



A Wise Consumer

By Michelle R. Vigil, MEd, AFC candidate, NE Community Development Educator

Becoming a wise consumer consists of multiple decisions over time, choosing to spend on consumer goods and services. Awareness, research, and action can aid in your quest toward becoming a wiser consumer. Most people (consumers) enjoy getting a good or service that enhances their quality of life in some way. Think of all the consumer goods that are available to us in the United States. The choices can be overwhelming and thrilling at the same time. Beauty products, exercise equipment, vacations, home decor, vehicles, new food items, garden gadgets, pet products and more. It is exciting to me to discover a solution to my problem with an available good or service. The goal is to get the best deal on the items that you buy and have peace with your decisions. A person gets better with practice and will learn where the best deals are at that point in time. It will also depend on where you live and your access to goods and services. Time is also a factor that needs consideration when researching goods and services. I tend to put more time and research into more expensive items such as homes and vehicles, then price watch on smaller items.

Businesses get feedback through customer communication, profits, customer satisfaction, reputation and more. Consumers have the power to build or break a business, casting their economic votes through buying items. Businesses that produce goods and services that meet consumer wants are the most successful. If a good or service is exceptionally positive or negative, I tend to reach out and tell the company. It can help both parties to get their needs met.

Merriam-Webster's definition of wisdom as the: ability to discern inner qualities and relationships or insight, good sense or judgement, a wise attitude, belief, or course of action.

Keep in mind, it is your life journey and how you use your resources is your business. Each person wants a variation of things in life, ultimately it is their decision. Carefully consider your needs and wants before buying anything.

There have been several people I would consider wise consumers. They got their best deal at the time on the good or service that they wanted. Think about something you would like to buy and strategize your plan.

Person #1 got a dealer price on her new truck, over six emails. Before any dealer was contacted, she had conducted her extensive research, asked family and friends about their experience, test drove over 75 vehicles, and purchased her truck in cash.

Couple #2 waited for two years to find and purchase 100 acres of land. Before anyone was contacted, couple wrote a dream list of all the things that they wanted on this land. Many people were consulted before this endeavor. A network of professionals was asked to give hints for this business venture. Their number one mentors are viable farmers. They plan to plant micro-greens and a variety of vegetables to sell them to nearby restaurants.

Person #3 researched on Consumer Reports and got the best deal on her cell phone and plan in her area. She believed she got the best deal for her situation.

Person #4 wanted to go out to dinner at an expensive restaurant. He called ahead to ask about specials, he could save almost half-price by going to lunch. He took his date to lunch instead and they had a satisfying meal and experience.

Person #5 wanted to plant a garden, spending less than \$200 for plants, soil, pots, and supplies. She asked her gardening friends for help and they supplied her with several free plants and nearly new pots. She went to her local Extension Office and received free seeds. In addition to the seeds, she got several plant publications to aid her with best practices.

The goal is to get the best deal on the items that you purchase and have peace with your decisions. A wise consumer gets better with practice and learns what works for them when purchasing goods and services.