

THE USEFULNESS OF E-GOVERNMENT PROMOTING CONSUMER'S EDUCATION: a Brazilian case from the citizen's perspective

A UTILIDADE DO GOVERNO DIGITAL NA PROMOÇÃO DE EDUCAÇÃO PARA O CONSUMO: um caso brasileiro a partir da perspectiva do consumidor

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate what is the usefulness of designed Government online platforms in their task of promoting education on Consumer Legislation to the citizen, in Brazil. It considers ICT's (Information and Communication Technologies) potential to enhance the learning process to fulfill the Government's role of educating society on such relevant matters. Four platforms from national and state-level agencies have been assessed: the SENACON National School for Consumers Defense, the SENACON Portal Education for Consumption, the PROCON MG Official Website, and the PROCON MG Facebook Page. A mixed-method approach has been adopted and both quantitative and qualitative analysis was developed by descriptive, inferential statistics and content analysis. The data was collected through an online survey. A certain level of inefficiency from the Public Sector informing consumers through the mentioned platforms has been found. There is a general lack of publicity and awareness of their existence. A positive and significant correlation has been flagged among the variables of measurement, indicating that the use of the mentioned media should be approached in an integrative manner, considering the aspects of Awareness and Publicity of the Platform's existence, and Understanding, Usefulness, and Enoughness of the content present on them. The sample prefers features of social media for educational purposes. Hence integrative platforms, promoting the fast sharing of information and the assistance of professionals in the field of interest are required.

Keywords

E-government; ICT; Education; Consumer's Protection.

Resumo

Este estudo objetivou investigar a utilidade de determinadas plataformas digitais brasileiras no cumprimento de seu papel de promover a educação concernente à Legislação do

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Consumo ao consumidor. Considera-se o potencial que as Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação (TIC) possuem para facilitar o processo de aprendizagem e contribuir para o papel do Governo em educar a sociedade sobre relações de consumo, um tema de extrema relevância. Quatro plataformas foram objeto de estudo, a saber: a Escola Nacional de Defesa do Consumidor/SENACON, o Portal Educação para o Consumo/SENACON, o Site Oficial do PROCON/MG e a Página de Facebook do PROCON/MG. Um método misto de pesquisa foi utilizado, a partir de análises quantitativas e qualitativas, através das técnicas de estatísticas descritivas e inferenciais e a análise de conteúdo. Os dados foram coletados com a utilização de um questionário online. O estudo revelou certo nível de ineficiência do Setor Público em comunicar com os consumidores a partir das plataformas, que sofrem a falta de publicidade. Uma correlação positiva e significativa foi encontrada entre as variáveis de análise utilizadas, indicando que o uso das mídias citadas devem ser abordadas em uma perspectiva integral, considerando os aspectos de Conhecimento e Publicidade sobre a existência da plataforma, bem como o Entendimento, a Utilidade e a Suficiência do conteúdo disponível nelas. Os respondentes mostraram preferência em recursos provenientes de redes sociais para o escopo educacional, demandando Plataformas integrais que promovam o rápido câmbio de informações e a assistência de profissionais do campo.

Palavras-chave

Governo digital; TIC; Educação; Proteção do consumidor.

1 Introduction

Consumer rights are of pivotal importance in nowadays world, when societies are always more organized around marketing relations of consumption for most of its practices (EFING&SCARPETTA, 2015), from eating to leisure and relaxing, for example. It becomes of great importance to protect consumers and also to educate society about the regulations on the practices around marketing relations (DESHMUKH, 2017) considering the consumer as the weakest actor who is a target of abusive and criminal behavior from producers and sellers (EFING&SCARPETTA, 2015; NASCIMENTO&SCALOPPE, 2018; BRITO&GORETTI, 2009; DE FARIAS, 2002; EFING ET AL., 2011; TEIXEIRA, 2002; DEVI ET AL., 2016).

In Brazil, the expert on Consumer's Rights, Dori Boucault reminds us of standard abusive practices of sellers possible by the ignorance of consumers regarding protective laws on consuming relations. Some examples are the combined sales of additional products or services not required by the consumer; the post sending of not requested products to consumer for further payment; the selling out of services denying the provision of a previously agreed budget; the declining of issuing tax coupon after selling (O GLOBO, 2016).

Also, the Service for Consumer Protection registers 1,023,467 calls realized by consumers just in the year 2019. 14,07% regarding consultations, while 85,93% concerning complaints and reports (MPMG, 2019). Moreover, the increasing number of people making use of the Internet in the country, and specifically the number of advanced age people, show how relevant it is for the Government to invest in effective communication for a diverse public.

E-government is a powerful means for emancipating citizens, adding value to the public, while achieving economy and efficiency to government administration at the same time (FANG, 2002; GRÖNLUND&HORAN, 2005; RUIXIN, 2016). To educate citizens in a participative model may provide to the Government the support of society on surveilling and reporting irregularities in different sectors, including regarding the processes of consumption, finally contributing to the supervision of the Law. At the same time, ICT has great potential for fostering learning. However, there is a need for investment in spreading clear information on such channels for serving the means of educating citizens (SELWYN, 2007; BOULOS&WHEELER, 2007).

Considering the right of the citizen to be educated on the matters regarding consumer's legislation and of responsibility of Government to provide such knowledge, this study aimed to discover the Usefulness of the online tools used by the Government on promoting such education for citizens. Its relevance lies in the lack of studies assessing Brazilian e-government from the citizen's perspective.

Hence, the research objective was to discover whether the designed platforms are serving the purpose of educating citizens and to what extent they do. Afterward, to find the communication gaps between the platforms and the public, preventing them from achieving their objectives ultimately. It also explores how to improve the Usefulness of such media on society's education regarding Consumer Legislation.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 *Consumer's rights in Brazil*

To consume is a primary needed practice around which the predominantly urban society is organized nowadays (EFING&SCARPETTA, 2015). Besides, many authors cite the consumer's status as the most vulnerable part of the consumption relations, as the part that must be protected (EFING&SCARPETTA, 2015; NASCIMENTO&SCALOPPE, 2018; BRITO&GORETTI, 2009; DE FARIAS, 2002; EFING ET AL., 2011; TEIXEIRA, 2002; DEVI ET AL., 2016) citing also how the awareness on the regulations of consuming takes a significant role for the protection of consumers (DESHMUKH, 2017).

The development of consumer rights regulations over the world is related to the industrialization and mass production and consumption promoted from this process. Accordingly, such movement reached Brazil from the U.S, during the process of industrialization and modernization of the country (TASCHNER, 2000).

As the first outcome, in 1978, the governing of the State of São Paulo created the State System for Consumer Protection in São Paulo. Also, PROCON (State -level Program for Consumer's Defense and Protection) of São Paulo, was the first one established in Brazil, followed by other regions (TASCHNER, 2000). In September of 1990, the Consumer's Defense Code was created, revolutionizing the treatment given by the Law to the consumer (BENJAMIN, 1993).

In 1991 the Code was implemented in practice (TASCHNER, 2000), considering the consumer as the weakest part of the consumer relations, the one who must rely on protection, so to ensure security to the citizen, when consuming. Besides, the Code considers a fundamental right to consumers the simplified access to Justice and its defense (BRITO&GORETTI, 2009). Hence, we believe that to guarantee such, it's essential to first, provide citizens with the proper access to information regarding the Code itself.

Taschner (2000) cites that the Brazilian Code on Consumer's Rights is known as very developed. She makes the point though that, ever since it was created, not enough investment has been made in promoting the education of consumers. As a result, not much awareness on the matter has grown among society. It is well-known that in Brazil consumers have their rights hurt due to abusive practices of sellers, mainly given the lack of information and knowledge regarding the Code for Consumer's Defense (NASCIMENTO&SCALOPPE, 2018; SOLEIS, 2016; O GLOBO, 2016).

2.2 *E-government and ICT educative potentialities*

E-government and the use of ICT technologies by the public administration can be understood as a means for making the Government responsible for accountability and for providing citizens with information and services. E-government practices must contribute to increasing democracy in a country while improving communication among administration and ordinary citizens (PHANG&KANKANHALLI, 2008; CÁRDENAS,2004).

Regarding the public information provided by e-government to the citizens, there is increasing use of ICT facilities. Of great relevance is the equality of access to such information, as well it is the delivery of complete and objective information to civilians (MACH, 2008) which should be considered by the light of the public demand, that is, citizens.

There are many studies dedicated to diversities of aspects of e-government implementation and evaluation. Although by different focuses, most call relevant the action of centering the public when designing the practices and the guidelines on the e-government implementation, according to the context it is inserted. Different authors emphasize, in many studies about e-government, the citizen's pivotal role in the use of Web 2.0 by the Government, as for the transformation of the government administration (OSBORNE 1992; CORDELLA, 2012; AL RAWAHI ET AL., 2016; SAMI ET AL., 2018; CHU&TSENG, 2018; YOTAWUT, 2018; CORDELLA ET AL., 2017; HUI&HAYLLAR, 2010; CORDELLA&TEMPINI, 2015)

On the other way along, studies from different areas demonstrate common points related to ICT technologies assisting in the learning process. Web 2.0 was showed valuable means for incentivizing the education among students – primarily through the use of Facebook (SELWYN, 2007), among patients or seekers of health knowledge (BOULOS&WHEELER, 2007), besides among university students (SELWYN, 2007).

These studies admit a need for more elaborated use of such platforms for serving the means of education, making the best use of the potentialities present on them. Accordingly, we believe that e-tools used by the Government have a vivid capacity for educating citizens on a variety of relevant matters, as ICT technologies and Web 2.0 are at their core. Also,

following the above-mentioned studies, continuous improvement of such media is needed. Thus, it becomes a pivotal process to evaluate their Usefulness, providing what they are meant to, as proposed by this study.

2.3 *E-government on Brazil: Background and status*

In similarity with many other countries, Brazil implements ICT on Government as part of a broader plan for the transformation of the government delivery of services. It carries objectives such as economy, efficiency, and efficacy, keeping the public value on the central role of such process, as shown by extensive bibliography (DINIZ ET AL., 2009; MEDEIROS&GUIMARÃES, 2005; JARDIM, 2007). Since the 70s, the public sector started to use ICT in the internal management processes (DE BITTENCOURT ET AL., 2000), implementing a strategic e-government planning from 2000, followed by a line of different technical, political, and social initiatives and investments (OECD, 2018).

In 2002, Almeida (ALMEIDA, 2002) developed a study on the Brazilian e-government and found that many services were already available online. However, he pointed out the need for integration of different platforms and also the need for decentralization. An assessment of Brazilian e-government status carried by OECD in 2018 reveals that 61% of the population admit to having accessed some public service online in 2016, showing an increasing demand for developing Brazilian e-government.

In a study analyzing the primary Platform for the Brazilian Government, Jardim (2007) concludes that the website is shaped according to the perspective of the Government, instead of bringing the intuitive approach useful to ordinary citizens to find information according to their interests quickly. Also, the limited level of interactivity and coverage of information are pointed, challenging the Usefulness of the Platform (JARDIM, 2007)

Adding to the argument, Damian, and Merlo (2013) point out the necessity for the development of more studies on e-government focused on the assessment of the services delivered to the citizen. Their investigation shows that most of the studies published in the field are regarding technical aspects of e-governmental platforms.

2.4 *Platforms for consumers*

SENACON is the National Consumer's Secretary. Part of the Justice Ministry, it was created in 2012 and is regulated by the Code of Consumer's Defense. One of the Platform's objectives it to assure the exercise of Consumer's Rights and to promote harmonic consumption processes. It acts on both national and international scenarios promoting dialogues for its cause (SENACON, 2019).

The platforms from SENACON found to be relevant to be considered in the study are the Platform SENACON National School for Consumers Defense and the SENACON Portal Education for Consumption.

The SENACON Portal Education for Consumption (SENACON, 2019) is aimed to make available to the citizens the materials on consumer's education produced by The Federal Government, The Organs for Consumer's Defense (Procons), and the Civil Entities from all the country.

The SENACON National School for Consumers Defense (GOVERNO FEDERAL, 2019) promotes training through education by distance on varieties of topics related to consuming processes, including the protection to consumers. The courses are opened to the general public.

PROCON is the State-level Program of Consumer's Protection and Defense. It is present in each District of the country. In the state of Minas Gerais, the Procon is part of the Public Ministry, being responsible for coordinating the State-level Policies for processes of consumption (MPMG, 2019)

Nowadays, PROCON is an agency that assists the population with problems on the consume relations, but also, provides educative material aiming to spread knowledge and awareness regarding the rights and duties of consumers, to the general society (COSTA&HENNIGEN, 2012), playing a relevant role in the matter. (SENNA, 2009).

The Procon MG platforms considered for this study are the PROCON Official Website (MPMG, 2019) and the Facebook Page PROCON MG (PROCON, 2019).

2.5 *Variables for investigation: Publicity and Clearness*

The Brazilian legislation states that one of its objectives is to educate society about the behavior expected from citizens, delimiting their rights and duties. Besides, it also establishes the necessity for being clear, publicized, and accessible, to guarantee efficiency (Portal, 2019). Similarly, the research proposed here admits that the communication of the Government toward citizens should be clear, publicized, and accessible. Also, it acknowledged that the e-government tools provided for assisting the consumers must be educative, as a means to achieve efficiency. For this study, Publicity and Clearness are guidelines considered for assessing the Usefulness of the abovementioned platforms, which are aimed to educate citizens regarding Consumer's Legislation.

3 Methodology

For serving the objectives of the present Exploratory study, a mixed-method approach has been implemented. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are applied so to provide a broader understanding of the topic. The methods have been implemented at once, concerning the data collection, through the use of a questionnaire. The data analysis was first quantitative and later qualitative. Afterward, the discussion considers both analyses.

The sample was geographically delimited in the State of Minas Gerais, in Brazil, chosen through a convenience sampling method. The State is among the top more populous of the country, ranking in the fourth position regarding the geographic area. It is part of the Southeast Region of Brazil and occupies the third position on GDP (gross domestic production) within the country. The Southeast Region, also composed of the States of Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo is the economic centre of Brazil (IBGE, 2019). Both quantitative and qualitative questionnaire was widely spread to students of the Federal University of the mentioned State, and among their families and friends.

For the sample size, the target was the ratio of 1:10, since it is a generally adopted and accepted ratio (SCHREIBER ET AL., 2006). Hence, for each question of the questionnaire, a minimum of 10 respondents was necessary so to reach the requirements to run quantitative data on SPSS properly. Thus, a minimum of 200 respondents was required for the questionnaire applied. At the end of the data collection, a total of 260 participants have answered the structured questions, part of the Quantitative Survey. As for the Qualitative Survey, 230 respondents have responded to the first question, while 223 have responded to the second one.

The Quantitative Survey Questionnaire was designed considering the variables chosen to measure the Usefulness of the platforms, which are Publicity and Clearness. Some relevant elements regarding the use of the platforms had been considered within these variables. Those constructs are Awareness and Publicity for the variable Publicity and Understanding, Usefulness, and Enoughness for the variable Clearness, as explained below:

Chart 1 – Variables for investigation

Variable Publicity	Meaning
Construct Awareness	Citizens' awareness regarding the existence of the Platform.
Construct Publicity	Citizens' opinion regarding how publicized the Platform is.
Variable Clearness	Meaning
Construct Understanding	Citizens' feedback about how easy the content of the Platform is for his/her understanding.
Construct Usefulness	Citizens' opinions about how practical the content of the Platform is in guiding the consumer in situations of a violation.
Enoughness	Citizens' opinions about how enough the content of the Platform is to educate consumers.

Original Source, 2020

The questionnaire contains 5 questions for each one of the 4 Platforms, adding up 20 structured questions, accessed by a scale from 1 to 5. It was set available online through Google Forms, so to allow the convenient self-administration online of the questionnaire, by the sample of respondents.

All the structured questions of the questionnaire were measured according to the Likert Scale (JOSHI ET AL., 2015) of 1 to 5, where 1 means Strongly Agree, 2 means Agree, 3 means neutral, 4 means Disagree and 5 means Strongly Disagree.

The data was collected from the Google Form and later exported to Microsoft Excel, where the questions have been nominated as items to be run on SPSS. Once on SPSS, a simple correlation among the items was run for each one of the platforms, separated. Also, Bartlett's Test and the Descriptive Statistics were run, for the whole data set.

The Descriptive Statistics and Frequencies from SPSS provided information regarding how the sample relates to the items studied of the platforms, and regarding the platforms' use.

The Correlation provided insights on the relationships among the variables studied divided by each platform, showing how the items move together and suggesting how to treat them for the whole approach of the media.

The Qualitative Survey Questionnaire was designed as the last section of the Quantitative Questionnaire applied. It was composed of 2 semi-structured questions regarding first, where do consumers search for information on the matter studied and why their preferences. Second, when information is searched: whether at any moment, for educative purpose and as a preventive action, or if only after suspecting a violation, as remedy action.

The range of the output gotten from the sample was very comprehensive, and much information was provided regarding different aspects of the sample's behavior and preferences when concerning processes of consumption, practices, and violation of consumer rights.

The qualitative data was assessed by content analysis through the identification of patterns and connections among the responses. The analysis was composed of three steps to guarantee the attainment of true significance for the interpretation of the data. The first one was the pre-analysis when a general reading of the whole material was done, for the first organization of it and preparation for the next steps. The second was the exploration of the data when the criteria for the codification was established. The third step was the interpretation of the material when a comparative analysis of the different categories of collected information was done.

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 1 - Correlations Platform SENACON National School for Consumers Defense

	1_AWA	2_PUB	3_UND	4_USE	5_ENO
1_AWAPearson Correlation	1	,596**	,318**	,433**	,368**
Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,000
N	260	260	260	260	260
2_PUB Pearson Correlation	,596**	1	,355**	,462**	,492**
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000
N	260	260	260	260	260
3_UNDPearsonCorrelation	,318**	,355**	1	,643**	,609**
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000	,000
N	260	260	260	260	260
4_USE Pearson Correlation	,433**	,462**	,643**	1	,644**
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,000
N	260	260	260	206	260
5_ENOPearson Correlation	,368**	,492**	,609**	,644**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	
N	260	260	260	260	260

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1_AWA = Awareness; 2_PUB = Publicity; 3_UND = Understanding; 4_USE = Usefulness; 5_ENO = Enoughness.

Original source, 2020

Regarding the Platform SENACON National School for Consumers Defense it was found: For the variable Awareness, 19% of the respondents report knowing the platform, while 67% report not knowing it. 14% of the sample is neutral. Under Publicity, 13% believe that the

Platform is very publicized, while 66% disagree. 21% are neutral. Regarding Understanding of the Platform's content, 35% of the sample agree that the content is of easy understanding. 14% disagree, and 51% are neutral. Under Usefulness, 29% of respondents agree with the statement that the content on the Platform is a practical guide in cases of violation of rights within processes of consumption. 18% disagree, and 53% are neutral. Finally, 21% agree that the content of the Platform is enough to educate consumers, while 23% disagree, and 56% are neutral. Besides, a positive and significant correlation has been flagged among each one of the variables above mentioned, at the level of 0.01.

Table 2 - Correlations SENACON Portal Education for Consumption

	1_AWA	2_PUB	3_UND	4_USE	5_ENO
1_AWA Pearson Correlation	1	,599**	,439**	,413**	,400**
Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,000
N	260	260	260	260	260
2_PUB Pearson Correlation	,599**	1	,399**	,463**	,474**
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000
N	260	260	260	260	260
3_UND Pearson Correlation	,439**	,399**	1	,827**	,666**
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000	,000
N	260	260	260	260	260
4_USE Pearson Correlation	,413**	,463**	,827**	1	,694**
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,000
N	260	260	260	206	260
5_ENO Pearson Correlation	,400**	,474**	,666**	,694**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	
N	260	260	260	260	260

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1_AWA = Awareness; 2_PUB = Publicity; 3_UND = Understanding; 4_USE = Usefulness; 5_ENO = Enoughness.

Original source, 2020

Regarding the SENACON Portal Education for Consumption it was found: For the variable Awareness, 19% of the respondents report knowing the portal, while 67% report not knowing it. 14% of the sample is neutral. Under Publicity, 12% believe that the Portal is very publicized, while 61% disagree. 27% are neutral. Regarding Understanding of the Portal's content, 33% of the sample agree that the content is of easy understanding. 15% disagree, and 52% are neutral. Under Usefulness, 28% of the respondents agree with the statement that the content on the Portal is a practical guide on cases of violation of rights within processes of consumption. 19% disagree, and 53% are neutral. Finally, 17% agree that the content of the Portal is enough to educate consumers, while 29% disagree, and 54% are neutral. Besides, a positive and significant correlation has been flagged among each one of the variables above mentioned, at the level of 0.01.

Table 3 – Correlations Facebook Page PROCON MG (Minas Gerais)

	1_AWA	2_PUB	3_UND	4_USE	5_ENO
1_AWA Pearson Correlation	1	,660**	,481**	,501**	,275**
Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,000
N	260	260	260	260	260

2_PUB	Pearson Correlation	,660**	1	,485**	,579**	,459**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
3_UND	Pearson Correlation	,481**	,485**	1	,795**	,426**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000	,000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
4_USE	Pearson Correlation	,501**	,579**	,795**	1	,608**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,000
	N	260	260	260	206	260
5_ENO	Pearson Correlation	,275**	,459**	,426**	,608**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1_AWA = Awareness; 2_PUB = Publicity; 3_UND = Understanding; 4_USE = Usefulness; 5_ENO = Enoughness.

Original source, 2020

Regarding the Facebook Page PROCON MG (Minas Gerais) it was found: For the variable Awareness, 27% of the respondents report knowing the page, while 58% report not knowing it. 15% of the sample is neutral. Under Publicity, 20% believe that the Page is very publicized, while 44% disagree. 36% are neutral. Regarding Understanding of the Page's content, 41% of the sample agree that the content is of easy understanding. 12% disagree, and 47% are neutral. Under Usefulness, 30% of the respondents agree with the statement that the content on the Page is a practical guide on cases of violation of rights within processes of consumption. 17% disagree, and 53% are neutral. Finally, 17% agree that the content of the Page is enough to educate consumers, while 33% disagree, and 50% are neutral. Besides, a positive and significant correlation has been flagged among each one of the variables above mentioned, at the level of 0.01.

Table 4 - Correlations PROCON Official Website

	1_AWA	2_PUB	3_UND	4_USE	5_ENO	
1_AWA	Pearson Correlation	1	,633**	,535**	,468**	,394**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
2_PUB	Pearson Correlation	,633**	1	,459**	,563**	,462**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
3_UND	Pearson Correlation	,535**	,459**	1	,716**	,476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000	,000
	N	260	260	260	260	260
4_USE	Pearson Correlation	,468**	,563**	,716**	1	,603**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,000
	N	260	260	260	206	260
5_ENO	Pearson Correlation	,394**	,464**	,476**	,603**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	260	260	260	260	260

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

1_AWA = Awareness; 2_PUB = Publicity; 3_UND = Understanding; 4_USE = Usefulness; 5_ENO = Enoughness.

Original source, 2020

For the variable Awareness, 38% of the respondents report knowing the Website, while 46% report not knowing it. 16% of the sample is neutral. Under Publicity, 24% believe that the Website is very publicized, while 43% disagree. 33% are neutral. Regarding Understanding of the Website's content, 40% of the sample agree that the content is of easy understanding. 11% disagree, and 49% are neutral. Under Usefulness, 33% of the respondents agree with the statement that the content on the Website is a practical guide on cases of violation of rights within processes of consumption. 14% disagree, and 54% are neutral. Finally, 23% agree that the content of the Website is enough to educate consumers, while 29% disagree, and 48% are neutral. Besides, a positive and significant correlation has been flagged among each one of the variables above mentioned, at the level of 0.01.

4.2 Results: Sampling Adequacy

Table 5 - KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	,894
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square Sphericity	4493,516
	df
	190
	Sig.
	,000

Original Source, 2020

The measure of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin number is adequate to evaluate the adequacy of the sample size. Different researchers may stand for different KMO numbers like the minimum acceptable for the sample to be considered sufficient.

However, 0.5 is conventionally the minimum acceptable KMO value (ADI ET AL., 2016). For the data collected, we found the number 0.894, which can be considered a great value. Hence such a result contributes to indicate the reliability and adequacy of the sample.

5 Discussion

5.1 Citizens' Attitude

Many respondents mention consulting information concerning their rights from the supplier itself, including when suspecting of any violation. Moreover, a typical behavior found is to attempt to negotiate primarily with the supplier, before seeking other supports. Also, some respondents say that when experiencing a violation, they would search for assistance in severe cases.

These findings suggest that the consumer is highly relying on the supplier to guarantee respect for his/her rights. While searching to negotiate with the supplier can be an excellent strategy to try a simplified resolution of concrete problems – as proposed by the public Platform Consumidor.gov.br -, a particular problem is posed when the consumer is not conscious regarding Consumer's Legislation and depend upon the strongest side on the relationship, there is, the supplier, to inform about his/her rights when there is a conflict of interest present.

At the same time, respondents show dissatisfaction with the available treatment from suppliers toward the consumers, reporting to feel disrespected while in consumer's relation frequently. Some of the most cited problems are many cases of abuse from telephone companies, the application of abusive charges, the lack of assistance when a call for warranty, the misleading advertisement, the application of improper billing and, the general scarcity of assistance from the sellers. Hence, such behavior from the sellers reported by consumers is one more evidence of the danger of relying on sellers and suppliers to get information or clarifications of the Consumer's Right, as well as resolutions.

Although many of the respondents report to search for the information on consumer relations only when suspecting a violation – what explains the higher Awareness regarding the agency of PROCON, which collects complaints of abuses - some of them still look for it for the mean of educating themselves to prevent violations. Many report little knowledge on the issue, besides a regret for such a condition, and a wish to learn more for protecting themselves and preventing breaches from suppliers or sellers.

5.2 *Platforms' Publicity*

Regarding the Publicity of the platforms, two facts have been observed. Whether people are aware of the existence of each one of the platforms and, whether people evaluate each one of them as well-publicized or not. It has been found a general lack of awareness regarding all the media accessed by the study.

Also, the majority of the participants in the survey believe that the platforms are not well-publicized. This indicates a lack of familiarity with the platforms and their existence. Some may have already faced the media before but, do not remember them, specifically. The platforms are not referential for the majority of the respondents when searching for information regarding Consumers' Rights.

The Internet is pointed as a preferred means to search for information regarding the matter. Many reasons are used to justify it, among them and closely related, the possibility of accessing the information at any time and the facility of accessing it online and hence, faster. Many people report how the media emphasizes that PROCON should be searched in person, instead of online though. A considerable number of people responded to know PROCON agencies and offices but not knowing about its existing online platforms.

When searching, it has been found that PROCON admits a lack of preparation to deal online with most of the cases. While it is understandable when regarding the negotiation or solving-conflicts matters, it is problematic that people usually do not seek PROCON online including as educative means, for avoiding the misleading traps. The reports suggest that the educative role of PROCON as a preventive of violation is not well known by the public.

Another point to highlight is that the physical agencies have a limited period to serve the public, so it is that some respondents say that they search for assistance in case of severe violation of rights, given the inconveniences experienced to solve a problem finally.

For such reason, we emphasize the urgent need of investing in publicizing the existence of the platforms and actually of having intuitive-use platforms that will attract the citizens to engage in educating themselves for the Consumer's Relations.

The Internet is also the search engine people seek because they ignore the existence of the mentioned platforms besides they do not have any referential platform to check for information. It has been pointed out the lack of knowledge about the presence of a centralized platform that facilitates the finding of different information in itself.

5.3 *Platforms' Clearness*

Concerning the Clearness of the Platforms, three aspects were used to indicate it. Whether the platform's content is of easy understanding to respondents, its content is practical in guiding on how to act in cases of violations, and, whether the respondents consider it enough to educate consumers about Consumer's Legislation.

The responses show a general unsatisfactory level of Clearness of the content of each one of the platforms. The number of people who report that the content of the media is of easy understanding is deficient when comparing to the total level of respondents, so it is the number of respondents who consider the content of the platform practical and enough to guide and educate the consumers. Some respondents report to have known about some of the platforms for the first time when answering the survey, and besides, to have accessed it by the link provided on the questionnaire to be able to give an opinion on the platform.

Although most respondents prefer to use the research engines of the Internet to search straight the answer for their need, others show the worry about not getting a precise response, when redirect to not official websites. As a result, they instead seek information on the Code for Consumer's Defense even though the problematic language was pointed.

The preference to search for information from people who have experienced similar cases before is justified by the inaccessibility of the language found on the Code, for example. Sometimes, to solve the problem, people will ask familiars of friends who are professionals in fields that require such knowledge or lawyers. In other cases, they will ask a friend or familiar who they believe to know about the topic, regardless of the profession.

In accordance, citizens will increasingly seek to access public services online. In this case, the sample showed a preference for having the possibility of checking for the experience of other people, in similar circumstances that they are experiencing themselves. Hence, many characteristics of a connected society that values the network exchange for searching knowledge have been found.

When considering the Connectivism Theory, explains the learning process by the interactive and complex connections established within the digital era (SIEMENS, 2004). Such preferred behavior for learning was found in the sample.

Among other principles, the Theory considers that a variety of standpoints produce learning and knowledge, and, to easier, steadily learning, it is pivotal to support and sustain connections (SIEMENS, 2004). Thus, it must also be considered when designing and maintaining public platforms that aim to educate society regarding any matter

5.4 *Correlated aspects of the Platforms*

In all the platforms, a positive and significant correlation has been flagged among the variables Awareness, Publicity, Understanding, Usefulness, and Enoughness. We can

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conclude that when a respondent is aware of the existence of a certain platform, he/she is likely to consider the platform well publicized. When the platform is well-publicized, then, the respondent is likely to be aware of its existence.

When increased Awareness of a particular platform, then all the other aspects of Publicity, Understanding, Usefulness, and Enoughness are also growing. Hence, as expected, the Publicity of the platform is an essential aspect to be considered, so that the others can be addressed. Other meaningful correlations show that:

Increasing the Publicity of a platform also increases its Usefulness. It means that as the platform is made known by the public, more its content will guide people on how to act in violation cases, which suggests the extent of efficiency of the content on the platforms. However, a detailed assessment of each platform may be needed to draw specific conclusions for each one of the platforms regarding the strong and weak aspects of the contents. Similarly, the more practical is the content of the platform in guiding the consumers, the more publicized it will be. Hence, there is a demand for practical content that properly guides the consumers for situations of daily consumer's life.

As the Understanding of the content of the platform raises, that is, the content is of easy understanding for the consumer, more useful it will be in guiding the consumers. On the other way along, as practical guiding, the content is, easily, the consumer will understand it. Thus, the content must be made of an easy, intuitive language in order to be practical to the citizen. Also, it must be practical to improve the understanding of the content.

Easiest is the content of the platform for the understanding of the citizen, more sufficient it will be to educate people to the Consumer's Relations finally. Also, if the content is enough for consumer's education, it will be of easy understanding for the citizen. Once more, the language used to communicate on the platforms is moving together with a relevant factor, which is the sufficiency of the content. More practical is the content of the platform in guiding the consumers on real threats, more sufficient will the content be for the education of consumers. It suggests that a platform that is enough to educate consumers is also practical in guiding them.

As the Information Theory claims, there is a limit of information that can be possibly passed from the speaker to the acceptor. The message goes through an encoding process before it passes on the channel used, which produces noise so that it will be finally codified by the acceptor (STONE, 2015). To diminish the noise caused by the passage channel is a possibility to maximize the limit of the channels to pass the information (STONE, 2015). In this case, the platforms are the channels used by the Government, the speaker, to communicate with the citizens, the acceptors. As channels, it produces noises that will decrease its overall capacity to pass information.

The noise is any adulteration or pollution of the original message meant to be passed by the speaker, produced in the context of the channel. The noises can be interpreted as any barrier for the passage of the original message, as social, psychological, and cultural (STONE, 2015). For this study, the language and the dimension of the contents provided on each platform can also be considered noise if its format does not facilitate the passage of the message.

Hence each one of those aspects of Clearness must be addressed by the light of the communication with the citizens, as receivers of the information. Moreover, the Publicity of the Platforms is an integrated aspect for its effectiveness in providing the desired effect on educating citizens, as shown by the correlations. Those points need to be addressed together for a better result.

6 Final Recommendations

Different challenges are attempting against the Usefulness of the platforms. The findings underline especially the lack of Awareness and Publicity of the platforms. The shape and the content of the platforms also present some gaps, that once more, influence their publicity. It has been found that although most of the respondents make use of the Internet to search for information on consumer legislation, the majority of them do not know about the existence of the platforms studied. Also, respondents affirm to have not much education regarding consumer legislation. Hence, a level of inefficiency of the public sector to deliver the information, as well as of the platforms has been found. Citizens from different ages and backgrounds do actively access the Internet for searching for information and many to get aware of Consumer's Legislation, and they are still not aware of the existence of the mentioned platforms.

Findings show the existence of some gaps for the platforms to reach the expectation, needs, and tastes of the citizens, when searching for the topic consume. Because it has been found that people do not have the platforms as a reference, we can conclude that it also imposes a challenge for their Publicity, since the public is not likely to suggest a platform that is not a reference to them, or simply unknown.

The survey could catch some inputs concerning relevant aspects to be considered when designing a platform to educate about Consumer's Legislation, able to serve the public, finally adding public value. The behave of the consumers show a consonance with Siemens' Connectivism Theory (Siemens, 2004) respecting the preference of connected online environments for learning. As the authors Selwyn (2007), Boulos & Wheeler (2007) and Ajjan & Hartshorne (2008) also defend, there is a positive influence on the learning process aroused by the exchanging.

The sample showed very regular use of the Internet to learn about new information, and likewise for Consumer's Legislation. The citizen is looking for fast ways to get information and also to solve any problem related to consumer violation—the reason why the Internet always becomes more used and preferred when compared to physical approaches to agencies. Besides, people showed an inclination to search for similar experiences of other consumers, as an easy method to find answers for their questions but also get aware of possibilities before choosing how to approach the violation.

For such reasons and considering other findings reported above, platforms that suit better the needs of the citizens must work more like social media to the extent that the exchange of information among a network of people arouses learning. However, there must be some mechanisms to guarantee that people can easily find the information that they are looking for.

Search engines can be helpful to direct the specific cases that people are searching for. Still, the whole use of Artificial Intelligence mechanisms and algorithms on Information and Communication Technology may facilitate the encounter of the information by the searcher (RZEPKA&BERGER, 2018), as well as the building of learning networks among consumers. A section of Questions and Answers per case can also be of help for the citizens' needs. Besides, some artificial intelligent mechanisms should shape conversational networks with the necessary amount of professionals to help the exchange of knowledge and also ensure access to trustful information.

Many investments are needed on developing platforms in agreement with the needs and usages of the public so that they will approach it, aiming to become educated regarding the matter of consumption and its processes. It is a recognized relevant issue, and people showed interest in learning about it as a preventive measure of a violation. Many threats are attacking the rights of the consumers, mainly originated from the behavior of suppliers, which is a reason for a tremendous general dissatisfaction reported by the consumers. Hence, the dependence on the supplier to handle the relationship with a consumer, especially one who is not aware of his/her rights can be very harmful.

There is an urgent need to strengthen the Government investment in providing the most suitable approaches to educate society regarding consumer legislation, shifting the focus from remedying to preventing. It was shown a demand and desire from society to learn more about the matter, to protect themselves. Still, the findings suggest that public investments are highly concentrated in remedying and solving problems of violation by negotiation, instead of educating society as a means to intimidate suppliers and guarantee the rights of consumers.

Regarding the present investigation, the overall lack of awareness regarding the platforms studied was a restraining factor to draw specific conclusions regarding elements of each one of the platforms, as a means of providing detailed feedback and guidelines for improvement of them, and also, for comparisons of each one. More general findings have been discussed regarding the wide aspects of the platforms, as well as regarding the needs, behavior, and anxieties of the consumers when searching for online information concerning Consumer's Legislation. To get specific inputs from the citizen about each one of the platforms, besides being able to pinpoint the differences among them, an empirical test of the platforms with different profiles of citizens must be appropriate.

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