White Paper on Consumer Affairs 2022

[Summary]

Consumer Affairs Agency
### Part 1 Trend in consumer issues and consumer’s attitude / behavior

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### Feature

**Changing consumption patterns of young people and their participation in achieving sustainable society ~The new age where people become adults from 18 years old~**

- Section 1: Changes in surrounding environment and awareness of young people
- Section 2: Consumption behavior and consumer problems of young people
- Section 3: Young people’s participation in achieving sustainable society

### Part 2 Implementation of consumer policy

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*In this document, contents and number of consumer affairs consultations registered with PIO-NET are current as of March 31, 2022. Since PIO-NET requires a certain amount of time from accepting consultations at local consumer affairs centers, to registering the consultations, so the number of consultations in this document may increase slightly in the future.*
The number of consumer accidents reported to the Consumer Affairs Agency in FY2021 was 14,941. Among them, breakdown of 3,992 life or health-related accidents reported, 1,500 were cases of serious injuries. 10,949 property-related cases were also reported.

(Note) 1. The number of consumer accidents reported by the heads of government institutes, prefectural governors, mayors of municipalities and the head of the National Consumers Affairs Center to the Consumer Affairs Agency under the provisions in the Consumer Safety Act.

2. From June 2021, it has become necessary to report the recall of foods subject to the notification requirement due to revisions of the Food Sanitation Act and the Food Labelling Act.
A magnet set is a product made of a set of magnets with a sphere or a cube shape, and sold as a “puzzle” or “toy”. There were accidents where a child accidentally ingested multiple magnets, and those magnets stopped moving while sandwiching the walls of the stomach and intestines, resulting in those walls being punctured.

The investigation report was made in March of this year, and it was submitted to the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry that regulations on magnet sets shall be made in order to prevent them from falling into hands of children.
The number of consumer affairs consultations in 2021 was 852,000, which slightly decreased from that of the previous year. Reasons for the decline include the decrease of the number of consultations related to COVID-19 and billing fraud.

When sorting themes of the consultation by product / service types, the theme with the largest number of consultations was the one concerning “Goods in general”. This theme also covers spam e-mails and suspicious phone calls.

### Transition of the number of consumer affairs consultations

![Graph showing the transition of the number of consumer affairs consultations](image)

### TOP 10 cases of consultations on product/service types related to the consumer affairs consultation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Products and services</th>
<th>Total number of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Goods in general (ex.: spam e-mails, suspicious phone calls)</td>
<td>57,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Real estate lease</td>
<td>28,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Work &amp; construction</td>
<td>21,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Internet connection service</td>
<td>15,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other health food</td>
<td>15,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mobile phone service</td>
<td>14,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>14,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Multi-purpose loan/consumer loan</td>
<td>13,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Repair services</td>
<td>12,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>10,452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The above is the result of aggregating information of consumer affairs consultation made from April to December of 2021.

(Note) All diagrams are created based on consumer affairs consultations registered with PIO-NET (as of March 31, 2022).
When focusing on proportions of different sales/purchase patterns in themes of consultation, proportion of “mail order sales” decreased, which had increased in 2020 due to COVID-19. Among consultations on “mail order sales”, the number of consultations regarding “internet shopping” decreased. Number of consumer affairs consultations that had some connection to social networking service (SNS) continued to increase.

(Note) All diagrams are created based on consumer affairs consultations registered with PIO-NET (as of March 31, 2022).
Consumer financial detriment in 2021 was estimated to be about ¥5.9 trillion (payments made (including credit granted)) in comparison with 2020 where many consultations were about products with low unit prices such as face masks, etc., the amount increased, and reached the level almost equal to that of 2018.

### Estimated results of consumer financial detriment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contract / purchase value</td>
<td>About ¥6.4 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥7.2 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥6.6 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥5.0 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥7.3 trillion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment made (including credit granted)*</td>
<td>About ¥5.3 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥6.1 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥5.1 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥3.8 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥5.9 trillion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment made</td>
<td>About ¥5.0 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥6.0 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥4.9 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥3.6 trillion</td>
<td>About ¥5.8 trillion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*“Payment made (including credit granted)” are the sum of payments made and future payment with credit cards, etc.

(Note)  
1. Consumer financial detriment is the total expenses for goods and services related to consumer harm and problems.  
2. The estimated amount is obtained by multiplying the population over 15 with the probability of occurrence of consumer harm & problems obtained from the results of “Basic Survey on Consumer Life”, then multiplying the obtained amount with the average amount per instance of harm and problems calculated from consumer affairs consultation information, then adding the amount estimated as potential harm for elderly people, and correcting the amount obtained.  
3. Note that the awareness survey used for this estimation is based on consumer awareness, so perspectives on consumer harm and problems are different depending on the respondent, and the attitude survey includes errors due to its nature.
<Situation and reasons for consumer problems among young people>

- Such problems occur mostly in the area concerning moneymaking schemes such as side work, or the area concerning beauty.

Problems concerning moneymaking schemes may be caused by exploiting young people's mind "not to want to miss a chance", and problems concerning beauty may be caused by exploiting young people’s low self-esteem. There are not a few young people who become “friends” with a stranger through social media, and for some people, sharing a moneymaking scheme was a start of their friendship.

### Highest numbers of consultations on product / service types by young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products and services</th>
<th>15 to 19 years</th>
<th>20 to 24 years</th>
<th>25 to 29 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hair removal agent</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>1,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online games</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods in general</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult website</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating websites &amp; applications</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information distribution service</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other health food</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other cosmetics</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other piecework/side work</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Proportion of answers to the question “When you sense an opportunity, is it OK for you to lose it?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total (N=5,493)</th>
<th>People in late teens (N=240)</th>
<th>People in 20s (N=478)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Purposes and opinions concerning usage of social media

- I use it for collecting information
- I use it for communicating with acquaintances
- I use it for making new friends and acquaintances
- I have chances to purchase the product or visit the sightseeing place or spot that go viral in social media
- I use it for sharing interesting experiences of my own or my favorite products
- I use it for supporting the person I like, or sharing information about that person with people around me

(Note) Created based on consumer affairs consultation registered with PIO-NET (as of March 31, 2022).
**<Prevention of consumer problems among young people>**

- Young people have various vulnerabilities including lack of knowledge and experience.
  → Awareness raising, awareness building and consumer education corresponding to vulnerabilities of each person are needed. Also, it is important to prepare means for making it easier for young people to access consulting services, and social media can be one of them.

  → **To prevent consumer problems from ever happening, consumer education, etc. corresponding to vulnerabilities of each young person, preparation of counseling system using social media and AI, etc., and support for self-solving of such problems, will be worked on.**

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**Vulnerabilities of young people**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerability</th>
<th>People in late teens (N=240)</th>
<th>People in 20s (N=478)</th>
<th>Total (N=5,493)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge and experience</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to solve worry or anxiety, or to change one’s current situation</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem or anxiety about future</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling that one is not good at communication</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling that one is not good at communicating one’s thoughts clearly to others</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in the number of persons to consult with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of COVID-19, frequency of attending school became less often than before, resulting in less opportunity for young people to make friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of economic resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency on income of their parents, or money sent from them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient employment income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Usage situation of social media**

(Note) Created from the “Basic Survey on Consumer Life” (FY2021) of the Consumer Affairs Agency.
<Young people’s concern towards SDGs, etc., and their participation in achieving them>

- They tend to have high motivation towards helping those who are in trouble or in need of help. On the other hand, while 40% of young people have interest in SDGs and ethical consumption, they do not actually participate in actions related to them.
- The topmost reason of not doing is “I do not know how to participate in them”.

→ It is required to make “those who are facing social issues more familiar”, and “how to participate in SDGs, etc., easier to understand”.

(Note) All diagrams are created from the “Basic Survey on Consumer Life” (FY2021) of the Consumer Affairs Agency.
<Promotion of young people’s participation in actions towards achieving SDGs, etc.>

・Young people who actually participate in such actions began to have interest in them when they learnt about them in school education or while studying abroad, etc. They have gained a sense of achievement after participating in them, which makes their participation even more proactive.

→It is important to start promoting young people’s participation from enhancing their understanding on social issues through school education, etc., and then make them realize that such issues actually involve them, and then make them well known about how to participate and also make results of their participation visible to them.

→To achieve sustainable society, “Promotion of young people’s understanding on social issues and making young people realize that such issues actually involve them”, and “Promotion of informing and educating methods for participating in ethical consumption, and making results of such participation visible” will be worked on.

Miyagi Prefecture Agriculture High School
(Received the Award in Ethical Koshien 2020)
“Deplasticization initiative for agricultural fertilizer”
- Develops a fertilizer made without using plastics, and supplies rice raised with this fertilizer to restaurants

・Students noticed plastics used for coating fertilizer flowing into the ocean when they were participating in volunteer activities.
・They developed a fertilizer made without using plastics by cooperating with a local company. They also proved its effectiveness.
・They provided rice raised with the developed fertilizer to local restaurants, thus promoting ethical consumption.

Itobanashi Co., Ltd.
CEO Fumika Date
“Making a society where quality of living of both manufacturers and users becomes richer”
- Develops a fashion brand mainly using embroidered clothes from India obtained through fair trading

・The idea of establishing a company occurred to the CEO while studying in India.
・The company has established a fair trade business model by bypassing middlemen to reduce purchasing costs, and purchasing embroidered clothes with a price higher than the average.
・The company aims to establish a business where both manufacturers (who are also sellers) and buyers (who are also users) are not required to overburden themselves.

WOTA CORP.
CEO Yosuke Maeda
“Water freedom for Everyone, Everywhere”
- Manufactures and sales of small-scale, decentralized water reuse systems

・The CEO began to have an interest in research into social issues while studying in the U.S.
・Issues of large-scale infrastructure felt during the earthquake disaster led to the idea of small-scale, decentralized water reuse systems.
・The company aims to solve social issues concerning water by reusing water.
“Part 2 Chapter 1” describes results of policies implemented by the Consumer Affairs Agency in FY2021.

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<td><strong>Section 2 Preventing consumer harm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Flexible / focused response to other various issues</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Ensuring consumer safety</td>
<td>(1) Simultaneous realization of protection and promotion of consumer profits in digital society</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Ensuring consumer opportunities for independent and reasonable selections</td>
<td>(2) Response to the spread of COVID-19, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Establishing the framework to process complaints from consumers and settle disputes</td>
<td>(3) Response to globalized development of consumer affairs</td>
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<th>Section 5 Promotion of consumer education and providing information for consumers</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Coordination and cooperation between consumers and business operators that contribute to development of sustainable society</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Promotion of voluntary efforts to improve compliance in business activities</td>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>(2) Role of the Consumer Affairs Agency Strategic Headquarters for Frontiers of Consumer Policy and its efforts</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Part 2 Chapter 2 Details of the implementation of consumer policies

"Part 2 Chapter 2" describes results of policies implemented by related ministries in FY2021.

Section 1 Preventing consumer harm
1. Ensuring consumer safety
2. Optimizing transactions and product labeling and ensuring consumer opportunities for independent and reasonable selections
3. Promoting policies that are coordinated among relevant government offices to support consumers with weakness, etc.
4. Establishing the framework to process complaints from consumers and settle disputes

Section 2 Promotion of economic / social structural reforms through consumers’ participation, etc. to fair and sustainable society
1. Coordination and cooperation between consumers and business operators that contribute to food loss and waste reduction, etc.
2. Coordination and cooperation between consumers and business operators that contribute to environmental conservation
3. Other coordination and cooperation between consumers and business operators that contribute to development of sustainable consumer society
4. Promotion of voluntary efforts to improve compliance in business activities

Section 3 Practice of “New Lifestyle”
   Flexible / focused response to other various issues
1. Practice of “New Lifestyle” and response to consumer issues regarding disasters
2. Simultaneous realization of protection and promotion of consumer profits in digital society
3. Response to the globalized development of consumer affairs

Section 4 Promotion of consumer education and providing information for consumers
1. Promotion of consumer education
2. Promotion of enlightenment activities for consumer policies

Section 5 Establishing the structure to promote consumer administration
1. Reflecting consumer opinions/ensuring consumer policy transparency
2. Establishing national systems
3. Establishing local systems