sentence, agreed that there was little investigative consumer reporting in newspapers.

The majority of respondents in all three groups agreed with the statement, "I don't see any reason why any smart, curious individual can't be an effective consumer affairs reporter," with more editors (68%) agreeing than reporters (50%) and consumer leaders (45%). About 40 percent of the responding consumer leaders disagreed with the aforesaid statement, while 29 percent of the editors and 25 percent of the reporters reported their disagreement. About one-quarter of the responding reporters did not express an opinion about the statement and one reporter stated, "dumb question." Two editors also wrote comments in the margin; one stated that one "must be a reporter first" and the other wrote that consumer reporters must "not be do-gooders--biased against business."

Responding editors and reporters seemed to be more satisfied with the performance of consumer reporters than consumer leader respondents who disagreed most with the statement, "The caliber of consumer reporters has generally improved over the last five years." More than 68 percent of the editor respondents agreed with the statement while only 4 percent disagreed. One of the few editors who disagreed wrote, "some are mistaken crusaders."

About 53 percent of the responding reporters also agreed with the aforesaid statement. Fifty percent of the consumer leader respondents agreed with 15 percent disagreeing

that the caliber of consumer reporters had improved. One leader who disagreed stated, "but their numbers have improved."

More than 70 percent of the respondents in all three groups agreed that "Most reporters for the news media try to report consumer affairs as accurately as possible," with the editor group having the highest percentage (82%) and the consumer leader group having the lowest one (70%). The reporter group had 71 percent of its respondents agreeing with the aforesaid statement with no reporter in disagreement. Fifteen percent of the responding consumer leaders disagreed that most reporters tried to accurately report consumer affairs while 11 percent of the responding editors agreed with the consumer leaders. One editor commented that "Many such reporters tend to go overboard in seeking out and reporting what they perceive to be the truth--and in the course of events run roughshod without first looking at both sides of the coin."

Surprisingly, 55 percent of the responding consumer leaders and 41 percent of the responding reporters agreed with the statement, "The good news about business is usually buried somewhere in the financial pages or not reported at all, while the bad news is often on front page headlines." About 25 percent of the editor respondents also agreed with one of the editors emphasizing his response with the words, "It should be." This editor's observation coincided with a consumer leader's rationale for agreeing with the statement.

He wrote, "I don't think this is wrong--except that I think good news about non-traditional businesses needs much more coverage."

Sixty-five percent of the respondents in all three groups disagreed with the statement, "Most reporters know the real news about business is to report the wrongdoings companies are involved in," with the responding editors in most disagreement at 78 percent. About 69 percent of the responding reporters also disagreed but 25 percent did not express an opinion. Of the consumer leader respondents, 65 percent disagreed while 20 percent agreed with the statement. One agreeing consumer leader, however, qualified her answer by stating that she was talking about "their (the reporters) perception, not mine." An editor also commented that "many young reporters do feel this way," while another warned that "The scariest part of consumer affairs reporting is that few grads entering the newspaper business are only interested in reporting conflict, no matter what the front. The idea of specializing in consumer conflict appalls me."

No respondents in any of the groups agreed with the statement, "On the whole, newspapers give too much attention to consumer affairs and consumer information." In fact, all of the responding consumer leaders disagreed; of that percentage, 50 percent strongly disagreed. About 89 percent of the responding editors and about 81 percent of the responding reporters also disagreed with the statement.

About 19 percent of the responding reporters, however, did not express an opinion.

Not surprisingly, more responding editors (79%) agreed with the statement, "In general, when most newspapers report on consumer affairs they are reasonably unbiased," than reporters (68%) and consumer leaders (40%). Consumer leader respondents also reported the highest percentage (30%) of disagreement in the three groups. One consumer leader's written rationale for her disagreement, however, was not expected. She wrote, "Sometimes consumer stories tend to have a consumer bias--although the story may still be fair." One editor also made an interesting comment in regard to this statement. He wrote, "satisfy readers, not reason."

Awareness, Information and Knowledge of Consumer Issues

The open-ended section of the three questionnaires was designed to assess awareness, information level and knowledge of consumer issues among the three groups. The findings did not yield useful data since the response rates for these items were relatively very low. This may be explained in terms of (1) the open-ended nature of the items which the respondents did not seem to be willing to fill out; (2) lack of information on the items; (3) lack of interest in the issue; (4) lack of familiarity of the issues that the aforesaid items incorporated; and (5) lack of real (against perceived) knowledge of the issues incorporated in the aforesaid items.

It is evident from the findings, then, that the following hypotheses as stated in Chapter III have been supported: H_1 , H_2 , H_5 , H_6 , H_{10} , H_{13} , H_{14} , H_{15} , H_{16} , H_{17} , H_{18} , H_{18} , and H_{20} . The findings also indicate that hypotheses H_{11} , H_{12} , and H_{21} were not supported by the data. In addition, the findings report a strong difference of opinion among the responding editors, reporters and consumer leaders in relation to hypotheses H_3 and H_4 . Consequently, a content analysis study is needed before the hypotheses can be accurately tested. Additional research is also needed to generate conclusions for the following hypotheses: H_7 , H_8 , H_9 , and H_{22} .

Of course, certain non-parametric statistical tests need to be conducted on all of the findings to determine the tenability as well as the non-tenability of all of the hypotheses.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND GENERALIZATIONS

The findings presented in Chapter IV indicate that the vast majority of respondents from all three groups surveyed in the study agreed that there exists a need for more and better consumer news reporting in Michigan's daily newspapers. As expected, however, the consumer leader respondents tended to be more critical of the current state of consumer reporting in Michigan than the responding editors and reporters.

The editor group, especially, seemed to feel that the caliber of consumer reporters and the quality of consumer news stories had improved in the last five years even though the numbers of consumer reporters had not. On the other hand, consumer leaders and, to a lesser extent, consumer reporters indicated that much of the consumer news printed in newspapers was either wire stories or news releases with little investigative consumer coverage. This finding may be partially explained by the fact that most consumer reporter respondents indicated that they were also responsible for covering a variety of other reporting assignments

including business, sports, photography and women or family living stories. Consequently, it seems that although most of the responding editors reported that they saw a need to improve consumer reporting in Michigan, they had not been able or willing to assign a full-time reporter to cover the consumer beat.

The majority of reporters also indicated that they had not been trained, either educationally or professionally, in the area of consumer affairs before they began covering consumer news for their newspaper. This finding is interesting when compared to the statement of the highest percentage of responding editors who reported that they would recommend a dual background in consumer affairs and journalism for prospective consumer affairs reporters. On closer examination, however, the lack of education and training of consumer affairs reporters is consistent with the largest percentage of responding editors' criteria for hiring a consumer reporter and their ranking of important courses and training experiences for consumer reporters; the criteria nor the ranking indicated much interest in consumer affairs. In sharp contrast, the responding leaders and reporters highly rated consumer affairs courses and training experiences as beneficial to the consumer reporter.

As expected, another point of contention between the responding editors and consumer leaders was in regard to the influence of advertisers and business on consumer news coverage. While most editors and reporters indicated

that they generally received complaints from advertisers and businesses about their treatment of consumer news, they reported that the pressure had not influenced their treatment of consumer news.

Most consumer leaders, however, indicated that they felt newspapers often succumbed to the power of the advertiser's dollar.

Interestingly, the respondents from the three groups agreed on the issue which perhaps will be the most important factor to the future of consumer reporting. As previously reported, not only did the respondents agree that most newspapers are doing an inadequate job of consumer reporting, they also agreed that consumer news is--and should be--important to their readers. Based on these findings, Michigan's daily newspapers may be on the threshold of closely examining their treatment and coverage of consumer affairs stories.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study offers some insights into the nature of consumer reporting in Michigan's daily newspapers as well as generates some sensitivity for the role of the consumer reporter. Furthermore, it is hoped that the study will provide the background and framework for additional research in the area of consumer news reporting.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EDITOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM - LINTON HALL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

CONSUMER AFFAIRS REPORTING SURVEY -- EDITORS

Please return to:
Linda Lawson
4610 Pleasant Grove
Lansing, MI 48910

To be filled out by the newspaper's editor.
Please complete and return as soon as possible.

Part One: Background Information

1. AGE: a. ☐ under 25 years
b. ☐ 25 to 35
c. ☐ 36 to 45
d. ☐ 46 to 55
e. ☐ 56 or older
2. EDUCATION: a. ☐ high school graduate
b. ☐ some college
c. ☐ college graduate
d. ☐ post-graduate work
e. ☐ other (please specify)
3. SEX: a. ☐ female
b. ☐ male
4. What is the daily circulation of your newspaper?
a. ☐ more than 100,000
b. ☐ 50,000 to 100,000
c. ☐ 25,000 to 49,999
d. ☐ 10,000 to 24,999
e. ☐ less than 10,000
5. How long have you been an editor at this newspaper?
a. ☐ less than one year
b. ☐ one to three years
c. ☐ four to six years
d. ☐ seven to ten years
e. ☐ more than 10 years
6. What criteria do you use in assigning consumer affairs stories to reporters?
a. ☐ regular consumer affairs reporter
b. ☐ expertise of reporter on particular subject of assignment
c. ☐ reporters' workloads
d. ☐ not responsible for assigning consumer affairs stories
e. ☐ other (please specify)
7. How many reporters on your newspaper cover consumer affairs stories?
a. ☐ one (regular consumer affairs reporter)
b. ☐ two
c. ☐ three
d. ☐ four or more
8. How long has your newspaper had a regular consumer affairs reporter?
a. ☐ newspaper doesn't have one
b. ☐ less than one year
c. ☐ one to three years
d. ☐ four to six years
e. ☐ seven to ten years
f. ☐ more than 10 years

9. Where are the consumer affairs stories usually placed in your newspaper?
- ☐ women/family living section
 - ☐ business section
 - ☐ news section
 - ☐ other (please specify)
10. Does your newspaper have an action-line type column where the public can ask for help with consumer problems? a. ☐ Yes b. ☐ No
 If yes, how long has it been in existence?
 how often does it appear?
 how many full-time staffers does it employ?
 how many inquiries does the column usually receive each week?
11. Does your newspaper name local businesses in reporting consumer complaints or problems?
- ☐ Yes, always
 - ☐ Yes, usually
 - ☐ No, not often
 - ☐ No, never
 - ☐ never report on such complaints/problems
12. What type of consumer affairs stories have you assigned to reporters since May 1, 1978?
- ☐ I don't assign consumer affairs stories
 - ☐ price surveys of local stores
 - ☐ state consumer legislation
 - ☐ localized news releases from federal or state consumer regulatory agencies
 - ☐ general consumer issues (please name)
 - ☐ other (please specify)
13. Have you ever stopped a consumer affairs story from being printed in your newspaper?
 If yes, please explain.
- ☐ Yes Explanation:
 - ☐ No
14. Has an advertiser ever complained to you or to your newspaper management about a consumer affairs story which was printed in your newspaper? If yes, please explain.
- ☐ Yes Explanation:
 - ☐ No
15. How does your newspaper usually handle news releases from government consumer agencies?
- ☐ run them verbatim
 - ☐ toss
 - ☐ verify them before printing
 - ☐ localize them
 - ☐ other (please specify)
16. How does your newspaper usually handle news releases from volunteer consumer agencies?
- ☐ run them verbatim
 - ☐ toss
 - ☐ verify them before printing
 - ☐ localize them
 - ☐ other (please specify)

17. How does your newspaper usually handle news releases from businesses?
- ☐ run them verbatim
 - ☐ toss
 - ☐ verify them before printing
 - ☐ localize them
 - ☐ other (please specify)
18. How important do you feel consumer affairs reporting is to your readers?
- ☐ very important
 - ☐ important
 - ☐ not that important
 - ☐ not important
 - ☐ no opinion
19. How important do you feel consumer affairs reporting should be to your readers?
- ☐ very important
 - ☐ important
 - ☐ not that important
 - ☐ not important
 - ☐ no opinion
20. Please rank the following eight consumer problems in order of significance to Michigan consumers with one being the most significant and eight being the least.
- | | |
|--|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> home repairs | e. <input type="checkbox"/> advertising |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> appliances | f. <input type="checkbox"/> mail order |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> credit | g. <input type="checkbox"/> housing/real estate |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> insurance | h. <input type="checkbox"/> automobiles |

Part Two: Education and Training of Consumer Reporters

1. What would you suggest a prospective consumer affairs reporter should specialize in?
- ☐ journalism
 - ☐ consumer affairs
 - ☐ both
 - ☐ neither
 - ☐ other (please specify)
2. If you were to hire a reporter to cover only consumer affairs stories, which of the following would be most important to your decision?
- ☐ educational training in consumer affairs
 - ☐ job-related training in consumer affairs
 - ☐ interest in consumer affairs
 - ☐ previous newspaper experience
 - ☐ other (please specify)
3. Please rank the importance of courses in the following disciplines to a consumer affairs reporter with one being the most important and eight being the least.
- | | |
|---|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> economics | e. <input type="checkbox"/> family living |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> business | f. <input type="checkbox"/> law |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> political science | g. <input type="checkbox"/> news writing |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> consumer affairs | h. <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) |

4. Please evaluate the following for their importance in the training of a consumer affairs reporter with 5 for excellent to 1 for no help; 0 for don't know.
- | | |
|--|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> consumer affairs seminars | h. <input type="checkbox"/> colleagues |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> consumer affairs associations | i. <input type="checkbox"/> newspapers |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> college journalism courses | j. <input type="checkbox"/> magazines |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> field reporting | k. <input type="checkbox"/> radio |
| e. <input type="checkbox"/> college consumer affairs courses | l. <input type="checkbox"/> television |
| f. <input type="checkbox"/> conventions | m. <input type="checkbox"/> top leadership of consumer agencies |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> editors | n. <input type="checkbox"/> lay consumers |

Part Three: Attitudes About Consumer Reporters/Reporting

The following section of the questionnaire asks your response to statements that have been made about consumer affairs reporting. Please respond by checking the appropriate answer.

1. "Many newspapers do an inadequate job of consumer reporting."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
2. "Aggressive reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper because it shows that a paper recognizes its obligation to expose unseemly business practices, despite the possibility of economic reprisal by advertisers."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
3. "Many ethical papers run articles that offend major advertisers yet remain as profitable as papers that purposely favor advertisers in their news columns."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
4. "You cannot get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks or department stores."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
5. "American people are crying out for consumer news -- reported without fear or favor."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly

6. "There's a business movement about to harness the power of the press on consumer issues."
a. ☐ disagree strongly
b. ☐ disagree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ agree
e. ☐ agree strongly
7. "Many consumer writers chafe at obstacles such as the tradition of not 'naming names' (businesses)."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly
8. "There is little investigative consumer reporting. Most consumer stories are either wire stories or news releases."
a. ☐ disagree strongly
b. ☐ disagree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ agree
e. ☐ agree strongly
9. "I don't see any reason why any smart, curious individual can't be an effective consumer affairs reporter."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly
10. "The caliber of consumer reporters has generally improved over the past five years."
a. ☐ disagree strongly
b. ☐ disagree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ agree
e. ☐ agree strongly
11. "Most reporters for the news media try to report consumer affairs as accurately as possible."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly
12. "The good news about business is usually buried somewhere in the financial pages or not reported at all, while the bad news is often on front page headlines."
a. ☐ disagree strongly
b. ☐ disagree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ agree
e. ☐ agree strongly

13. "Most reporters know the real news about business is to report the wrongdoings companies are involved in."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly
14. "On the whole, newspapers give too much attention to consumer affairs and consumer information."
a. ☐ disagree strongly
b. ☐ disagree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ agree
e. ☐ agree strongly
15. "In general, when most newspapers report on consumer affairs they are reasonably unbiased."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly

Part Four: Open-Ended Questions

1. How do you define consumer affairs issues?
2. What do you think has been the most important state consumer legislation passed in the last five years?
3. What do you think has been the most important federal consumer legislation passed in the last five years?
4. Are additional consumer protection laws needed in Michigan? Why or why not? If yes, in what areas?

OPTIONAL: What is your name?

What is your newspaper's name?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME! ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

APPENDIX B

CONSUMER REPORTER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM • LINTON HALL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

CONSUMER AFFAIRS REPORTING SURVEY -- REPORTERS

Please return to:
Linda Lawson
4610 Pleasant Grove
Lansing, MI 48910

To be filled out by the reporter who usually
covers consumer affairs stories. Please
complete and return as soon as possible.

Part One: Background Information

1. AGE: a. ☐ under 25 years
b. ☐ 25 to 35
c. ☐ 36 to 45
d. ☐ 46 to 55
e. ☐ 56 years or older
2. EDUCATION: a. ☐ high school graduate
b. ☐ some college
c. ☐ college graduate
d. ☐ post-graduate work
e. ☐ other (please specify)
3. SEX: a. ☐ female
b. ☐ male
4. What is the daily circulation of your newspaper?
a. ☐ more than 100,000
b. ☐ 50,000 to 100,000
c. ☐ 25,000 to 49,999
d. ☐ 10,000 to 24,999
e. ☐ less than 10,000
5. How long have you been a reporter at this newspaper?
a. ☐ less than one year
b. ☐ one to three years
c. ☐ four to six years
d. ☐ seven to ten years
e. ☐ more than 10 years
6. How did you become the consumer affairs reporter for your newspaper?
a. ☐ specifically hired to cover consumer affairs
b. ☐ experience as a consumer affairs reporter at another newspaper
c. ☐ editor's discretion
d. ☐ interest in consumer affairs
e. ☐ no other reporter wanted to cover consumer affairs
f. ☐ other (please specify)
7. Do you cover only consumer affairs stories?
a. ☐ Yes
b. ☐ No, also cover women or family living stories
c. ☐ No, also cover business stories
d. ☐ No, also take general assignments
e. ☐ No, also cover (please specify)
8. How long have you been covering consumer affairs stories at this newspaper?
a. ☐ less than one year
b. ☐ one to three years
c. ☐ four to six years
d. ☐ seven to ten years
e. ☐ more than 10 years

9. Where are the consumer affairs stories usually placed in your newspaper?
- ☐ women/family living section
 - ☐ business section
 - ☐ news section
 - ☐ other (please specify)
10. How much time do you generally spend on an action-line type column where the public can ask for help with consumer problems?
- ☐ newspaper doesn't have column
 - ☐ most of time
 - ☐ one/half or more of time
 - ☐ less than one/half of time
 - ☐ newspaper has column but I don't work on it
11. Does your newspaper name local businesses in reporting consumer complaints or problems?
- ☐ Yes, always
 - ☐ Yes, usually
 - ☐ No, not often
 - ☐ No, never
 - ☐ never report such complaints/problems
12. What type of consumer affairs stories have you reported on since May 1, 1978?
- ☐ price surveys on local stores
 - ☐ localized news releases from federal or state consumer regulatory agencies
 - ☐ state consumer legislation
 - ☐ general consumer issues (please name)
 - ☐ none or can't remember
 - ☐ other (please specify)
13. Has your newspaper management stopped one of your consumer affairs stories from being printed because of possible advertising ramifications? If yes, please explain.
- ☐ Yes
Explanation:
 - ☐ No
14. Has an advertiser ever complained to you about a consumer affairs story which you wrote? If yes, please explain.
- ☐ Yes
Explanation:
 - ☐ No
15. How do you usually handle news releases from government consumer agencies?
- ☐ run them verbatim
 - ☐ toss
 - ☐ verify them before printing
 - ☐ localize them
 - ☐ other (please specify)
16. How do you usually handle news releases from volunteer consumer agencies?
- ☐ run them verbatim
 - ☐ toss
 - ☐ verify them before printing
 - ☐ localize them
 - ☐ other (please specify)

17. How do you usually handle news releases from businesses?
- ☐ run them verbatim
 - ☐ toss
 - ☐ verify them before printing
 - ☐ localize them
 - ☐ other (please specify)
18. How important do you feel consumer affairs reporting is to your readers?
- ☐ very important
 - ☐ important
 - ☐ not that important
 - ☐ not important
 - ☐ no opinion
19. How important do you feel consumer affairs reporting should be to your readers?
- ☐ very important
 - ☐ important
 - ☐ not that important
 - ☐ not important
 - ☐ no opinion
20. Please rank the following eight consumer problems in order of significance to Michigan consumers with one being the most significant and eight being the least.
- | | |
|--|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> home repairs | e. <input type="checkbox"/> advertising |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> appliances | f. <input type="checkbox"/> mail order |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> credit | g. <input type="checkbox"/> housing/real estate |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> insurance | h. <input type="checkbox"/> automobiles |

Part Two: Education and Training of Consumer Reporters

1. Do you feel your formal education has prepared you to cover consumer affairs stories?
- ☐ Yes, quite well
 - ☐ Yes, partially
 - ☐ No, not very well
 - ☐ No, not at all
2. Did you find consumer affairs courses worthwhile?
- ☐ Yes, very worthwhile
 - ☐ Yes, somewhat worthwhile
 - ☐ No, not very worthwhile
 - ☐ No, worthless
 - ☐ didn't take any consumer affairs courses
3. Please rank the importance of courses in the following disciplines to a consumer affairs reporter with one being the most important and eight being the least.
- | | |
|---|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> economics | e. <input type="checkbox"/> family living |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> business | f. <input type="checkbox"/> law |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> political science | g. <input type="checkbox"/> news writing |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> consumer affairs | h. <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) |

4. Please evaluate the following for their importance in the training of a consumer affairs reporter with 5 for excellent to 1 for no help; 0 for don't know.
- | | |
|--|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> consumer affairs seminars | h. <input type="checkbox"/> colleagues |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> consumer affairs associations | i. <input type="checkbox"/> newspapers |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> college journalism courses | j. <input type="checkbox"/> magazines |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> field reporting | k. <input type="checkbox"/> radio |
| e. <input type="checkbox"/> college consumer affairs courses | l. <input type="checkbox"/> television |
| f. <input type="checkbox"/> conventions | m. <input type="checkbox"/> top leadership of consumer agencies |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> editors | n. <input type="checkbox"/> lay consumers |

Part Three: Attitudes About Consumer Reporters/Reporting

The following section of the questionnaire asks your response to statements that have been made about consumer affairs reporting. Please respond by checking the appropriate answer.

1. "Many newspapers do an inadequate job of consumer reporting."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
2. "Aggressive reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper because it shows that a paper recognizes its obligation to expose unseemly business practices, despite the possibility of economic reprisal by advertisers."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
3. "Many ethical papers run articles that offend major advertisers yet remain as profitable as papers that purposely favor advertisers in their news columns."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
4. "You cannot get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks or department stores."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
5. "American people are crying out for consumer news -- reported without fear or favor."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly

6. "There's a business movement about to harness the power of the press on consumer issues."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
7. "Many consumer writers chafe at obstacles such as the tradition of not 'naming names' (businesses)."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
8. "There is little investigative consumer reporting. Most consumer stories are either wire stories or news releases."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
9. "I don't see any reason why any smart, curious individual can't be an effective consumer affairs reporter."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
10. "The caliber of consumer reporters has generally improved over the past five years."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
11. "Most reporters for the news media try to report consumer affairs as accurately as possible"
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
12. "The good news about business is usually buried somewhere in the financial pages or not reported at all, while the bad news is often on front page headlines."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly

13. "Most reporters know the real news about business is to report the wrongdoings companies are involved in."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly
14. "On the whole, newspapers give too much attention to consumer affairs and consumer information."
a. ☐ disagree strongly
b. ☐ disagree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ agree
e. ☐ agree strongly
15. "In general, when most newspapers report on consumer affairs they are reasonably unbiased."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly

Part Four: Open-Ended Questions.

1. How do you define consumer affairs issues?
2. What do you think has been the most important state consumer legislation passed in the last five years?
3. What do you think has been the most important federal consumer legislation passed in the last five years?
4. Are additional consumer protection laws needed in Michigan? Why or why not? If yes, in what areas?

OPTIONAL: What is your name?

What is your newspaper's name?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME! ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

APPENDIX C

CONSUMER LEADER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

CONSUMER AFFAIRS REPORTING SURVEY -- CONSUMER LEADERS

Please return to:
Linda Lawson
4610 Pleasant Grove
Lansing, MI 48910
(self-addressed, stamped
envelope is attached)

To be filled out by the director of the
consumer affairs agency or by the chair-
person of the legislative consumer
committee. Please complete and return
as soon as possible. Deadline for replies
is August 4, 1978.

Part One: Background Information

1. AGE: a. ☐ under 25 years
b. ☐ 25 to 35
c. ☐ 36 to 45
d. ☐ 46 to 55
e. ☐ 56 years or older
2. EDUCATION: a. ☐ high school graduate
b. ☐ some college
c. ☐ college graduate
d. ☐ post-graduate work
e. ☐ other (please specify)
3. SEX: a. ☐ female
b. ☐ male
4. Which category of consumer affairs best describes your agency?
a. ☐ business consumer affairs
b. ☐ volunteer consumer affairs
c. ☐ government consumer affairs
5. How long have you had a leadership role in consumer affairs in Michigan?
a. ☐ less than one year
b. ☐ one to three years
c. ☐ four to six years
d. ☐ seven to ten years
e. ☐ more than 10 years
6. What criteria do you think newspapers usually use in assigning consumer affairs stories to reporters?
a. ☐ regular consumer affairs reporter
b. ☐ expertise of reporter on particular subject of assignment
c. ☐ reporters' workloads
d. ☐ reporter's interest in consumer affairs
e. ☐ other (please specify)
f. ☐ don't know
7. How many daily newspapers in Michigan do you think have regular consumer affairs reporters?
a. ☐ less than one per cent
b. ☐ less than 25 per cent
c. ☐ around 50 per cent
d. ☐ around 75 per cent
e. ☐ around 100 per cent
8. Are you contacted by reporters for daily newspapers?
a. ☐ Yes, regularly
b. ☐ Yes, sometimes
c. ☐ Yes, but seldom
d. ☐ No, never

9. From your observations, where are consumer affairs stories usually placed in a daily newspaper?
- ☐ women/family living section
 - ☐ business section
 - ☐ news section
 - ☐ other (please specify)
10. Do you think this (answer to question 9) is an appropriate place for consumer stories?
- ☐ yes, always
 - ☐ yes, usually
 - ☐ no, not often
 - ☐ no, never
 - ☐ no opinion
11. Do you feel action-line type columns where the public can ask a daily newspaper for help with consumer problems are valuable to consumers?
- ☐ yes, very valuable
 - ☐ yes, somewhat valuable
 - ☐ no, not very valuable
 - ☐ no, not valuable at all
 - ☐ no opinion
12. From your observations, do daily newspapers in Michigan name local businesses in reporting consumer complaints and problems?
- ☐ yes, always
 - ☐ yes, usually
 - ☐ no, not often
 - ☐ no, never
 - ☐ I haven't noticed
13. How do daily newspapers handle your agency's news releases?
- ☐ usually run them verbatim
 - ☐ usually toss them
 - ☐ usually call to verify facts before printing
 - ☐ usually localize them
 - ☐ agency doesn't send news releases to daily newspapers
 - ☐ other (please specify)
14. How important do you feel consumer affairs reporting is to most daily newspapers?
- ☐ very important
 - ☐ important
 - ☐ not that important
 - ☐ no opinion
15. Please rank the following eight consumer problems in order of significance to Michigan consumers with one being the most significant and eight being the least.
- | | |
|--|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> home repairs | e. <input type="checkbox"/> advertising |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> appliances | f. <input type="checkbox"/> mail order |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> credit | g. <input type="checkbox"/> housing/real estate |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> insurance | h. <input type="checkbox"/> automobiles |

Part Two: Education and Training of Consumer Reporters

1. What would you suggest a prospective consumer affairs reporter should specialize in?
 - a. ☐ journalism
 - b. ☐ consumer affairs
 - c. ☐ both
 - d. ☐ neither
 - e. ☐ other (please specify)
2. If a newspaper were to hire a reporter to cover only consumer affairs stories, which of the following do you think would be most important to its decision?
 - a. ☐ educational training in consumer affairs
 - b. ☐ job-related training in consumer affairs
 - c. ☐ interest in consumer affairs
 - d. ☐ previous newspaper experience
 - e. ☐ other (please specify)
3. Please rank the importance of courses in the following disciplines to a consumer affairs reporter with one being the most important and eight being the least.
 - a. ☐ economics
 - b. ☐ business
 - c. ☐ political science
 - d. ☐ consumer affairs
 - e. ☐ family living
 - f. ☐ law
 - g. ☐ news writing
 - h. ☐ other (please specify)
4. Please evaluate the following for their importance in the training of a consumer affairs reporter from 5 for excellent to 1 for no help; 0 for don't know.
 - a. ☐ consumer affairs seminars
 - b. ☐ consumer affairs associations
 - c. ☐ college journalism courses
 - d. ☐ field reporting
 - e. ☐ college consumer affairs courses
 - f. ☐ conventions
 - g. ☐ editors
 - h. ☐ colleagues
 - i. ☐ newspapers
 - j. ☐ magazines
 - k. ☐ radio
 - l. ☐ television
 - m. ☐ top leadership of consumer agencies
 - n. ☐ lay consumers

Part Three: Attitudes About Consumer Reporting/Reporters

The following section of the questionnaire asks your response to statements that have been made about consumer affairs reporting and consumer affairs reporters. Please respond by checking the appropriate answer.

1. "Many newspapers do an adequate job of consumer reporting."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
2. "Aggressive reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper because it shows that a paper recognizes its obligation to expose unseemly business practices, despite the possibility of economic reprisal by advertisers."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
3. "Many ethical papers run articles that offend major advertisers yet remain as profitable as papers that purposely favor advertisers in their news columns."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
4. "You cannot get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks and department stores."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
5. "American people are crying out for consumer news -- reported without fear or favor."
 - a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
6. "There's a business movement about to harness the power of the press on consumer issues."
 - a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly

7. "Many consumer writers chafe at obstacles such as the tradition of not 'naming names' (businesses)."
- a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
8. "There is little investigative consumer reporting. Most consumer stories are either wire stories or news releases."
- a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
9. "I don't see any reason why any smart, curious individual can't be an effective consumer affairs reporter."
- a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
10. "The caliber of consumer affairs reporters has generally improved over the past five years."
- a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly
11. "Most reporters for the news media try to report business and consumer affairs as accurately as possible."
- a. ☐ disagree strongly
 - b. ☐ disagree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ agree
 - e. ☐ agree strongly
12. "The good news about business is usually buried somewhere in the financial pages or not reported at all, while the bad news is often on front page headlines."
- a. ☐ agree strongly
 - b. ☐ agree
 - c. ☐ neutral
 - d. ☐ disagree
 - e. ☐ disagree strongly

13. "Most reporters know the real news about business is to report the wrongdoings companies are involved in."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly
14. "On the whole, newspapers give too much attention to consumer affairs and consumer information."
a. ☐ disagree strongly
b. ☐ disagree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ agree
e. ☐ agree strongly
15. "In general, when most newspapers report on consumer affairs they are reasonably unbiased."
a. ☐ agree strongly
b. ☐ agree
c. ☐ neutral
d. ☐ disagree
e. ☐ disagree strongly

Part Four: Open-Ended Questions

1. How do you define consumer affairs issues?
2. What do you think has been the most important state consumer legislation passed in the last five years?
3. What do you think has been the most important federal consumer legislation passed in the last five years?
4. Are additional consumer protection laws needed in Michigan? Why or why not? If yes, in what areas?

OPTIONAL: What is your name?

What is the name of your organization?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME! ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER FOR QUESTIONNAIRE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM • LINTON HALL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

January 8, 1979

Dear

Sometime ago I sent you a questionnaire on consumer reporting in Michigan. Your response is important to the completion of my research.

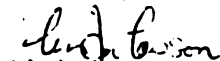
This is the first comprehensive study on consumer reporters in the state. Therefore, your input on this relatively new field is vital.

Enclosed is another copy of the questionnaire in case you misplaced the original one. Would you please take a few moments now to complete and return the questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided for your convenience? Even though all the questions may not apply to you, please fill out the items which are applicable.

Of course, your response will be completely confidential. If you have any questions or would like to see the results of this study, please let me know.

Thank you!

Sincerely,



Linda Lawson
4610 Pleasant Grove
Lansing, MI 48910

P.S. If you have already returned the questionnaire, please accept my thanks.

Enclosures

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR QUESTIONNAIRE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM • LINTON HALL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

January 15, 1979

Dear

Last week I sent you a questionnaire on consumer affairs reporting in Michigan daily newspapers. Because this is the first comprehensive study of consumer affairs reporting in the state, it's vital that I receive your response for the validity of my research.

If you haven't yet mailed back the questionnaire, please do so today in the self-addressed, stamped envelope I provided with the survey. In case you don't have the time to complete the entire survey, please feel free to respond to only the questions which you can answer quickly.

Of course, your response will be strictly confidential. If you are interested in the results of this survey, please let me know.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Linda Lawson
4610 Pleasant Grove
Lansing, MI 48910

P.S. If you have already mailed the questionnaire, please accept my thanks!

APPENDIX F

EDITORS

Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

APPENDIX F

EDITORS

Table F1.--Age of the Editors.

Age	N	Percentage
Under 25	2	7.40
25-35	6	19.35
36-45	7	22.58
46-55	9	29.03
56 or older	7	22.58
Total	31	100.94

Unused variables: 2

Table F2.--Education of Editors.

Education	N	Percentage
High school graduate	0	0.00
Some college	9	29.03
College graduate	17	54.83
Post graduate work	4	12.90
Other	1	3.22
Total	31	99.98

Unused variables: 2

Table F3.--Sex of Editors.

Sex	N	Percentage
Female	2	7.40
Male	24	88.88
Other	1	3.70
Total	27	99.98
Unused variables: 6		

Table F4.--Circulation of Newspaper.

Circulation	N	Percentage
More than 100,000	4	12.12
50,000 to 100,000	4	12.12
25,000 to 49,999	9	27.27
10,000 to 24,999	11	33.33
Less than 10,000	5	15.15
Total	33	99.99

Table F5.--Length as Editor.

Years	N	Percentage
Less than one year	5	16.12
1-3 years	10	32.25
4-6 years	4	12.90
7-10 years	4	12.90
More than 10 years	8	25.80
Total	31	99.97
Unused variables: 2		

Table F6.--Criteria for Assigning Consumer Stories.

Criteria	Yes	No	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Regular consumer reporter	4 (13.33%)	26 (86.66%)	30	99.99%	3
Expertise of reporter	17 (54.83%)	14 (45.16%)	31	99.99%	2
Reporter's workload	15 (50.00%)	15 (50.00%)	30	100%	3
Not responsible for assigning stories	4 (12.90%)	27 (87.09%)	31	99.99%	2
Other (own judgment)	1 (100%)	0 (0.00%)	1	100%	32

Table F7.--Consumer Reporters on Newspapers.

Reporters	N	Percentage
One	3	10.71
Two	8	28.57
Three	6	21.42
Four or more	9	32.14
Other	2	7.14
Total	29	99.98

Unused variables: 5

Table F8.--Length of Time Newspapers Had Consumer Reporters.

Years	N	Percentage
Newspaper doesn't have one	20	64.51
Less than one year	0	0.00
One to three years	6	19.35
Four to six years	3	9.67
Seven to ten years	1	3.22
More than ten years	0	0.00
Other	1	3.22
Total	31	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table F9.--Placement of Consumer Affairs Stories.

Placement	N	Percentage
Women/Family Living section	5	16.66
Business section	3	10.00
News section	5	16.66
Wherever appropriate	2	6.66
Depends on subject and importance	2	6.66
Combination of above	13	43.33
Total	30	99.97

Unused variables: 3

Table F10.--Presence of Action Line Type Column.

Column	N	Percentage
Yes	13	41.93
No	18	58.06
Total	31	99.99

Unused variables: 2

Table F11.--Length of Column's Existence.

Length	N	Percentage
Less than one year	1	3.33
One to three years	2	6.66
Four to five years	2	6.66
Six to seven years	6	20.00
Eight to ten years	1	3.33
No column	18	60.00
Total	30	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table F12.--Frequency of Column.

Frequency	N	Percentage
Daily	3	10.71
Weekly	2	7.14
3 times a week	3	10.71
6 times a week	2	7.14
Frequently	1	3.57
No column	17	60.71
Total	28	99.98

Unused variables: 5

Table F13.--Number of Staff on Column.

Number	N	Percentage
Part-time	3	10.71
One	4	14.28
Two to five	3	10.71
Five to seven	0	0.00
Eight to ten	1	3.57
No column	17	60.71
Total	28	99.98

Unused variables: 5

Table F14.--Number of Complaints Received by Column Per Week.

Number	N	Percentage
Less than ten	1	3.70
10 to 25	3	11.11
26 to 50	1	3.70
51 to 100	1	3.70
101 to 200	3	11.11
More than 200 to 11,000	1	3.70
No column	17	62.96
Total	27	99.98

Unused variables: 6

Table F15.--Newspaper's Policy for Naming Businesses.

Policy	N	Percentage
Yes, always	10	33.33
Yes, usually	12	40.00
No, not often	5	16.66
No, never	1	3.33
Never report on such complaints	1	3.33
Depends on story	1	3.33
Total	30	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table F16.--Types of Consumer Stories Assigned.

Type	N	Percentage
I don't assign consumer stories	5	16.12
Price surveys of local stores	0	0.00
State consumer legislation	1	3.22
Localized news releases from federal, state regulatory agencies	0	0.00
General consumer issues	0	0.00
Investigation of local consumer ripoff	0	0.00
Mixture of above	25	80.64
Total	31	99.98

Unused variables: 2

Table F17.--Stoppage of Consumer Stories.

Policy	N	Percentage
Yes	3	10.00
No	27	90.00
Total	30	100.00

Unused variables: 3

Table F18.--Reasons for Stopping Consumer Stories.

Reasons	N	Percentage
Irresponsible source	1	3.33
Needed additional data	1	3.33
Might influence trial	1	3.33
No stories stopped	27	90.00
Total	30	99.99

Unused variables: 3

Table F19.--Complaints by Advertisers.

Complaints	N	Percentage
Yes	27	87.09
No	4	12.90
Total	31	99.99

Unused variables: 2

Table F20.--Reasons for Advertisers' Complaints.

Reasons	N	Percentage
General principle	1	4.34
Harmful to business	8	34.78
Happens regularly	2	8.69
Happens almost every time	4	17.39
Advertiser pulled ads	3	13.04
Advertiser threatened to pull ads but didn't	1	4.34
No complaints	4	17.39
Total	23	99.97

Unused variables: 10

Table F21.--Newspaper's Policy for Handling Government News Releases.

Policy	N	Percentage
Run them verbatim	2	6.45
Toss	5	16.12
Verify them before printing	6	19.35
Localize them	12	38.71
Use wire stories	1	3.22
Consider on merit	4	12.90
Do not "usually" do things	1	3.22
Total	31	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table F22.--Newspaper's Policy for Handling Volunteer Consumer Agencies News Releases.

Policy	N	Percentage
Run them verbatim	0	0.00
Toss	5	16.12
Verify them before printing	13	41.93
Localize them	9	29.03
Use wire stories	1	3.22
Do not "usually" do things	3	9.67
Total	31	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table F23.--Newspaper's Policy for Handling News Releases from Businesses.

Policy	N	Percentage
Run them verbatim	0	0.00
Toss	4	12.90
Verify them before printing	10	32.25
Localize them	8	25.80
Trim off puff/extensive editing/rewrite	5	16.12
Consider on merit	3	9.67
Do not "usually" do things	1	3.22
Total	31	99.96

Unused variables: 2

Table F24.--Importance of Consumer Stories to Readers.

Importance	N	Percentage
Very important	10	32.25
Important	18	58.06
Not that important	0	0.00
Not important	1	3.22
No opinion	0	0.00
Part of the mix	1	3.22
Depends on what you mean by consumer affairs stories	1	3.22
Total	31	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table F25.--Personal Opinion on Importance of Consumer Affairs Stories.

Personal Importance	N	Percentage
Very important	13	41.93
Important	15	48.38
Not that important	0	0.00
Not important	1	3.22
No opinion	0	0.00
Part of the mix	1	3.22
Depends on what you mean by consumer affairs stories	1	3.22
Total	31	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table F26.--Ranking of Consumer Problems.

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total N	Total %	Unused variable
Home repairs	1 (3.70%)	4 (14.81%)	8 (29.63%)	3 (11.11%)	1 (3.70%)	4 (14.81%)	4 (14.81%)	2 (7.40%)	27	99.97%	6
Appliances	0 (0.00%)	1 (3.70%)	3 (11.11%)	4 (14.81%)	4 (14.81%)	6 (22.22%)	4 (14.81%)	5 (18.51%)	27	99.97%	6
Credit	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.70%)	10 (37.03%)	3 (11.11%)	8 (29.63%)	2 (7.40%)	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.70%)	27	99.97%	6
Insurance	1 (3.70%)	6 (22.22%)	3 (11.11%)	6 (22.22%)	3 (11.11%)	4 (14.81%)	1 (3.70%)	3 (11.11%)	27	99.98%	6
Advertising	4 (14.81%)	2 (7.40%)	1 (3.70%)	2 (7.40%)	1 (3.70%)	4 (14.81%)	6 (22.22%)	7 (25.92%)	27	99.96%	6
Mail order	1 (3.84%)	3 (11.53%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (11.53%)	6 (23.07%)	11 (42.30%)	26	99.96%	7
Housing/real estate	8 (28.57%)	2 (7.14%)	3 (10.71%)	5 (17.85%)	5 (17.85%)	2 (7.40%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (10.71%)	28	100.23%	5
Automobiles	11 (39.28%)	8 (28.57%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (7.14%)	4 (14.28%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (7.15%)	1 (3.57%)	28	99.99%	5

Table F27.--Specialization of Prospective Consumer Affairs Reporters.

Specialization	N	Percentage
Journalism	4	12.90
Consumer affairs	3	9.67
Both	19	61.29
Neither	2	6.45
Other, i.e., liberal arts	2	6.45
Don't know	1	3.22
Total	31	99.98

Unused variables: 2

Table F28.--Importance of Training in Hiring Consumer Reporters.

Training	N	Percentage
Educational Training in Consumer Affairs	1	3.22
Job related training in Consumer Affairs	4	12.90
Interest in Consumer Affairs	6	19.35
Previous news experience	9	29.03
Objectivity	2	6.45
Interest in consumers	0	0.00
Mixture	8	25.80
Don't know	1	3.22
Total	31	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table F29.--Ranking of Important Courses.

Courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Economics	8 (27.58%)	7 (24.13%)	9 (31.03%)	1 (3.44%)	1 (3.44%)	3 (10.34%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	29	99.96%	4
Business	5 (17.24%)	8 (27.58%)	6 (20.69%)	6 (20.69%)	2 (6.84%)	1 (3.44%)	1 (3.44%)	0 (0.00%)	29	99.97%	4
Political Science	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (7.40%)	5 (18.51%)	3 (11.11%)	5 (18.51%)	10 (37.03%)	2 (7.40%)	27	99.96%	6
Consumer Affairs	3 (10.71%)	6 (21.42%)	4 (14.28%)	4 (14.28%)	3 (10.71%)	5 (17.85%)	3 (10.71%)	0 (0.00%)	28	99.96%	5
Family Living	0 (0.00%)	2 (8.00%)	1 (4.00%)	4 (16.00%)	6 (24.00%)	5 (20.00%)	7 (28.00%)	0 (0.00%)	25	100.00	8
Law	2 (6.89%)	1 (3.44%)	5 (17.24%)	5 (17.24%)	11 (37.93%)	4 (13.79%)	1 (3.44%)	0 (0.00%)	29	99.97%	4
Newswriting	12 (41.37%)	6 (20.79%)	2 (6.89%)	4 (13.79%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (10.34%)	2 (6.89%)	0 (0.00%)	29	99.97%	4
Other	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.28%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.28%)	5 (71.42%)	7	99.98	26

Table F30.--Evaluation of Training.

Training	Excellent 5	4	3	2	No Help 1	Don't Know	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Consumer Affairs Seminar	6 (25.00%)	10 (41.66%)	3 (12.50%)	3 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (8.33%)	24	99.99	9
Consumer Affairs Associations	1 (4.54%)	2 (9.09%)	8 (36.36%)	5 (22.72%)	2 (9.09%)	4 (18.18%)	22	99.98	11
College Journalism Courses	6 (26.08%)	5 (21.73%)	8 (34.78%)	2 (8.69%)	1 (4.34%)	1 (4.34%)	23	99.96	10
Field Reporting	12 (48.00%)	7 (28.00%)	3 (12.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (8.00%)	1 (4.00%)	25	100.00	8
College Consumer Affairs Courses	2 (9.52%)	4 (19.04%)	10 (47.61%)	2 (9.52%)	1 (4.76%)	2 (9.52%)	21	99.97	12
Conventions	2 (9.09%)	2 (9.09%)	6 (27.27%)	6 (27.27%)	4 (18.18%)	2 (9.09%)	22	99.99	11
Editors	4 (16.66%)	3 (12.50%)	9 (37.50%)	7 (29.16%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (4.16%)	24	99.98	9
Colleagues	1 (4.76%)	2 (9.52%)	7 (33.33%)	7 (33.33%)	1 (4.76%)	2 (9.52%)	20	95.22	12
Newspapers	4 (18.18%)	3 (13.63%)	7 (31.81%)	6 (27.27%)	1 (4.54%)	1 (4.54%)	22	99.97	11

Table F30.--Continued.

Training	Excellent 5	4	3	2	No Help 1	Don't Know	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Magazines	3 (15.00%)	3 (15.00%)	3 (15.00%)	8 (40.00%)	1 (5.00%)	2 (10.00%)	20	100.00	13
Radio	2 (10.00%)	1 (5.00%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (25.00%)	10 (50.00%)	2 (10.00%)	20	100.00	13
Television	3 (15.00%)	1 (5.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (15.00%)	10 (50.00%)	3 (15.00%)	20	100.00	13
Top consumer leadership	2 (10.00%)	1 (5.00%)	7 (35.00%)	5 (25.00%)	1 (5.00%)	4 (20.00%)	20	100.00	13
Lay consumers	2 (9.52%)	4 (19.04%)	8 (38.09%)	5 (23.81%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (9.52%)	21	99.98	12

Table F31.--"Many newspapers do an inadequate job of consumer reporting."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	1	3.44
Agree	21	72.41
Neutral	4	13.79
Disagree	3	10.34
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	29	99.98

Unused variables: 4

Table F32.--"Aggressive reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper because it shows that a paper recognizes its obligation to expose unseemly business practices, despite the possibility of economic reprisal by advertisers."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	3	10.34
Agree	20	68.96
Neutral	3	10.34
Disagree	3	10.34
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	29	99.98

Unused variables: 4

Table F33.--"Many ethical papers run articles that offend major advertisers yet remain as profitable as papers that purposely favor advertisers in their news columns."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	5	17.24
Agree	15	51.72
Neutral	6	20.69
Disagree	2	6.89
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Don't know	1	3.44
Total	29	99.98

Unused variables: 4

Table F34.--"You can't get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks or department stores."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	0	0.00
Neutral	2	6.89
Disagree	14	48.27
Disagree strongly	13	44.82
Total	29	99.98

Unused variables: 4

Table F35.--"American people are crying out for consumer news--reported without fear or favor."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	6	20.69
Agree	13	44.82
Neutral	7	24.13
Disagree	2	6.89
Disagree strongly	1	3.44
Total	29	99.97

Unused variables: 4

Table F36.--"There's a business movement about to harness the power of the press on consumer issues."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	2	7.14
Neutral	4	14.28
Disagree	18	64.28
Disagree strongly	4	14.28
Total	28	99.98

Unused variables: 5

Table F37.--"Many consumer writers chafe at obstacles such as the tradition of not 'naming names' (businesses)."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	3	10.71
Agree	16	57.14
Neutral	5	17.85
Disagree	4	14.28
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	29	99.98
Unused variables: 4		

Table F38.--"There is little investigative consumer reporting. Most consumer stories are either wire stories or news releases."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	1	3.57
Agree	10	35.71
Neutral	4	14.28
Disagree	13	46.42
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	28	99.98
Unused variables: 5		

Table F39.--"I don't see any reason why any smart, curious individual can't be an effective consumer affairs reporter."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	2	7.14
Agree	17	60.71
Neutral	1	3.57
Disagree	6	21.42
Disagree strongly	2	7.14
Total	28	99.98

Unused variables: 5

Table F40.--"The caliber of consumer reporters has generally improved over the past five years."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	19	67.85
Neutral	7	25.00
Disagree	1	3.57
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Don't know	1	3.57
Total	28	99.99

Unused variables: 5

Table F41.--"Most reporters for the news media try to report consumer affairs as accurately as possible."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	2	7.14
Agree	21	75.00
Neutral	2	7.14
Disagree	3	10.71
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	28	99.99

Unused variables: 5

Table F42.--"The good news about business is usually buried somewhere in the financial pages or not reported at all, while the bad news is often on front page headlines."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	2	7.14
Agree	5	17.85
Neutral	3	10.71
Disagree	15	53.57
Disagree strongly	3	10.71
Total	28	99.98

Unused variables: 5

Table F43.--"Most reporters know the real news about business is to report the wrongdoings companies are involved in."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	0	0.00
Neutral	4	14.28
Disagree	19	67.85
Disagree strongly	3	10.71
Other	2	7.14
Total	28	99.98

Unused variables: 5

Table F44.--"On the whole, newspapers give too much attention to consumer affairs and consumer information."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	0	0.00
Neutral	3	10.71
Disagree	23	82.14
Disagree strongly	2	7.14
Total	28	99.99

Unused variables: 5

Table F45.--"In general, when most newspapers report on
consumer affairs they are reasonably unbiased."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	22	78.57
Neutral	2	7.14
Disagree	4	14.28
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	28	99.99

Unused variables: 5

Table F46.--Definition of Consumer Affairs Issues.

Definition	N	Percentage
Issues dealing with buyers and sellers	5	45.45
Pocketbook	3	27.27
People	1	9.09
Civil rights oriented	1	9.09
Safety/lives of consumers	1	9.09
Total	11	99.99

Unused variables: 22

Table F47.--Best State Consumer Law.

Law	N	Percentage
Truth-in-lending	3	25.00
Product liability/registration for mechanics	1	8.33
No fault auto insurance	1	8.33
Landlord/tenant act/CPA	1	8.33
No single "most important"	2	16.66
Auto lemon law	1	8.33
Others (Bottle Bill, PBB)	2	16.66
Don't know	1	8.33
Total	12	99.97

Unused variables: 21

Table F48.--Best Federal Consumer Law.

Law	N	Percentage
Honesty in advertising	1	12.50
FDA bans	1	12.50
Truth-in-lending	0	0.00
Auto safety	1	12.50
No single "most important" law	2	25.00
Others (pension, insurance, auto, mileage)	2	25.00
Don't Know	1	12.50
Total	8	100.00

Unused variables: 25

Table F49.--Necessity of Additional Consumer Laws.

Laws	N	Percentage
Yes	4	57.14
No	1	14.28
Depends	1	14.28
Don't know	1	14.28
Total	7	99.98

Unused variables: 26

Table F50.--Number of Proposed Consumer Laws.

Number	N	Percentage
One	2	28.57
Two	1	14.28
None listed	2	28.57
Answer was no	1	14.28
Don't know	1	14.28
Total	7	99.98

Unused variables: 26

APPENDIX G

CONSUMER REPORTERS

Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

APPENDIX G

CONSUMER REPORTERS

Table G1.--Age of Reporter.

Age	N	Percentage
Under 25 years	2	10.52
25 to 35 years	13	68.42
36 to 45 years	0	0.00
46 to 55 years	1	5.26
56 years or older	3	15.78
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table G2.--Education of Reporter.

Education	N	Percentage
High school graduate	0	0.00
Some college	0	0.00
College graduate	10	52.63
Post graduate work	9	47.36
Total	19	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table G3.--Sex of Reporter.

Sex	N	Percentage
Female	6	30.00
Male	14	70.00
Total	20	100.00

Table G4.--Circulation of Paper.

Circulation	N	Percentage
More than 100,000	3	15.00
50,000 to 100,000	3	15.00
25,000 to 49,999	6	30.00
10,000 to 24,999	4	20.00
Less than 10,000	4	20.00
Total	20	100.00

Table G5.--Length of Time as Reporter.

Time	N	Percentage
Less than one year	5	25.00
One to three years	7	35.00
Four to six years	2	10.00
Seven to ten years	3	15.00
More than 10 years	1	5.00
Newspaper doesn't have consumer reporter	2	10.00
Total	20	100.00

Table G6.--Reasons for Assignment to Consumer Affairs
Stories.

Reason	N	Percentage
Specifically hired to cover consumer affairs	3	17.64
Experience as a consumer affairs reporter at another newspaper	0	0.00
Editor's discretion	6	35.29
Interest in consumer affairs	3	17.64
No other reporter wanted to cover consumer affairs	1	5.88
Other (it's a job, part of the job)	4	23.52
Total	17	99.97
Unused variables: 3		

Table G7.--Coverage of Other Stories.

Coverage	N	Percentage
Yes	4	23.52
No, also cover women or family living stories	3	17.64
No, also cover business stories	4	23.52
No, also take general assignments	3	17.64
No, also weekend editor, cover news, sports	3	17.64
Total	17	99.96

Unused variables: 3

Table G8.--Time Covering Consumer Affairs Stories.

Time	N	Percentage
Less than one year	8	47.05
One to three years	8	47.05
Four to six years	0	0.00
Seven to ten years	1	5.88
More than ten years	0	0.00
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G9.--Placement of Consumer Affairs Stories.

Placement	N	Percentage
Women/family sections	6	35.29
Business section	1	5.88
News section	5	29.41
Paper too small to have sections/editor's discretion	1	5.88
Other (mixture of above, "Extra/Money" section)	4	23.52
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G10.--Time Spent on Action-Line Type Column.

Time	N	Percentage
Newspaper doesn't have one	8	44.44
Most of the time/100% of time	1	5.55
One/half or more of the time	1	5.55
Less than one/half of time	3	16.66
Newspaper has column but I don't work on it	5	27.77
Total	18	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table G11.--Policy for Naming Businesses.

Policy	N	Percentage
Yes, always	4	22.22
Yes, usually	8	44.44
No, not often	5	27.77
No, never	0	0.00
Never report complaints/problems	1	5.55
Total	18	99.98

Unused variables: 2

Table G12.--Types of Consumer Stories.

Type	N	Percentage
Price surveys on local stores	1	5.88
Localized news releases from federal/state consumer regulatory agencies	0	0.00
State consumer legislation	2	11.76
General consumer issues	0	0.00
None or can't remember	1	5.88
Other (all of the above)	13	76.47
Total	17	99.99

Unused variables: 3

Table G13.--Advertisers' Pressure Toward Consumer Stories--
Stopped Stories.

	N	Percentage
<u>Policy</u>		
Yes	1	5.88
No	15	88.23
Other (not to reporter's recollection)	1	5.88
Total	17	99.99
Unused variables: 3		
<u>Why</u>		
Consumer beat was dropped for four years because of my series on auto repair problems	1	5.88
Doesn't apply, answer was no	16	94.11
Total	17	99.99
Unused variables: 3		

Table G14.--Advertisers' Complaints Against Consumer Stories.

	N	Percentage
<u>Complaint</u>		
Yes	10	58.82
No	7	41.17
Total	17	99.99

Unused variables: 3

Reason

Headline stated supermarket costs were highest in state/ store owner didn't like it	1	6.25
Advertiser complained because they aren't mentioned in surveys - wanted more prominent mention	3	18.75
About what you'd expect	1	6.25
Business owner said he was hurt by story	2	12.50
Auto dealers/mobile home dealers complained bitterly about series	1	6.25
Advertiser objected to one very minor error in story/ set up meeting with editor	1	6.25
Answer was no	7	43.75
Total	16	100.00

Unused variables: 4

Table G15.--Policy on Government News Releases.

Policy	N	Percentage
Run them verbatim	1	5.88
Toss	5	29.41
Verify them before printing	1	5.88
Localize them	5	29.41
File by topic for future reference	2	11.76
If release has relevance for area, use verbatim or localize	1	5.88
Edit then run verbatim	1	5.88
Don't know	1	5.88
Total	17	99.98
Unused variables: 3		

Table G16.--Policy on News Releases from Volunteer Consumer Groups.

Policy	N	Percentage
Run them verbatim	1	5.88
Toss	5	29.41
Verify them before printing	2	11.76
Localize them	4	23.52
File for future reference/ possible sources for other stories	2	11.76
If release has relevance for area, use verbatim or localize	1	5.88
Edit then run verbatim	1	5.88
Don't know	1	5.88
Total	17	99.97
Unused variables: 3		

Table G17.--Policy on Business News Releases.

Policy	N	Percentage
Run them verbatim	1	5.26
Toss	6	31.57
Verify them before printing	0	0.00
Localize them	2	10.52
File for future reference	2	10.52
Rewrite (de-commercialize them)	2	10.52
Edit extensively then run verbatim	2	10.52
Run them in columns	1	5.26
All of the above	3	15.78
Total	19	99.95

Unused variable: 1

Table G18.--Importance to Readers of Consumer Affairs Stories.

Importance	N	Percentage
Very important	5	31.25
Important	8	50.00
Not that important	0	0.00
Not important	0	0.00
No opinion	1	6.25
Don't know	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00

Unused variables: 4

Table G19.--Personal Importance of Consumer Affairs Stories to Readers.

Importance	N	Percentage
Very important	7	41.17
Important	9	52.94
Not that important	0	0.00
Not important	0	0.00
No opinion	0	0.00
Don't know	1	5.88
Total	17	99.99
Unused variables: 3		

Table G20.--Ranking of Consumer Problems.

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Home repairs	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (31.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (6.25%)	16	100%	4
Appliances	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (12.50%)	4 (25.00%)	2 (12.50%)	5 (31.25%)	16	100%	4
Credit	3 (18.75%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (12.50%)	2 (12.50%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (12.50%)	16	100%	4
Insurance	4 (23.52%)	6 (35.29%)	1 (5.88%)	2 (11.76%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	17	99.97%	3
Advertising	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)	4 (25.00%)	3 (18.75%)	16	100%	4
Mail order	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)	8 (50.00%)	16	100%	4
Housing/ real estate	2 (12.50%)	2 (12.50%)	5 (31.25%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (12.50%)	16	100%	4
Automobiles	4 (25.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)	3 (18.75%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	16	100%	4

Table G21.--Preparation from Education.

Preparation	N	Percentage
Yes, quite well	2	11.76
Yes, partially	9	52.94
No, not very well	4	23.52
No, not at all	2	11.76
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G22.--Value of Consumer Affairs Courses.

Value	N	Percentage
Yes, very worthwhile	2	11.76
Yes, somewhat worthwhile	4	25.52
No, not very worthwhile	1	5.88
No, worthless	0	0.00
Didn't take any consumer affairs courses	10	58.82
Total	17	101.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G23.--Ranking of Important Courses.

Courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Economics	1 (6.66%)	4 (26.66%)	3 (20.00%)	2 (13.33%)	4 (26.66%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.66%)	0 (0.00%)	15	99.97%	5
Business	1 (6.66%)	2 (12.50%)	7 (43.75%)	2 (12.50%)	4 (25.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	16	100.41%	4
Political Science	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)	16	100%	4
Consumer Affairs	5 (31.25%)	2 (12.50%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (12.50%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0.00%)	16	100%	4
Family Living	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.66%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.66%)	2 (13.33%)	4 (26.66%)	5 (33.33%)	2 (13.13%)	15	99.77%	5
Law	3 (18.75%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (12.50%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	16	100%	4
Newswriting	6 (35.29%)	3 (17.64%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	0 (0.00%)	17	99.97%	3
Other	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (50.00%)	1 (50.00%)	2	100%	18

Table G24.--Evaluation of Training.

Training	Excellent 5	4	3	2	No Help 1	Don't Know	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Consumer Affairs Seminar	3 (17.64%)	4 (23.52%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (17.64%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (29.41%)	17	99.97%	3
Consumer Affairs Associations	2 (11.76%)	1 (5.88%)	4 (23.52%)	1 (5.88%)	2 (11.76%)	7 (41.17%)	17	99.97%	3
College Journalism Courses	2 (11.76%)	4 (23.52%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (17.64%)	3 (17.64%)	17	99.96%	3
Field Reporting	11 (64.70%)	2 (11.76%)	2 (11.76%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	17	99.98%	3
College Consumer Affairs Courses	2 (12.50%)	2 (12.50%)	3 (18.75%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	6 (37.50%)	16	100%	4
Conventions	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	3 (17.64%)	3 (17.64%)	4 (23.52%)	5 (29.41%)	17	99.97%	3
Editors	2 (11.76%)	4 (23.52%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	2 (11.76%)	4 (23.52%)	17	99.96%	3
Colleagues	1 (5.88%)	5 (29.41%)	5 (29.41%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	1 (5.88%)	17	99.98%	3
Newspapers	6 (35.29%)	4 (23.52%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (17.64%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	17	99.97%	3

Table G24.--Continued.

Training	Excellent 5	4	3	2	No Help 1	Don't Know	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Magazines	5 (29.41%)	3 (17.64%)	3 (17.64%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	1 (5.88%)	17	99.97%	3
Radio	2 (11.76%)	2 (11.76%)	2 (11.76%)	5 (29.41%)	3 (17.64%)	3 (17.64%)	17	99.97%	3
Television	0 (0.00%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (17.64%)	4 (23.52%)	5 (29.41%)	3 (17.64%)	17	99.97%	3
Top Consumer Leadership	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	4 (23.52%)	2 (11.76%)	4 (23.52%)	2 (11.76%)	17	99.96%	3
Lay Consumers	4 (23.57%)	4 (23.52%)	4 (23.52%)	3 (17.64%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (11.76%)	17	100.01%	3

Table G25.--"Many newspapers do an inadequate job of consumer reporting."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	3	17.64
Agree	11	64.70
Neutral	1	5.88
Disagree	1	5.88
Disagree strongly	1	5.88
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G26.--"Aggressive reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper because it shows that a paper recognizes its obligation to expose unseemly business practices, despite the possibility of economic reprisal by advertisers."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	6	35.29
Agree	7	41.17
Neutral	3	17.64
Disagree	1	5.88
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G27.--"Many ethical papers run articles that offend major advertisers yet remain as profitable as papers that purposely favor advertisers in their news columns."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	7	41.17
Agree	2	11.76
Neutral	7	41.17
Disagree	1	5.88
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G28.--"You can't get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks or department stores."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	0	0.00
Neutral	0	0.00
Disagree	12	70.58
Disagree strongly	5	29.41
Total	17	99.99

Unused variables: 3

Table G29.--"American people are crying out for consumer news--reported without fear or favor."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	4	23.52
Agree	6	35.29
Neutral	7	41.17
Disagree	0	0.00
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G30.--"There's a business movement about to harness the power of the press on consumer issues."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	3	17.64
Neutral	6	35.29
Disagree	3	17.64
Disagree strongly	4	23.52
Don't know	1	5.88
Total	17	99.97

Unused variables: 3

Table G31.--"Many consumer writers chafe at obstacles such as the tradition of not 'naming names' (businesses)."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	2	11.76
Agree	6	35.29
Neutral	7	41.17
Disagree	1	5.88
Disagree strongly	1	5.88
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G32.--"There is little investigative consumer reporting. Most consumer stories are either wire stories or news releases."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	10	58.82
Neutral	2	11.76
Disagree	4	23.52
Disagree strongly	1	5.88
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G33.--"I don't see any reason why any smart, curious individual can't be an effective consumer affairs reporter."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	4	25.00
Agree	4	25.00
Neutral	4	25.00
Disagree	2	12.50
Disagree strongly	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00

Unused variables: 4

Table G34.--"The caliber of consumer reporters has generally improved over the past five years."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	3	17.64
Agree	6	35.29
Neutral	8	47.05
Disagree	0	0.00
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G35.--"Most reporters for the news media try to report consumer affairs as accurately as possible."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	12	70.58
Neutral	5	29.41
Disagree	0	0.00
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	17	99.99

Unused variables: 3

Table G36.--"The good news about business is usually buried somewhere in the financial pages or not reported at all, while the bad news is often on front page headlines."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	7	41.17
Neutral	2	11.76
Disagree	2	11.76
Disagree strongly	6	35.29
Total	17	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table G37.--"Most reporters know the real news about business is to report the wrongdoings companies are involved in."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	1	6.25
Neutral	4	25.00
Disagree	9	56.25
Disagree strongly	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00

Unused variables: 4

Table G38.--"On the whole, newspapers give too much attention to consumer affairs and consumer information."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	0	0.00
Neutral	3	18.75
Disagree	9	56.25
Disagree strongly	4	25.00
Total	16	100.00

Unused variables: 4

Table G39.--"In general, when most newspapers report on consumer affairs they are reasonably unbiased."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	11	68.75
Neutral	5	31.25
Disagree	0	0.00
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	16	100.00

Unused variables: 4

Table G40.--Definition of Consumer Affairs Issue.

Definition	N	Percentage
People's spending habits/ quality-of-living topics	6	54.54
Pocketbook	2	18.18
Any good/service in market	2	18.18
Legal value	1	9.09
Total	11	99.99

Unused variables: 9

Table G41.--Best State Consumer Law.

Law	N	Percentage
Consumer Protection Act	3	25.00
Auto Repair Act	1	8.33
Landlord/Tenant Laws	0	0.00
Auto Lemon Law	1	8.33
Most are important	2	16.66
Others	3	25.00
Don't know	2	16.66
Total	12	99.98

Unused variables: 8

Table G42.--Best Federal Consumer Law.

Law	N	Percentage
Fair Trade Repeal	0	0.00
Women's Protection Act	2	16.66
Establishment of CPSC	2	16.66
Auto Safety Act	1	8.33
Most are important	2	16.66
Gas Mileage Guideline	1	8.33
Don't know	4	33.33
Total	12	99.97

Unused variables: 8

Table G43.--Necessity of Additional Consumer Laws.

Laws	N	Percentage
Yes	8	80.00
No	0	0.00
Don't know	2	20.00
Total	10	100.00

Unused variables: 10

Table G44.--Number of New Laws Listed.

Number	N	Percentage
One	4	40.00
Two	0	0.00
Three	1	10.00
Four	3	30.00
Don't know	2	20.00
Total	10	100.00

Unused variables: 10

APPENDIX H

CONSUMER LEADERS

Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

APPENDIX H

CONSUMER LEADERS

Table H1.--Age of Consumer Leaders.

Age	N	Percentage
Under 25 years	1	5.00
25 to 35 years	7	35.00
36 to 45 years	6	30.00
46 to 55	1	5.00
56 or older	5	25.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H2.--Education of Consumer Leader.

Education	N	Percentage
High school graduate	1	4.76
Some college	3	14.28
College graduate	4	19.04
Post graduate work	12	57.14
Others, trade, law degree	1	4.76
Total	21	99.98

Table H3.--Sex of Consumer Leader.

Sex	N	Percentage
Female	10	52.63
Male	9	47.36
Total	19	99.99
Unused variables: 2		

Table H4.--Categories of Agencies.

Categories	N	Percentage
Business consumer affairs	4	20.00
Volunteer consumer affairs	8	40.00
Government consumer affairs	7	35.00
Others/institutions of higher education	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H5.--Length of Time in Leadership Role.

Time	N	Percentage
Less than one year	3	15.78
1 to 3 years	3	15.78
4 to 6 years	8	42.10
7 to 10 years	2	10.52
More than ten years	3	15.78
Total	19	99.96
Unused variables: 2		

Table H6.--Criteria for Assigning Consumer Stories.

Criteria	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Regular consumer reporter	2(10.00%)	16(80.00%)	2(10.00%)	20	100	1
Expertise of reporter	5(25.00%)	13(65.00%)	2(10.00%)	20	100	1
Reporter's work-load	8(40.00%)	10(50.00%)	2(10.00%)	20	100	1
Reporter's interest in consumer affairs	3(15.00%)	15(75.00%)	2(10.00%)	20	100	1
Depends on size of paper	2(10.00%)	16(80.00%)	2(10.00%)	20	100	1
Mixture of above	1(5.00%)	17(85.00%)	2(10.00%)	20	100	1
When space needs to be filled between ads	2(10.00%)	16(80.00%)	2(10.00%)	20	100	1

Table H7.--Number of Regular Consumer Affairs Reporters.

Number	N	Percentage
Less than 1%	4	20.00
Less than 25%	14	70.00
Around 50%	1	5.00
Around 75%	0	0.00
Around 100%	0	0.00
Don't know	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H8.--Contact by Reporters.

Contact	N	Percentage
Yes, regularly	6	30.00
Yes, sometimes	8	40.00
Yes, but seldom	3	15.00
No, never	2	10.00
Yes, but not about consumer issues	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H9.--Location of Consumer Affairs Stories.

Location	N	Percentage
Women/Family Living section	10	52.63
Business section	0	0.00
News section	2	10.52
Wherever/whenever they can fit them in	1	5.26
Depends on significance/timing of coverage	1	5.26
Action-line type columns	0	0.00
Combination of above	5	26.31
Total	19	99.98

Unused variables: 2

Table H10.--Appropriateness of Location of Consumer Affairs Stories.

Appropriateness	N	Percentage
Yes, always	1	5.55
Yes, usually	6	33.33
No, not often	8	44.44
No, never	1	5.55
No opinion	0	0.00
Does not apply if answer to 9 is blank	2	11.11
Total	18	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table H11.--Value of Action-Line Type Columns.

Value	N	Percentage
Yes, very valuable	6	30.00
Yes, somewhat valuable	11	55.00
No, not very valuable	3	15.00
No, not valuable at all	0	0.00
No opinion	0	0.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H12.--Newspapers' Policy of Naming Local Businesses.

Policy	N	Percentage
Yes, always	0	0.00
Yes, usually	11	55.00
No, not often	8	40.00
No, never	1	5.00
I haven't noticed	0	0.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H13.--Newspapers' Policy for Handling Agency's News Releases.

Policy	N	Percentage
Usually run them verbatim	3	14.28
Usually toss them	3	14.28
Usually call to verify facts	7	33.33
Usually localize	4	19.04
Agency doesn't send news releases to daily newspapers	1	4.76
Usually run but not on consumer issues	0	0.00
Usually cut	1	4.76
Almost use all/wire stories/ verbatim/localize/call for more details	1	4.76
Don't know	1	4.76
Total	21	99.97

Table H14.--Importance of Consumer Affairs Reporting to Newspapers.

Importance	N	Percentage
Very important	1	5.00
Important	9	45.00
Not that important	10	50.00
No opinion	0	0.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H15.--Ranking of Consumer Problems.

Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Home repairs	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	5 (29.41%)	4 (23.52%)	5 (29.41%)	2 (11.76%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	17	99.98	4
Appliances	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (23.52%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (11.76%)	2 (11.76%)	7 (35.29%)	2 (11.76%)	18	99.97	3
Credit	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (23.52%)	3 (17.64%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	17	99.96	4
Insurance	0 (0.00%)	4 (23.52%)	1 (5.88%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (17.64%)	2 (11.76%)	2 (11.76%)	3 (17.64%)	17	99.96	4
Advertising	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	2 (11.76%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	2 (11.76%)	5 (29.41%)	4 (23.52%)	17	99.97	4
Mail order	4 (25.00%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (12.50%)	1 (6.25%)	5 (31.25%)	16	100.00	5
Housing/real estate	1 (5.88%)	3 (17.64%)	1 (5.88%)	4 (23.52%)	2 (11.76%)	5 (29.41%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	17	99.97	4
Automobiles	8 (47.05%)	6 (35.29%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (5.88%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.88%)	17	99.98	4
Utilities	2 (66.66%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (33.33%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3	99.99	18

Table H16.--Specialization of Prospective Consumer Affairs Reporters.

Specialization	N	Percentage
Journalism	2	11.11
Consumer affairs	2	11.11
Both	10	55.55
Neither	0	0.00
Government, political science, economics, business	2	11.11
Journalism, technical background	1	5.55
Interest in consumer interest, ability to write	1	5.55
Total	18	99.98

Unused variables: 3

Table H17.--Important Training for Consumer Reporters.

Importance	N	Percentage
Educational training in consumer affairs	3	15.00
Job-related training in consumer affairs	5	25.00
Interest in consumer affairs	10	50.00
Previous newspaper experience	1	5.00
Background in government, political science, law, economics and skeptical/critical/analytical/ mental qualities	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H18.--Ranking of Important Courses.

Courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Economics	3 (15.00%)	4 (20.00%)	5 (25.00%)	2 (10.00%)	2 (10.00%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (20.00%)	0 (0.00%)	20	100.00	1
Business	3 (15.00%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (25.00%)	4 (20.00%)	4 (20.00%)	2 (10.00%)	2 (10.00%)	0 (0.00%)	20	100.00	1
Political Science	1 (5.26%)	2 (10.52%)	1 (5.26%)	1 (5.26%)	3 (15.78%)	7 (36.84%)	4 (21.05%)	0 (0.00%)	19	99.97	2
Consumer Affairs	6 (30.00%)	6 (30.00%)	2 (10.00%)	3 (15.00%)	1 (5.00%)	1 (5.00%)	1 (5.00%)	0 (0.00%)	20	100.00	1
Family Living	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.00%)	2 (10.00%)	4 (20.00%)	4 (20.00%)	6 (30.00%)	2 (10.00%)	1 (5.00%)	20	100.00	1
Law	1 (5.00%)	4 (20.00%)	5 (25.00%)	3 (15.00%)	2 (10.00%)	4 (20.00%)	1 (5.00%)	0 (0.00%)	20	100.00	1
Newswriting	5 (25.00%)	2 (10.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (15.00%)	4 (20.00%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (25.00%)	1 (5.00%)	20	100.00	1
Other	1 (33.33%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (33.33%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (33.33%)	3	99.99	18

Table H19.--Ranking of Consumer Affairs Training.

Training	Excellent 5	4	3	2	No Help 1	Don't Know	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Consumer Affairs Seminars	10 (50.00%)	4 (20.00%)	4 (20.00%)	2 (10.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	20	100	1
Consumer Affairs Associations	4 (20.00%)	6 (30.00%)	7 (35.00%)	1 (5.00%)	1 (5.00%)	1 (5.00%)	20	100	1
College Journalism Courses	4 (20.00%)	6 (30.00%)	6 (30.00%)	4 (20.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	20	100	1
Field Reporting	7 (35.00%)	10 (50.00%)	1 (5.00%)	1 (5.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.00%)	20	100	1
College Consumer Affairs Courses	6 (30.00%)	6 (30.00%)	4 (20.00%)	3 (15.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.00%)	20	100	1
Conventions	0 (0.00%)	3 (15.00%)	5 (25.00%)	5 (25.00%)	3 (15.00%)	4 (20.00%)	20	100	1
Editors	2 (10.52%)	2 (10.52%)	3 (15.78%)	6 (31.57%)	2 (10.52%)	4 (21.05%)	19	99.96	2
Colleagues	2 (10.52%)	2 (10.52%)	4 (21.05%)	4 (21.05%)	2 (10.52%)	5 (26.31%)	19	99.97	2
Newspapers	0 (0.00%)	4 (21.05%)	6 (31.57%)	5 (26.31%)	1 (5.26%)	3 (15.78%)	19	99.97	2

Table H19.--Continued.

Training	Excellent 5	4	3	2	No Help 1	Don't Know	Total N	Total %	Unused Variable
Magazines	1 (5.26%)	4 (21.05%)	7 (36.84%)	2 (10.52%)	1 (5.26%)	4 (21.05%)	19	99.98	2
Radio	1 (5.26%)	0 (0.00%)	10 (52.63%)	3 (15.78%)	2 (10.52%)	3 (15.78%)	19	99.97	2
Television	1 (5.26%)	1 (5.26%)	8 (42.10%)	5 (26.31%)	1 (5.26%)	3 (15.78%)	19	99.97	2
Top Consumer Leadership	9 (45.00%)	6 (30.00%)	2 (10.00%)	2 (10.00%)	1 (5.00%)	0 (0.00%)	20	100	1
Lay Consumers	8 (42.10%)	3 (15.78%)	5 (26.31%)	2 (10.52%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (5.26%)	19	99.97	2

Table H20.--"Many newspapers do an inadequate job of consumer reporting."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	2	10.52
Agree	8	42.10
Neutral	4	21.05
Disagree	5	26.31
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	19	99.98

Unused variables: 2

Table H21.--"Aggressive reporting on consumer issues is one of the best evidences of a conscientious newspaper because it shows that a paper recognizes its obligation to expose unseemly business practices, despite the possibility of economic reprisal by advertisers."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	10	53.62
Agree	6	31.57
Neutral	1	5.26
Disagree	2	10.52
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	19	100.97

Unused variables: 2

Table H22.--"Many ethical papers run articles that offend major advertisers yet remain as profitable as papers that purposely favor advertisers in their news columns."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	6	31.57
Agree	9	47.36
Neutral	2	10.52
Disagree	1	5.26
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Don't know	1	5.26
Total	19	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table H23.--"You can't get anything into the newspapers that in any way rubs against the business policy of the banks or department stores."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	1	5.26
Agree	1	5.26
Neutral	5	26.31
Disagree	10	52.63
Disagree strongly	2	10.52
Total	19	99.98

Unused variables: 2

Table H24.--"American people are crying out for consumer news--reported without fear or favor."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	6	31.57
Agree	8	42.10
Neutral	2	10.52
Disagree	3	15.78
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	19	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table H25.--"There's a business movement about to harness the power of the press on consumer issues."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	2	10.52
Agree	4	21.05
Neutral	4	21.05
Disagree	6	31.57
Disagree strongly	2	10.52
Don't know	1	5.26
Total	19	99.97

Unused variables: 2

Table H26.--"Many consumer writers chafe at obstacles such as the tradition of not 'naming names' (businesses)."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	3	15.00
Agree	9	45.00
Neutral	5	25.00
Disagree	3	15.00
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H27.--"There is little investigative consumer reporting. Most consumer stories are either wire stories or news releases."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	3	15.00
Agree	13	65.00
Neutral	0	0.00
Disagree	4	20.00
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H28.--"I don't see any reason why any smart, curious individual can't be an effective consumer affairs reporter."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	1	5.00
Agree	8	40.00
Neutral	3	15.00
Disagree	7	35.00
Disagree strongly	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H29.--"The caliber of consumer reporters has generally improved over the past five years."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	1	5.00
Agree	9	45.00
Neutral	7	35.00
Disagree	2	10.00
Disagree strongly	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00

Unused variable: 1

Table H30.--"Most reporters for the news media try to report consumer affairs as accurately as possible."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	1	5.00
Agree	13	65.00
Neutral	3	15.00
Disagree	2	10.00
Disagree strongly	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H31.--"The good news about business is usually buried somewhere in the financial pages or not reported at all, while the bad news is often on front page headlines."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	1	5.00
Agree	10	50.00
Neutral	1	5.00
Disagree	8	40.00
Disagree strongly	0	0.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H32.--"Most reporters know the real news about business is to report the wrongdoings companies are involved in."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	4	20.00
Neutral	3	15.00
Disagree	12	60.00
Disagree strongly	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H33.--"On the whole, newspapers give too much attention to consumer affairs and consumer information."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	0	0.00
Neutral	0	0.00
Disagree	10	50.00
Disagree strongly	10	50.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H34.--"In general, when most newspapers report on consumer affairs they are reasonably unbiased."

Attitude	N	Percentage
Agree strongly	0	0.00
Agree	8	40.00
Neutral	6	30.00
Disagree	5	25.00
Disagree strongly	1	5.00
Total	20	100.00
Unused variable: 1		

Table H35.--Definition of Consumer Affairs Issues.

Definition	N	Percentage
Cost, availability, quality of goods	13	76.47
How people spend their money	1	5.88
Major problems people can't solve themselves	1	5.88
Others (don't like term, changing definition)	2	11.76
Total	17	99.99
Unused variables: 4		

Table H36.--Best State Consumer Law.

Law	N	Percentage
Consumer Protection Act	11	64.70
Generic drugs	1	5.88
Item Pricing Act	0	0.00
Security Deposit Act	1	5.88
Motor Vehicle Repair Act	3	17.64
Others (open meetings, public health code)	0	0.00
Don't know	1	5.88
Total	17	99.99

Unused variables: 4

Table H37.--Best Federal Consumer Law.

Law	N	Percentage
Equal Credit Opportunity Act	4	30.76
Fair Credit Billing Act	3	23.07
Magnusson Moss Warranty Act	1	7.69
None that can be set above others	1	7.69
Others (NHTSA, Collections Act)	2	15.38
Don't know	2	15.38
Total	13	99.97

Unused variables: 8

Table H38.--Necessity of Additional Consumer Laws.

Law	N	Percentage
Yes	13	81.25
No	3	18.75
Total	16	100.00
Unused variables: 5		

Table H39.--Number of Proposed Consumer Laws.

Number	N	Percentage
One	3	18.75
Two	3	18.75
Three	1	6.25
Four	3	18.75
Five	1	6.25
Many	3	18.75
Not needed	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00
Unused variables: 5		

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