

A Study On Awareness Of Consumers Towards Consumer Rights

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Consumer Protection is not new in India. It is as old as trade and commerce itself, Kautily's Arthashastra Preaches the significance of Consumer Protection from exploitation, underweight, adulteration etc., It also highlights the strict enforcement of punishment to the cheaters. Even then, the consumers are continuously cheated by the cunning and greedy businessmen. Hence effective protection becomes imperative to the consumers. Enactment of Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was one of the most important steps taken to protect the rights of the consumers. The Act safeguard the economic interests of the consumer and ensures the free and fair trade and commerce to some extent. The consumers are now aware of their rights. They are now aware of the fraudulent business and are ready to take the legal remedy. The Indian trade and commerce, steadily move towards a new dawn. A real consumer's day will come where one can't experience any fraudulence.

Keywords: Consumer protection, Consumer rights, Adulteration

INTRODUCTION

Consumer is the center of all economic activities. In a competitive economy, it is the consumer who decides the success or failure of a business either by buying or not buying the product. But the importance of the consumer to the business has not been fully realized. In India consumers have no strong foundation for their social movement, which can protect their interest from professional sellers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Philip Kotler defines Consumerism as "a social movement seeking to augment the rights and powers of the buyers in relation to sellers". The Indian consumers in general are not aware of

the rights. Consumers may be decided in various ways by unscrupulous businessmen. A number of laws have been passed by the Government of India over the years to protect the interest of consumers. However, this legislation are not effective in protecting consumer interest as they deal with only certain aspects of consumer protection and there is no effective machinery for enforcement of these legislative measures. With the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act 1986, the Consumers' rights are protected. In order to protect the consumers, they should have awareness about their rights. Hence, the researcher has proposed to study the awareness of consumer Rights under Consumer Protection Act, 1986 in the Virudhunagar district.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

It has been observed very often that a consumer does not get right goods and services. He is charged with very high prices. The unfamiliarity of the consumers with product features makes the sale of sub standard, inferior or even defective products easier in India. Short supply of many goods and services is a very serious problem affecting the Indian consumers. It leads to hoarding, and black marketing, corruption, nepotism and arrogance towards consumers. Thus consumers awareness towards consumer rights under Consumer Protection Act 1986 have been analyzed in this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio economic status of the respondents.
2. To find out the consumer deception areas.
3. To analyse the awareness of the consumers regarding their rights.
4. To suggest measures for awareness of consumer rights.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected from the sample of 250 respondents of Virudhunagar district. The respondents are selected by using simple random sampling method. Apart from this, secondary data are collected from

books, journals and websites. The collected primary data has been analysed by using percentage analysis, mean score analysis and Kruskal Wallis test.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The socio economic variables such as age, gender, education qualification, occupation, marital status and monthly income of the respondents are analyzed through percentages.

Table- 1

Socio – Economic Profile of the Respondents

Socio Economic Variables	Particulars	No of respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 20 years	23	9.2
	21- 35 years	74	29.6
	36-50 years	95	38.0
	Above 51 years	58	23.2
Gender	Male	165	66
	Female	85	34
Educational qualification	Below HSC	95	38
	Above HSC	118	47.2
	Others	37	14.8
Occupation	Unemployed	23	9.2
	Employed	113	45.2
	Business	50	20
	Professional	64	25.6
Marital Status	Married	151	60.4
	Unmarried	99	39.6
Monthly Income	Upto Rs.10,000	80	32
	Rs.10,001 – 20,000	67	26.8
	Rs.20,001 – 30,000	58	23.2

	Above Rs.30,000	45	18
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Source: Primary data

Table1 depicts the socio economic characteristics of the respondents and it shows that (38.0%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 36 – 50 years. It is further revealed that most of the respondents (66.0%) are male. Most of the (47.2%) respondents have above HSC educational qualification. A majority of (45.2%) respondents are employed. It is further revealed that most of the (60.4%) respondents were married. Monthly income of the respondents depicts that nearly (32.0%) respondents earn upto Rs.10, 000.

Table – 2 Deception Areas in Marketing the Products/ Services

S.No	Deception Areas	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Adulteration	53	21.2
2	False Advertisement	49	19.6
3	Shortage in Weights and Measures	48	19.2
4	Sale of Duplicate	32	12.8
5	Exorbitant Price	29	11.6
6	False Guarantee	39	15.6
	Total	250	100.00

Source: Primary data

Out of 250 respondents, 53 (21.2%) are affected by adulteration, 49 (19.6%) are affected by false advertisements, 48 (19.2%) are cheated by shortage in weights and measures, 39 (15.6%) face the problem of false guarantee, 32 (12.8%) are affected by sale of duplicate and 29 (11.6%) are affected by exorbitant price.

Table – 3 Awareness of Consumer Rights

S. No	Factors	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
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1	Verify the expiry date for food/medicine products	325	208	174	72	39	818	17.92	I
2	Get information about quality, quantity purity, methods of use and so on from friends/shopkeepers	335	140	174	82	49	780	17.09	III
3	Purchase the products /services by own choice	275	288	78	106	44	791	17.33	II
4	Experience to file complaints against faulty goods/services	190	240	171	92	49	742	16.26	V
5	Get compensation against Unfair trade Practices	235	88	183	106	67	679	14.88	VI
6	Knowledge about role of consumer protection council	210	244	144	114	42	754	16.52	IV

Source: Primary data

Most of the respondents verify the expiry date for food/medicine products (17.92) as it gets I rank with the mean score of followed by ‘Purchase the products /services by own choice’ (17.33). The statement ‘Get information about quality, quantity purity, methods of use and so on from friends/shopkeepers’ gets third position and ‘Knowledge about role of consumer protection council’ obtains fourth position. Fifth rank goes to ‘Experience to file complaints against faulty goods/services and the statement ‘Get compensation against Unfair trade Practices’ receives last position.

Kruskal Wallis Test

In order to analyse the relationship between deceptive areas in marketing of goods and services and awareness of the consumers towards their rights, Kruskal Wallis test has been used. The null hypothesis framed are that:

The respondents do not have awareness about adulteration.

The respondents do not have awareness about false advertisement.

The respondents do not have awareness about shortage in weights and measures

The respondents do not have awareness about sale of duplicate

The respondents do not have awareness about exorbitant price.

The respondents do not have awareness about false guarantee.

The results of Kruskal Wallis Test are given in Table 5.

Table 5
Kruskal Wallis Test Results

Factors	Mean Rank					
	Adulteration	False advertisement	Shortage in weights and measures	Sale of duplicate	Exorbitant price	False guarantee
Verify the expiry date for food/medicine products	23.56	31.42	18.39	10.22	6.70	7.54
Get information about quality, quantity purity, methods of use and so on from friends/shopkeepers	55.67	24.47	11.49	42.21	85.30	27.40
Purchase the products /services by own choice	44.53	99.78	24.60	19.79	30.11	20.06
Experience to file complaints against faulty goods/services	11.04	20.09	17.08	18.10	19.38	54.58
Get compensation against Unfair trade Practices	23.10	19.54	26.08	18.02	22.03	18.10
Knowledge about role of consumer protection council	30.06	22.80	14.09	20.10	23.95	17.34
H value	8.520	12.57	7.49	12.94	17.64	15.04
P value	0.000	0.014	0.249	0.003	0.021	0.000
Significance	S	S	NS	S	S	S

Source: Primary data

Among the six deceptive areas in marketing of goods and services, five areas are significantly related with consumer awareness towards their rights as their p value is less than 0.05. Only one deceptive area i.e. the respondents do not have awareness about shortage in weights and measures as its p value is more than 0.05. ($0.249 > 0.05$).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Out of 250 respondents, most of the respondents belong to the age group of 36 – 50 years. They are male and their educational qualification is HSC. They are employed are married. They earn up to Rs.10,000 per month. They are affected by the problem of adulteration.

They verify the expiry date of food/medicine products and purchase the products /services by their own choice. Kruskal Wallis test reveals that the respondents do not have awareness about shortage in weights and measures.

SUGGESTIONS

- Even though the weight and measurements are printed on the package, the consumers have to check the weight again to find out the problem of shortage in weights and measures.
- When they are affected from unfair trade practices, they have to come forward to fight against such unfair business practices legally.
- They have to develop awareness about the method of filing complaint against faulty goods/services.
- They have to improve their knowledge about the functioning of consumer protection council.

CONCLUSION

Before five decades, the awareness of the consumers towards unethical business practices is low. Hence, many business firms engaged in malpractices and cheated the consumers. In order to protect the consumers from such malpractices, government framed consumer rights. After that

also, many consumers are exploited due to their ignorance. But now a days, this condition has been changed. Consumer rights are included in the curriculum of the academic institutions. Therefore, consumers understand their rights. But due to technological improvements, the fraudulent activities also increased in various forms. When consumers smell that type of activities and follows legal legislations to protect themselves, the day will be a real consumer's day.

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