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Feature Article

Fading Receipts – a Concern for Council

Many consumers may find keeping receipts irrelevant, as shopping for groceries and other merchandise is a routine job. It may seem like a waste of time and space keeping all receipts piled up. However, this very piece of paper is most important when it comes to exercising consumer right and seeking redress just in case something goes wrong later.

Receipts contain vital information such as the items purchased, date and time of purchase, the cost of each item and the total amount paid for the products and services. It is the proof of purchase.

Receipts are also a requirement by law- as the Value Added Tax Regulations (Decree) 1991 states:

“Notwithstanding any other regulation, supplier shall not unless requested by the recipient be required to provide a tax invoice if the consideration in money for a supply does not exceed ten dollars or such amount as the Minister may from time to time, by Legal Notice declare.”

For goods/service above \$10, it is mandatory for retailers or service providers to issue receipts to consumers. If they don't, ask for one. You also have the right to request a receipt for anything under \$10.

Even businesses require receipts to last long to prepare their accounts and for auditing purposes. If these documents fade away then there is no form of evidence, for instance to claim VAT etc.

All this leads to one important point – the paper, the ink and the printer used to print the receipts.

The better the quality, the longer the receipts will last or be preserved as a source of evidence.

In Fiji, the quality of receipts issued to consumers is a growing concern and remains high on the Consumer Council of Fiji's agenda.

The Council has on several occasions noted poor quality receipts especially when consumers file their complaints for redress where the print is barely visible.

Council has also received queries from some vigilant and receipt-conscious consumers claiming that their receipts are not readable after few days.

What is the reason for the low quality receipts?

The Council ran a quick check on the type of papers and ink, business houses, traders and supermarkets use to issue receipts and invoices.

Council's findings show that mostly supermarkets opt for **bond paper** for their cash register rolls to print receipts. While this paper is said to be able to print receipts with only a life span of minimum 3 weeks, a lot depends on the quality of ink and machine used by supermarkets to do this job.

If traders use cheap quality paper which fades within days then consumers are left without evidence of their transactions, making it difficult for them to seek redress should the need arise.

Traders should opt for better quality paper and ink which are durable even in different weather conditions. For example, plastic coated paper which lasts long and does not fade away even if exposed to strong sunlight or moisture.

The Council is thus urging supermarkets and traders to provide better quality receipts as there are options available for them to upgrade their current systems.

Consumers should remember that receipts are vital for the following reasons:

1. Proof of purchase for warranties: Receipts for any major purchase such as appliances, electronics, or jewelry should be filed or kept securely for exercising warranty given on products.

2. Merchandise returns or exchanges: If and when the need arises for you to return an item, you may want to hold onto the receipt for as long as the store's return policy applies;

3. Budgeting and reconciling: Keep your receipts well to help track your expenses.

Finally, consumers must keep receipts in a safe, dry place and make a copy if they are worried about fading. To use your rights to a repair, replacement or refund you will need to keep the receipt.