

## **Consumerism In Zimbabwe: Can Zimbabwean Retailers Withstand The Social Pressure?**

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**Abstract:** *The rapid changes in the composition and expectations of Zimbabwean consumers is likely to expose the retail business to high pressure consumerism. This paper aims to examine the preparedness of retailers to satisfy rights-oriented and socio-political consumers in Zimbabwean society. A survey involving 210 retail customers and in-depth interviews with 2 EMA officers, 1 CCZ, 2 health inspectors and 2 SAZ officers was used for providing the market perceptions. Respondents were established using quota and judgmental sampling methods. Key issues that led to the research include fear of retailers on losing their licenses, temporary closure and lost image as political consumers fight for their rights in product, pricing, promotion, service, employee behavior, physical environment and social responsibility dimensions. Some consumer rights were found to be ignored and forgotten by the retailers. Research results will assist in implementation of consumer rights in Zimbabwe. The study will also empower grocery retailers and other sellers of products and services in dealing with consumer rights proactively.*

**Key Words:** *Political consumer, consumerism, consumer rights and ethics.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century consumers of goods and services are becoming much different from their predecessors in terms of power and influence. Consumers are becoming more caring and socially aware of their rights and the need to defend their social values when shopping from grocery retailers in both developing and developed world. For instance, Shaw and Clerk (1999) and Strong (1996) professed that a time will come when political and green consumers will be joined in the shopping revolution by a new breed of ethical buyers who demand products to be priced, promoted, distributed and serviced in ethical ways that respect both the physical and social well being of people. As Zimbabwean retail businesses faced the 2000-2009 operational challenges, customers had to queue and receive lower quality products from the seller's market which had replaced the buyer's market. In the theory of consumerism such issues become part of many expectations and disappointments that society and customers see on retail businesses. Retail provision within Zimbabwe had been increasingly concentrated at the onset of 2009 dollarisation and the number of small independent retailers has continued to decline as the retail marketplace became dominated by a relatively small number of large retailers who aggressively pursued strategies to increase their sales, their market share and their profits (Jones et al, 2005). Major players include OK Zimbabwe, TM – Pick'n Pay, Spars, Food World, Gutsai and small shops like DCK. With the awareness that grocery retailing is playing a vital role in the Zimbabwean economy, the way people should be treated when shopping became important.

Since customers are the reasons why firms come into business (Mawere, 2010), it should be noted that customer satisfaction means meeting the specific values, beliefs, assumptions and mind sets of consumers as individuals and also members of a wider cultural and socio-political system.

Since grocery retail customers are people and cannot be separated from their physical and socio-political environment, the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) emphasises the need to uphold the Consumer Bill of Rights in the area of right to product safety, information access, environmental protection and social wellbeing. This is in line with the Consumer Bill of Rights that need to be observed under United Nations Agreements and Conventions. Some existing institutions that were created to safeguard the treatment of consumers by suppliers and retailers of products include Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, Environmental Management Agency, Health Inspectors and Standards Association of Zimbabwe. Their success in ensuring the upholding of consumer rights is dependent on cooperation of all stakeholders and information sharing on consumer rights (Jennings, 2012). The feelings of customers and their perceptions about grocery retailers need to be continuously investigated and communicated to relevant bodies and stakeholders (Mawere, 2010).

The glue that binds the marketer and society, and marketer and consumers should be the morality, justice, fairness, value of life and respect of people and their assets. This raises ethical questions for marketers on food safety, product performance, environmental protection, the rights of consumers, morality of marketing mix strategies, sustainable development, employee behaviour to customers and customer satisfaction. The

intensity of competition and competition strategies applied by small, medium and large retailers(Tiwari,2009) in Harare are generally high and likely to expose consumers and society to unprecedented suffering and damages around their marketing mix and ignorance of environment and social responsibility issues. It is therefore vital for retailers to act in an ethical and consumerism oriented manner because they affect the lives of many people (Sharma, 2008). This leaves room and opportunity for business ethics and consumerism research that aim at the development of active morals to be done by the grocery retailers in Harare (Crane, 1999; Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2008). The preparedness of grocery retailers to meet consumerism pressure is dependent on their ability to uphold consumer rights in the areas of product, pricing, promotion, customer service, employee behaviour, environmental protection and social responsibility variables.

### **1.3 Statement of The Problem**

There were some non conformity reports in the 2009 to 2013 period by CCZ, EMA, SAZ and health inspectors which contained anti- consumerism allegations for the Harare grocery retailing industry. Regardless of the ethical, environmental and social responsibility ignorance shown by grocery retailers in Harare, membership of pressure groups and organizations concerned with environmental, ecological and conservation issues showed remarkable growth in numbers and vigilance from year 2007 to date. There is need to align the retailing strategies and policies to the consumerism dimensions for the grocery retailing players to remain proactive and safe.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. To analyse the performance of grocery retailers on consumerism issues
2. To compare the consumerism preparedness of the various grocery retailers in Harare.

### **1.5 Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub> :Product quality and safety issues were not meeting consumer rights
- H<sub>2</sub> :Pricing and affordability issues were not meeting consumer rights
- H<sub>3</sub> :Promotional and information provision was not meeting consumer rights
- H<sub>4</sub> :Customer service offered was not meeting consumer rights
- H<sub>5</sub> :Employee behavior was not meeting consumer rights.
- H<sub>6</sub> :Environmental protection and health issues were not meeting consumer rights.
- H<sub>7</sub> :Social responsibility and participation were not meeting consumer rights.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Consumerism in Developed World Grocery Retailers**

In the international arena the study and analysis of performance of grocery retailers was done basing on their policies, processes, and management thoughts (Rudrabasavaj, 2010). Ethical considerations, upholding of consumer rights and awareness projects did not start in Zimbabwe today, but their intensity were already felt in the developed world also. Consumer rights issues, ethical issues, such as paying Third World producers a fair price, providing minimum wages, guaranteeing long-term trading commitments and fair credit terms, the provision of minimum health, safety and environmental standards, social justice and the sustainment of natural resources(European Commission, 1997) have become regular features of media reports and television documentaries in the developed world and recently in developing countries (Strong,1996 ; Hiller, 2010; Mawere, 2010)

Consumerism ranking of the top seven grocery retailers in the United Kingdom was given by the Ethical Consumer(2013). The rankings were based on Animal Welfare, Climate Change, Health, Toxics, Waste, Water, Workers' Rights and Integrity. The Co-op, Marks and Spencer, and Sainsbury generally topped the ethical rating table. The last four included Waitrose, Morrisons, ASDA and Tesco. The rating used covered mainly the company ethical policy, statements on environmental protection and social responsibility. The rating on the specific marketing mix like product, price, promotion, people and processes was not done. In the Zimbabwean study the researchers, however, took the marketing mix tools and , environmental issues and social responsibility dimensions for measuring consumerism conduct of grocery retailers in Harare, Zimbabwe (Mawere, 2010).

### **2.2 Marketing Mix and Consumerism**

The study of consumerism is made relevant to the industry context if the strategic significance of the activities are discussed. The literature focus on the marketing mix elements of the grocery retailers(Murphy et al, 2012) and highlight how consumer rights can be contravened and ignored by the market players.

### **2.2.1 Product Mix and Consumerism**

Product safety and responsibility issues have led to bans on tobacco advertising, the setting up of independent bodies to protect consumers' interest in the food and beverage industries, and reductions in the levels of fat, sugar and salt in many food and drink brands particularly the level of sugar in food and soft drinks consumed by children (Jobber,2010; Anselmsson and Johansson, 2007; DesJardins and McCall, 1990).

Deceptive packaging that include slack packaging has the potential to deceive consumers when the packaging is opaque. Products such as soap powders and breakfast cereals have the potential to suffer slack packaging (Jobber,2010).

Although customers have traditionally liked attractive, effective and convenient packaging, the cost of such packaging is high. For some products, such as cosmetics, the cost of the package is higher than the cost of the product itself (Dibb, Simkin,William and Ferrell,1997; Howard and Allen, 2006).

Although product labelling is widely regarded as the best tool to provide consumers with information about the social and environmental attributes of a brand (De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Howard and Allen, 2006; Carrero and Valor, 2012) current consumerism issues are rising due to marketers who fail to inform customers about existing conditions or changes in product quality (PLMA, 2011;Carrero and Valor, 2012).

### **2.2.2 Pricing mix and Consumerism**

Price fixing, predatory pricing and failure to disclose the full price associated with a purchase are typical consumerism issues. The emotional and subjective nature of price creates many situations that lead to misunderstandings between the seller and buyer hence causing consumerism problems (Kumar, 2012). Marketers have the right to price their products so that they earn a reasonable profit, but consumerism issues may crop up when a company seeks to earn high profits at the expense of its customers (Dibb et al, 1997). Jobber (2010) said price fixing is against consumerism because it restrains the consumer's freedom of choice(Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004) and interferes with each firm's interest in offering high quality products at the best price. Predatory pricing, deceptive pricing and price discrimination also deceive customers into believing they are being offered bargains (Jobber ,2010), while they are oppressed and alienated.

Product dumping pricing, unfair pricing and price gouging are all against the consumer's bill of rights since they make customers fail to access products that they need(Jobber,2010; Paboteeah and Cullen, 2013).

### **2.2.3 Promotion Consumerism And Grocery Retailers**

Promotion can create consumerism issues in a variety of ways, among them false or misleading advertising and manipulative or deceptive sales promotions, tactics and publicity. A major ethical issue in promotion pertains to the marketing of video games that have been accused of promoting violence and weapons to children. Many other consumerism issues linked to promotion, included the use of bribery in personal selling situations. It should be noted that an informed consumer is not something that the advertising industry is trying to build (Shaw and Clarke ,1999). Mass media communication, especially advertising, has been criticised internationally over a long period of time for being deceptive, manipulative, offensive, and for influencing people to buy products or services that they do not need (Shimp, 2003; Kitchen and de Pelsmacker, 2009). Advertising is also criticised for contributing to the broader issue of consumerism, creating a materialistic, consumerist mentality, which has environmentally damaging implications (Kitchen and de Pelsmacker, 2009).

### **2.2.4 Employee Behaviour And Consumerism**

Tschudin (2006) gave Manning (1998)'s Five Elements that constitute a care ethic. These are moral attention, sympathetic understanding, relationship awareness, accommodation and response. A combination of these factors work to give care, see other persons and their world, listening to all people involved and acting according to what the other person has said. Though these principles were applied in the nursing field, employees in the grocery retailing might also need to apply such consumerism values in serving retail customers. These are also covered by the principles of knowledge, patience, honesty, trust, humility, hope and courage. Employees with immoral habits will not change by reading a book on business ethics(Tschudin and Davis, 2008). Consumerism can guide our reflection on such matters, but cannot actually reorient and shape the qualities of our character, commitment and mind. This is a matter of education, giving the right example, and learning to practice moral behaviour in honest dialogue (Bhatia, 2004).

## **2.3 Environmental and Social Responsibility Consumerism**

The protection of the physical environment is as important as preserving the cultural and social environment. The following section provides the various assertions by scholars on the significance of observing environmental consumerism and social responsibility consumerism.

### **2.3.1 Environmental Consumerism**

The first factor relates to health and environmental issues and is therefore named the dimension of environmental responsibility (Anselmsson and Johansson, 2007). Concerning studies in emerging economies, like Zimbabwe, consumers seemed to express little environmental commitment (Carrete et al, 2012). Environmentalists were once considered the only people concerned about the depletion of natural resources, waste accumulation and pollution (Ottman, 2011). Environmentalists around the world are becoming global in their scope and scale of operations. Their aim is to increase people's awareness of the importance of environmental preservation on global scale and how the lack of it will have a harmful effect on our planet. Since ecological grass-root campaigns gained widespread recognition and support, and with global media like CNN continuing to report on environmental issues and disasters, today's consumer is becoming environmentally conscious and demanding (Ottman, 2011; Jones et al, 2001).

The majority of the UK's top 20 retailers recognise the impacts their businesses have on the environment, the economy and on society and several of them are seeking to measure and benchmark their performance in addressing sustainability agendas (Jones et al, 2005). In Holland, Gatersleben et al (2002) found that environmental awareness had a positive influence on the acquisition of environmentally conscious food products and recycling. Their concerns are oriented more towards cleanliness and aesthetics rather than the protection of resources (Carrete et al, 2012). It seems that media communication from private and public organizations have not contributed substantially to the increase in consumers' knowledge on environmental matters (Carrete et al, 2012). Within the past decade a wide variety of factors, including increasing consumer awareness, pressure from government, trade unions and investors, new legislation, developments in information and communication technologies and media attention, have forced many retailers to take an increasing and visible interest in the environmental, economic and social impact of their activities (Jones et al, 2005).

### **2.3.2 Corporate Social Responsibility And Consumerism**

More and more companies are implementing CSR plans and policies in the belief that this will lead to superior performance, since CSR is considered globally to be a source of competitive advantage (European Commission, 2002; Webb et al., 2008). Notwithstanding, Corral-Verdugo and Pinheiro (2004) criticized that pro-environmental behaviours tend to preserve only the physical environment without expressing explicit interest in the human welfare and related aspects, such as social and economic justice or the benefits of health, employment, and education (Carrete et al, 2012). Corporate social responsibility involve community support (e.g. support of arts, health programs, educational activities), diversity (e.g. sex, race, disability-based initiatives within and outside the organisation), employee support (e.g. concern for safety, job security, union relations), environment (e.g. environment friendly products, waste management, animal testing, pollution control, recycling), non-domestic operations (e.g. overseas labour practice, operations in countries with human rights violations) and product (e.g. product safety, research and development, marketing controversies, antitrust disputes) (Anselmsson and Johansson, 2007).

## **III. Research Methodology**

The study used both qualitative and quantitative research decisions in the collection, analysis and presentation of the data. A qualitative exploratory research that used in-depth interviews collected data from 2 EMA officers, 1 CCZ officer, 2 Health inspectors and 2 SAZ officers. That qualitative research was used for collecting exploratory data about prevalent consumerism issues. After some analysis, the resulting information was later used for creating the survey questionnaire. The quantitative cross sectional survey was carried out with 210 retail customers through face-to-face survey, drop and pick survey and also through emails. The sample of grocery customers was selected from a population of all customers who buy at OK Zimbabwe, Spar, Food World, TM Supermarkets, Gutsai and small retailers situated in Harare using quota sampling. Respondents who answered questionnaires were generally more experienced with Harare grocery retailers. Only 27.2% reported having interacted for 5 and below years with Harare grocery retailers, while 72.8% reported having shopping experience of 6 years and above. The sample was balanced in terms of gender as 55.2% of them were men and 44.8% were women. The questionnaire contained the seven consumerism dimensions namely; product, pricing, promotion, employee behaviour, customer service, environment and social responsibility. Each dimension had a minimum of 5 specific sub-items that described the consumerism issues in a more behavioural way. For example, the pricing dimension contained its sub-elements which covered price gouging, predatory pricing, deceptive pricing, price discrimination and price collusion. The overall reliability statistic showing Cronbach's Alpha values of each consumerism dimension were calculated and presented on Table I below.

**Table I: Reliability Coefficients for Consumerism Dimensions**

Consumerism Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha value
Product	0.629
Pricing	0.493
Promotion	0.243
Customer service	0.264
Employee Behaviour	0.772
Environmental	0.542
Social responsibility	0.761
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.738</b>

A reliability value of 0.74 is generally acceptable since it is around the 0.80 benchmark. Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 15) and Microsoft Excel. The results were presented in form of graphs, charts and tables. The discussion of results was based on the basic mean analyses and t-test hypothesis analyses. The mean benchmark for basic mean analyses was 2.75 where a value about 2.75 showed high preparedness on consumerism, while the mean values below 2.75 showed low preparedness. In The t-tests used the benchmark mean value of 2.50. The overall comparison of consumerism preparedness of grocery retailers considered smaller averages as indicators for consumerism preparedness, while large values showed weaknesses in consumerism levels.

#### IV. The Performance Of Grocery Retailers On Consumerism Issues

This is covered by discussion on the mean value, t-test hypothesis analyses, presentation of the consumerism model, and consumerism ranking of grocery shops in Harare.

##### 4.1 The Mean and T- test Hypothesis Analyses

The findings provide the results of the research on how consumers perceived retailers to be sensitive to consumerism issues in Zimbabwe. The discussion covered the basic mean value analyses and t-test hypothesis analyses basing on the key consumerism dimensions given on Table II below.

**Table II: Overall Consumerism Performance by Dimension**

N =210: Ranked Values	Overall mean	Reject H <sub>0</sub> if	T <sub>cal</sub>	Hypothesis Decision	Comment on Consumerism
Corporate social responsibility	2.05	T <sub>cal</sub> > 2.02	-0.45	Accept H <sub>0</sub>	Highly against consumers
Physical environmental Consumer Rights	2.39	T <sub>cal</sub> > 2.02	-0.49	Accept H <sub>0</sub>	Highly against consumers
Customer service and Consumer Rights	2.48	T <sub>cal</sub> > 2.02	-0.33	Accept H <sub>0</sub>	Generally against consumers
Employee behaviour On Consumer Rights	2.58	T <sub>cal</sub> > 2.02	+0.69	Accept H <sub>0</sub>	Generally against consumers
Promotion And Consumer Rights	2.60	T <sub>cal</sub> > 2.02	+0.89	Accept H <sub>0</sub>	Generally against consumers
Products And Consumer Rights	2.61	T <sub>cal</sub> > 2.02	+0.74	Accept H <sub>0</sub>	Generally against consumers
Pricing and Consumer Rights	2.78	T <sub>cal</sub> > 2.02	+0.76	Accept H <sub>0</sub>	Somehow against consumers
<b>Overall industry average</b>	<b>2.498476 = 2.50</b>				<b>Generally against consumers</b>

With a mean value of 2.05, which is below 2.75, social responsibility was found to be poorly attended by grocery outlets in Harare. Those gaps include their failure to assist people at funerals, failure to fill road potholes, not donating to hospitals and not supporting neighbourhood security projects. Hypothesis testing also accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that the retailers were less prepared to accommodate consumerism on this dimension. The social responsibility dimension was found to be the major area of grocery retailers' unpreparedness to accommodate consumerism. On the environmental preparedness, grocery retailers, with a mean value of 2.39 which is less than 2.75, failed on consumerism scale due to their dirty and unattractive backyards and offloading zones, and shortage of toilets around their premises. Paper, packaging and waste material from products purchased or promotion material from the shop is thrown on the pavements, road sides and outside arena. Another consumerism concern is where grocery retailers stock many products manufactured by polluters and less products of environmentally green manufacturers. The null hypothesis was accepted and led to a conclusion that Harare grocery retailers were not ready for environmental consumerism pressures. The study established that grocery retailers with a mean of 2.48 on overall customer service preparedness, were benefiting from 'change' problem at the expense of consumers and were also not worried about long-queues of customers. Customer service is also weak due to their failure to document and resolve customer complaints with urgency and respect. Some respondents complained that grocery retailers in Zimbabwe are not accepting genuine returns of faulty products by consumers. The null hypothesis was

accepted and led to the agreement that grocery retailers lacked preparedness on defending consumerism pressures.

The study also indicated that grocery retailers, with an overall mean of 2.58 on employee behavior consumerism, were not patient when dealing with customers and also lacked knowledgeability and confidence when dealing with customers. Lack of preparedness on employee behaviour consumerism by grocery retailers was also shown by their lack of empathy and compassion, and lack of commitment when dealing with customers. The study accepted the null hypothesis since there was statistical evidence to conclude that grocery retailers’ employee behavior was against the consumerism spirit. The promotion consumerism got a mean value of 2.60. Consumers complained that grocery retailers offered sales promotion rewards only to one or few lucky customers and customers interpreted that practice as ‘fooling customers’. Grocery retailers’ messages that encourage overspending by consumers, their use of messages that lie and deceive customers on product availability and benefits, and having too many in-store sales promotions to consumers that add to product costs in future showed lack of preparedness in the area of promotion consumerism. Some counters were also blamed for selling drugs and alcohol products to children. The null hypothesis was also accepted for this dimension and pointed to the need for having promotional activities sensitive to the rights of consumers. The product consumerism mean value was established to be 2.61. Grocery retailers’ consumerism unpreparedness was found to be in selling old food cooked in their in- store kitchens for some days, selling products with deceiving volumes, weight and sizes, selling some products without information on their usage and origin, and selling GMO products that can have side effects on health. The consumer fights can also come against retailers who sell products that are expired, and products that are of poor quality and not safe to use or consume. The null hypothesis was accepted and showed that grocery retailers were generally unaware about this area of consumerism. The pricing consumerism issues got an overall mean value of 2.78, which is slightly above 2.75. Though this dimension was found to be acceptable, consumerism pressure on the pricing side of grocery retailers were that of charging higher prices than normal, failure to clearly show price tags on products in shelves but only appearing at tills, and hiking prices at month-end pay days to reap from customer’s pockets. The Zimbabwean retailers were, however, found to be safe in the area of price discrimination, price collusion and predatory pricing. Though the mean value analysis regard the retailers as generally considering consumers, the statistical significance in hypothesis testing, however, showed an acceptance of the null hypothesis and led to the conclusion that these retailers were somewhat poor in the area of pricing consumerism.

#### 4.2 A Model for Consumerism Analysis

Using the mean values generated for each consumerism variable a spider gram was plotted as on Fig I below.

Figure I: Developing The Consumerism Heptagon Model(CHM).



Given that the seven dimensions were statistically weak in terms of consumerism, the researchers propose that various industries and specific firms in both developing and developed world use this model for assessing their ability to meet consumer rights. The model conveniently known as the Consumerism Heptagon Model(CHM) that gives the Marketing Mix, Environmental and Social Responsibility consumerism dimensions was proposed. This model will be used for assessing consumerism performance of service sector firms and industries in both developing and developed countries. Though the model does not explicitly mention the

‘Consumer Rights’ as given by the UN Bill of Consumer Rights, these rights are covered by analysing product safety, choice, affordability, environmental safety, respect of customers’ values and redress to complaints.

**4.3 Consumerism Ranking of Grocery Retailers**

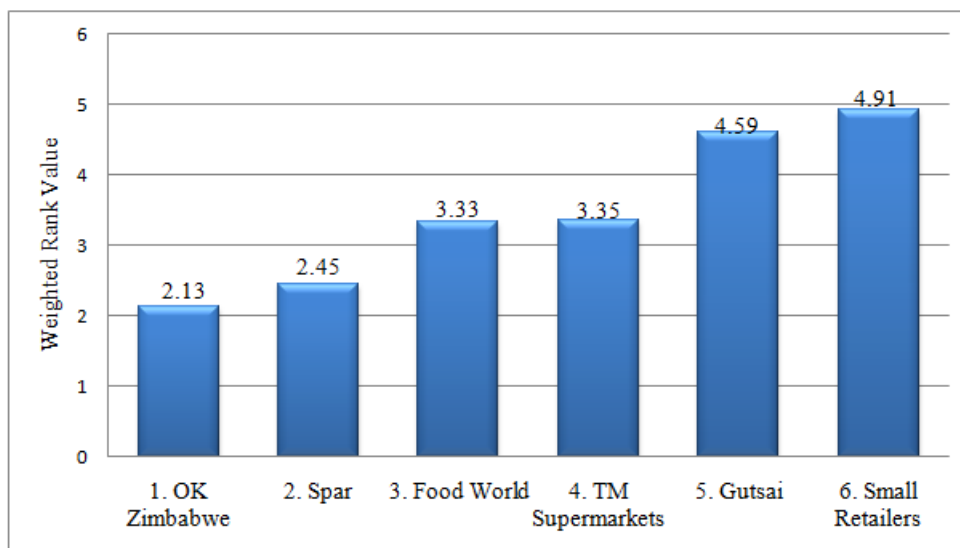
The retail customers were asked to rank the six grocery retailers on a scale of 1-High in Consumerism to 6-Least in Consumerism. All the rankings are shown by Table III and Figure II.

**Table III: Consumerism Ranking of Grocery Retailers**

	Mean Rankings	Rank
OK Zimbabwe	2.13	1 High in Consumerism
Spar	2.45	2
Food World	3.33	3
TM Supermarkets	3.35	4
Gutsai	4.59	5
Small Retailers	4.91	6 Least in Consumerism

NOTE: A small weighted figure shows high consumerism rating on this presentation.

**Figure II: Consumerism Ranking of Grocery Retailers**



NOTE: A small weighted figure shows high consumerism rating on this presentation.

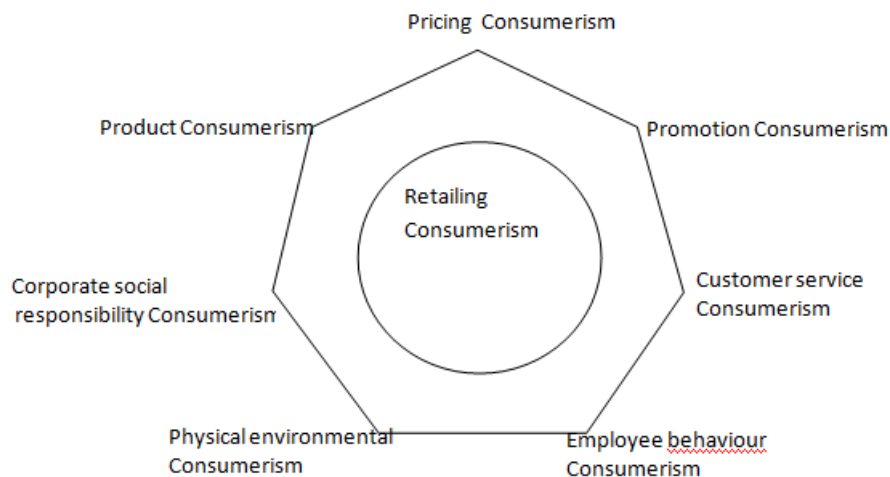
The study showed that O.K. Zimbabwe was number 1, Spar number 2, Food World number 3, TM supermarkets number 4, Gutsai number 5 and small retailers being number 6. The study rated OK Zimbabwe as a grocery retailer most prepared to meet the imminent pressures of consumerism. This could have been achieved through its high publicity on the Annual OK Grand Challenge, where customers were winning some valuable sales promotion prizes for more than 25 years. Customer complaints were addressed well in OK Zimbabwe than in other shops. This was followed by Spar shops who also showed some awareness and sensitivity to their immediate communities. TM supermarkets got a number 4 in terms of consumerism preparedness due to its weak brand recognition in the Harare market and its location in some congested and dirty places. Gutsai and the small retailers came last due to too much recycling of old cooked food and poor customer service. Poor customer complaints handling approaches also made some retailers to be regarded as highly against consumerism movement.

**V. Conclusions**

The study reached major conclusions on various dimensions on consumerism and the retail shops in Harare suburbs. Concerning products that are sold by the grocery retailers in Harare we concluded that the health and life of customers/consumers could be in danger in the short to long term. The study also concluded that local grocery retailers’ pricing and price adjustments have generally been rational and sensitive to the plight of customers. Considering the misgivings expressed by some of the respondents from this study concerning promotions in grocery retails, we concluded that some of these promotions have been used to cheat customers and this is likely to go on even into the future. Improving customer service should be the priority area of focus by any retail shop and any grocery retailer that upgrades itself on customer service might meet customer

expectations and may eventually become a retailer of choice by most customers. Employees have always been considered the face of the company and their conduct is forever a subject of customer scrutiny. This study concluded that employees of grocery retailers in Harare have not met the expectations of customers in as far as their behaviour and conduct, when dealing with customers' issues, is concerned. This study also concluded that grocery retailers were not sensitive to consumers in the up keep of their premises, immediate surroundings and general funding of environmental protection programmes. Customers are becoming more annoyed by the blatant neglect and sometimes damage to the physical environment by retailers. This study also concluded that social responsibility consumerism of grocery retailers in Harare is generally low. There was an overall acceptance on the claim that grocery retailers in Harare were not prepared to deal with the imminent aggressive consumerism pressure. The study concludes by proposing a Consumerism Heptagon Model(CHM) for measuring preparedness of businesses to consumer activism and pressure groups. Figure III below Presents The CHM model.

Figure III: Consumerism Heptagon Model(CHM).



## VI. Recommendations

Retailers are recommended to carry out internal consumerism audits and do some self evaluation, so that they can proactively identify areas that need improvement. Constant appraisal on customer care should not be taken lightly as it weighs greatly on the success or lack thereof, of any retailer. Retailers are encouraged to create an ethical marketing mix so as to have a competitive edge in the retailing industry. Activities of any grocery retailer who seeks to succeed in the long term should begin to take environmental and hygiene issues seriously. Inviting EMA inspectors is advisable so as to identify areas that lack attention or get a positive word-of-mouth if everything is well. Harare retailers should not turn deaf ears to watchdogs like CCZ, as these are capable of crippling any grocery retailer who have not met the customers' expectations. Customers of groceries are encouraged to acquaint themselves to all their rights stated in the constitution. Recommendations are also given to the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, Standard Association of Zimbabwe, Environmental Management Agency and other watchdogs to continue to fight for the rights of customers and defend their interest. The government of Zimbabwe need to introduce consumer education in schools and colleges so as to bring up responsible citizens both as consumers and retailers. Antidumping by-laws should carry heavier penalties to violators especially grocery retailers so as to stop them from violators from offending again.

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