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FEATURE ARTICLE

Father's Day Shopping: A Gift of Love or a Costly Mistake?

Father's Day is more than just a date on the calendar. It's a day of gathering, reflection, and appreciation for the men who have stood as providers, protectors, mentors, and role models in our lives. Across the country, families prepare to mark the occasion with gifts that range from sentimental to practical electronics, white goods, hampers, flowers, or even customized delivery packages ordered online.

But in the rush to secure "the perfect gift," too many consumers fall into avoidable traps, purchasing faulty goods, receiving disappointing deliveries, or getting caught up in misleading promotions. Each year, the Consumer Council of Fiji receives a wave of complaints following Father's Day, showing how quickly a gesture of love can turn into regret.

So before reaching for your wallet this year, pause and ask yourself: *Am I making a thoughtful purchase or a careless one?*

Electronics and White Goods

Few gifts generate as much excitement as a shiny new gadget or appliance. Imagine the look on Dad's face when he unwraps a flat-screen TV, a fridge to replace the old one, or a smartphone to stay connected with family abroad. These are practical, lasting gifts when they work as promised. However, the reality is that the Council receives complaints every year related to electronics and household appliances. These are not just minor inconveniences; they can often involve significant financial loss.

These complaints remind us that the glitter of a good deal can sometimes hide hidden problems. Asking about warranty terms, checking whether the product is new or second-hand, and ensuring the receipt is detailed are simple but powerful steps that protect your purchase.

Online Shopping

The digital era has transformed Father's Day shopping. From the comfort of our homes, we can browse Facebook pages, Instagram stores, and websites that promise "exclusive Father's Day hampers" or "limited edition gadgets at special prices." The idea is convenient and appealing especially for families with busy schedules. But with convenience comes risk. Online scams have become increasingly common, particularly around festive occasions. Pages pop up

Head Office

Level 5 Vanua House
Victoria Parade GPO, Suva
Phone: 3300792/3310183
CEO: 3305864
Fax: 3300115
Email: complaints@consumersfiji.org

Lautoka/West

Suite 4 Popular Building
Vidilo Street
P.O. Box 5396, Lautoka
Phone: 6664987
Email: consumerlkt@connect.com.fj

Labasa/North

Shop 2, Mudaliar Investment
Sangam Avenue Street
P.O. Box 64, Labasa
Phone: 8812559
Email: colbs@connect.com.fj



overnight, luring customers with glossy photos and heavy discounts, only to disappear once payments are made.

The Council has seen cases where consumers ordered luxury hampers only to receive baskets filled with low-quality, near-expiry items. Others paid for electronics online but were delivered counterfeit products with no warranty. One common theme? Sellers often operate informally, without clear business addresses, receipts, or after-sales support.

If you're shopping online for Dad this year, remember the golden rules:

- Verify the legitimacy of the seller.
- Insist on receipts or proof of transaction.
- Be cautious with upfront payments, especially to personal bank accounts.
- If something feels "too good to be true," it probably is.

Hampers and Bouquets

Not every gift needs to be high-tech. Sometimes, it's the simple gestures, a bouquet, a personalized hamper, or a surprise delivery that carry the deepest meaning. Across Fiji, many families now turn to these options, especially with the growing trend of "customized gift services." Yet even here, complaints have surfaced. Hampers that look glamorous in photos often arrive half-filled with cheap products. Bouquets ordered for delivery sometimes show up wilted, mismatched, or not at all. In some cases, deliveries have been so late that the celebration was already over.

But here's a scenario to imagine: you order a bouquet to be delivered at a specific time, planning to surprise your father during the family lunch. Hours pass, and the flowers still haven't arrived. When they finally do, they look wilted, mismatched, and nothing like the photo you saw online. Instead of enhancing the celebration, the late and disappointing delivery creates awkwardness. Or consider a hamper that is marketed as "premium." Without checking, you assume it includes high-quality items. When you open it, however, you find generic, low-value goods that don't reflect what was promised. The cost may have been high, but the value was low.

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Lautoka/West

Suite 4 Popular Building
Vidilo Street
P.O. Box 5396, Lautoka
Phone: 6664987
Email: consumerlwk@connect.com.fj

Labasa/North

Shop 2, Mudaliar Investment
Sangam Avenue Street
P.O. Box 64, Labasa
Phone: 8812559
Email: colbs@connect.com.fj



These are not isolated possibilities, they are common risks during festive shopping seasons. Consumers must be vigilant: ask for itemized lists of what a hamper contains, request real photos rather than stock images, and confirm delivery times in writing.

Red Flags to Watch Out For

Father's Day is supposed to be joyful but that doesn't mean dropping your guard. Here are some common red flags consumers should be alert to this season:

- Sellers who refuse to provide receipts or warranties.
- Ads that use vague language like "assorted items" or "premium hamper" without details.
- Online sellers who ask for full payment upfront but provide no verifiable contact details.
- Deliveries arriving late, poorly packaged, or not at all.
- Goods without clear expiry dates or labels.

"A quick question here, a closer look there it only takes a moment to protect yourself from weeks of frustration".

It's not just consumers who must act wisely. Traders and service providers must also recognize their responsibility during peak shopping seasons. Father's Day should not be a time to exploit emotions with misleading marketing or unfair practices. Transparent pricing, honest advertising, and reliable service are not just ethical, they're good business. When a consumer feels cheated, they are unlikely to return. But when they feel respected, they become loyal customers who spread positive word-of-mouth.

At the end of the day, Father's Day is about more than shopping. It's about honouring the men who have stood by us with care and wisdom. Just as our fathers taught us to be cautious and make wise choices, so too must we exercise that wisdom when spending in their honour.

Celebrate wisely, shop smart, and let your gift truly reflect the care your father deserves.

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