

Overview

The annual textbook survey conducted by the Consumer Affairs Commission is of special significance in 2008, given the internationally widespread environment of increasing prices and the attendant hardships faced by consumers of critical goods and services. Our analysis of the survey conducted in 2007 attempted to go beyond the usual examination and report on price movements and sought to give a fuller view of the book industry's structure, function and contribution.

Briefly, our research found where the structure of the industry was much deeper than the apparent distributive network of book stores. Its profile indeed reflected an industry whose linkages and value added outputs extend over printing, binding, designing, and publishing in addition to retail distribution. Therefore in addition to its contribution to the distribution sector, the book industry is indeed a part of another economic subsector (Paper, paper products, printing and publishing) whose aggregate contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the economy was 3.5% of manufacturing in 2005 (at constant value).

The aim of the survey was twofold:

- 1) To provide information to consumers which will help them to cost-effectively discharge their responsibilities as parents/guardians
- 2) To present researched evidence rather than anecdotal references concerning textbooks as critical consumer items.

The survey was planned to include data from all known outlets. With this in mind, contact was made with potential participants to confirm their willingness. The CAC subsequently received data from twenty six (26) outlets in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (including Portmore and Spanish Town) and thirty seven (37) from Rural Towns.

The CAC wishes to caution purchasers of English literature texts in particular to be aware that books with the same title may not be comparable. While text titles may be the same, prices may vary with different features such as textual notes and other printing aesthetics.