

Awareness Level Of The Undergraduate Students On Consumerism In The Globalised World

*** Edward David ** Dr. M. Vakkil**

Abstract

In the globalised world with advanced technology and science, policy of liberalization, competition, globalisation has exhibited its impact on all human activities including consumerism in India. In the global economy, consumerism is the outcome of globalization and both are interrelated, beyond the boundaries of land, water, and culture, through the ever-pervading social media and communication. Globalisation leading to global market, made consumerism to extend to the search, the quest, the drive for those goods, services and experiences. In India, the consumer protection act of 1986 and its later amendments gave a legal impetus to the consumers in claiming their rights to justice. The concept of consumerism gaining prominence since two decades, in discussions and researches. The researcher has used survey method to find out the awareness level of undergraduate students on consumerism under globalisation. The total sample of 300, consisting of 100 students from three degree colleges situated in Bangalore has been selected by simple random sampling method. The consumerism awareness level of the undergraduate students has been collected through primary data. The finding of the study, clearly, exposes that 82% lack of awareness on consumerism in the globalised world. The lack of knowledge about consumer rights and protection of consumers, invites the higher education institutions to provide the consumer education along with their regular academic and technical courses, to enrich the undergraduate students to become rational and knowledgeable consumers in the future.

Keywords: Consumerism, globalisation, Consumer education

***Research Scholar, Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem-636011, Tamilnadu. Contact: Email: edwarddave@gmail.com, Mobile: 09880549251**

****Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Periyar University, Salem-636011. Tamilnadu, Contact: Email: mvakkil@gmail.com, Mobile: 9842782796**

Introduction

The present era popularly known as global era or globalization influenced every human activity immensely, giving rise to the concept of global economy, global market, global culture, global consumerism. The new economic policies of liberalization, made the international trade and contact feasible effectively producing and supplying in bulk various goods and items all over the world. Globalization and consumerism are interlinked, while the former has greater impact on the latter.

The tremendous effect of social media and communication, especially through attractive advertisements are luring the consumers in the purchase of goods and services. Still, the awareness level of undergraduates on consumerism with its protection law proves to be dismal low. This present dilemma between increased consumerism and lacunae in knowledge of consumerism and its legal implications, challenges and invites the higher education Institutions to educate the students on consumerism with its legal protection to empower them to become intelligent consumers in the future.

This paper makes an attempt to present the awareness level of undergraduate students on consumerism in the globalised world, presenting the concept of consumerism with its related topics, suggesting educational implications to educate the students on consumerism in the globalised world. The term consumerism was first coined by businessmen in the middle of 1960s, and consumerism movement that promotes the interests of buyers of goods and services. This movement strives to protect the consumers from any kind of injustice meted out to them by the suppliers ensuring justice. Consumerism also ensures proper information to the customers and obtaining compensation for damage or inconvenience caused by defective products and services.

Major measures were initiated as a part of the liberalisation and globalisation strategy in the early nineties and by this India opened up the new economy. This new policy regime radically pushed forward in favour of a more open and market oriented economy. Globalisation involves the free movement of capital, goods, people, services, technology as well as information. Globalisation is the action or procedure of international integration as an offshoot of some shared world views, products, ideas, and related aspects of cultural customs.

Review of literature

The concepts of globalisation and consumerism are interlinked and exist together. The advancement of science and technology, policy of liberalisation in international trade relationships have given rise to the concept of globalisation.

According to the study conducted by Gogineni RR et.al. (2018), Industrialization, urbanization, modernization, and globalization have contributed to significant changes in the culture of the world, more in the non-Western third world since the end of the colonial period, and the Second World War, contributing to some progressive, undesired changes. The study of Natarajan R. et al. (2018), found that the level of consumer awareness being low, proposes concrete steps from the government to raise the consumer awareness through concrete steps in increasing the consumer awareness, specially through consumer education, training and research. The success of consumerism is possible only when all the consumers are aware of their rights and responsibilities. The research study of Kangkana Chaudhury (2017), reveals that the ignorance and illiteracy of the consumers, regarding consumer protection act, 1986 and its implications, leads to consumer exploitation by the manufacturer and sellers. In order to spread the consumer awareness, the researcher, proposes a humble suggestion to the government to include the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 in the syllabus of Higher Secondary/ Degree course of all streams of the State Board/ University, to educate the next generations to know and exercise their consumer rights and responsibilities. The research study of, Uma Maheswari Devi P., Sankara Rao B. (2016), found out that, the consumers in India, not only lack consumer awareness but they have little confidence in the government and negative opinion about the existing measures. They also suggest consumer education to be made part of the curriculum and also to organize, seminars, Workshops, discussions should be conducted in the educational institutions frequently, so that, they understand the rights and responsibilities as consumers. The research paper of Mittal, Ishwar (2015), attempts to analyse the consumer awareness level towards various legislations enacted in India to protect the interest of consumers. The findings, proved that nearly one fourth consumers were aware of the legislations, one third customers were partially aware and more than one third of consumers were totally ignorant of these legislations. Saleem, et al. (2015) examined the background of brand loyalty of beverage industry among the consumers living in four cities, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, and Sargodha of Pakistan. The authors viewed that brand facilitates customers to provide their needs in the best possible way, having a perfect assurance in the quality of the product as they had relied on that

particular product before and is expected that this practice will increase the chances of repeat purchase. When people discuss and share about the brands at home, at work, with friends, or in offices most of them consider the opinion of family, friends, and their colleagues to buy any product. Jain, Sankalp (2015), study explains that, Consumerism is likely to dominate the Indian market in the next millennium, thanks to the economic reforms ushered in and the several agreements signed under the World Trade Organization. The transition will be from a predominantly “sellers market” to a “buyer’s market” where the choice exercised by the consumer will be influenced by the level of consumer awareness achieved. Aastha Verma (2015). Due to the forces of globalization in India there is a transformation in the consumer culture as the consumer of India primarily those who are residing in the cosmopolitan cities of the country are increasing adapting the culture of west, which is also evident from their purchasing behaviour as they prefer the brands of foreign origin and this phenomenon is called consumer acculturation. Kishor (2014) study based on primary sources of data collection with the basic objective of enquiring the potentiality of rural markets in Guntur District in Andhra Pradesh, enquires the pre-purchase rural consumer behavior towards consumer goods, the usage of consumer durable products in rural areas in Guntur district, to identify the role of various socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors that influences the purchasing pattern of rural consumers and to suggest some measures for effective implementation of marketing strategies by various consumer durable goods companies with reference to rural and urban areas in Guntur district. Alvi, et al. (2014) analyzed the different dimensions of the influence of consumer culture in the context of Pakistani society as its influence varied from region to region depending upon the specific socio-cultural and political frame of the culture. The study is empirical in nature aimed to explain how consumer culture has influenced the youth of Pakistan in context of their family life. In the study, two- pronged approach was developed to explain the influence of consumer culture on youth. The first approach explains the direct influence of families on youth. Prabhavathi, et al. (2014) examined the fast food preference and consumption patterns in India. The study has been conducted in two major cities in India Hyderabad and Coimbatore by selecting randomly 100 respondents. Statistical methods like Percentages, factor analysis, T-test, multifunction regression function is used. The findings of the study revealed that Young, unmarried, working professionals having own lifestyle and well educated persons forms major consumer segment in fast food sector. Reeta Arora et al. (2014), aims to analyse the consumer awareness of the teenagers to know their perception of the consumer markets,

suggesting to the government to make attempts to educate the teenagers in consumer education through seminars and workshops. There is a relationship between consumers awareness, knowledge, and effective consumer behaviours. The findings of the study, show that consumer awareness is prior effective consumer behaviour, while ignorance leads to consumer exploitations. Eckhardt, G. M., & Mahi, H. (2012), examine consumer tensions arising in India's transitional marketplace. These findings uncover cultural characteristics underlying consumption strategies to address these tensions: the danger and immorality of consumption, the distance and inaccessibility of many newly available products, and the desire for sociality and relationships via consumption. This work enhances the conceptualization of how consumers negotiate tensions as marketplaces globalize and demonstrates how consumers can create their own discourses in this process that in turn can shape the marketplace. Kumar M, Varun (2012), says that since the educational institutions has greater influence in changing the whole system, economy, even the world, it becomes easier for them to bring consumer awareness to safeguard from consumer exploitation. This study suggests, beginning campaigns to create awareness among the people and also to introduce new schemes and programs with the government in this regard. The education department along with government departments to be involved in consumer education and also to include consumer education in the curriculum to empower the youth. The consumer awareness increases our critical thinking, life skills and self-confidence, motivating the consumers to demand justice when manipulated and exploited by the manufacturer of goods or services. (Suraiya Ishak & Nur Faridah M. Zabil ,2012). The study of Biswajit Ghosh (2011), states that contemporary globalization has produced many changes in our economy, society, culture, and politics. The process of globalization is, therefore, much broader, complex, and multifaceted. The challenge today for us is to recognize and respect plurality and multiplicity as a better model of globalized social life. Nitin Gupta (2011), The results showed that predisposition towards foreign brands had a significant impact on materialistic values among the Indian consumers.

The literature reviewed offers to summarize into the various proportions related to consumerism, its history of development and stagnation. Most of the studies reviewed are empirical in nature and focused on various aspects related to globalization, consumerism and the relationship between the two. A large number of studies revolve around the ideology of consumerism, the mass consumption, consumer culture, consumer socialization and

transnationalism of local culture in a global perspective.

Objectives of The study

1. To prepare and validate the questionnaire on consumerism in the globalised world.
2. To find out the awareness level of consumerism in the globalised world.
3. To suggest to improve the awareness level of the undergraduate students on consumerism through consumerism education with its legal aspects.

The research question of the study,

Does the undergraduate students have the awareness of consumerism in the globalised world?

Methodology

The researcher has used survey method to find out the awareness level of undergraduate students on consumerism and globalisation. The total sample of 300, consisting of 100 students from three degree colleges situated in Bangalore has been selected by simple random sampling method.

Tools of data collection

The consumerism awareness level of the undergraduate students has been collected through primary and secondary data. Primary data collection through Likert scale questionnaire with three options on 25 items administered conveniently to 300 undergraduate students from three degree colleges of Bangalore. The questionnaire has been prepared on the five criteria/dimensions – Consumerism, Globalisation, Consumer awareness, Consumer act and consumer education. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire has been established with the consultation of the experts. The secondary data includes journals and internet materials, related to consumerism and globalisation.

Analysis of the Data

Percentage of five dimensions related to consumerism and globalisation

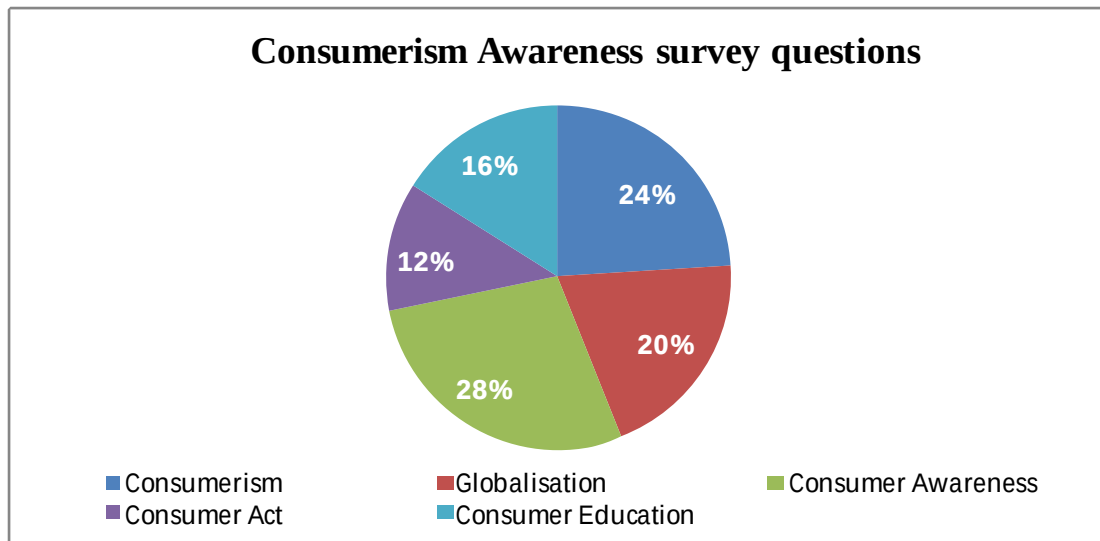


Figure1: Showing Percentage of five dimensions related to consumerism and globalisation.

The consumer awareness survey questionnaire displays in Fig.1, percentage of all the five dimensions – Consumerism (16%), Globalisation (20%), Consumer awareness (28%), Consumer act (12%), and Consumer education (28%).

Percentage of three options related to consumerism and globalisation

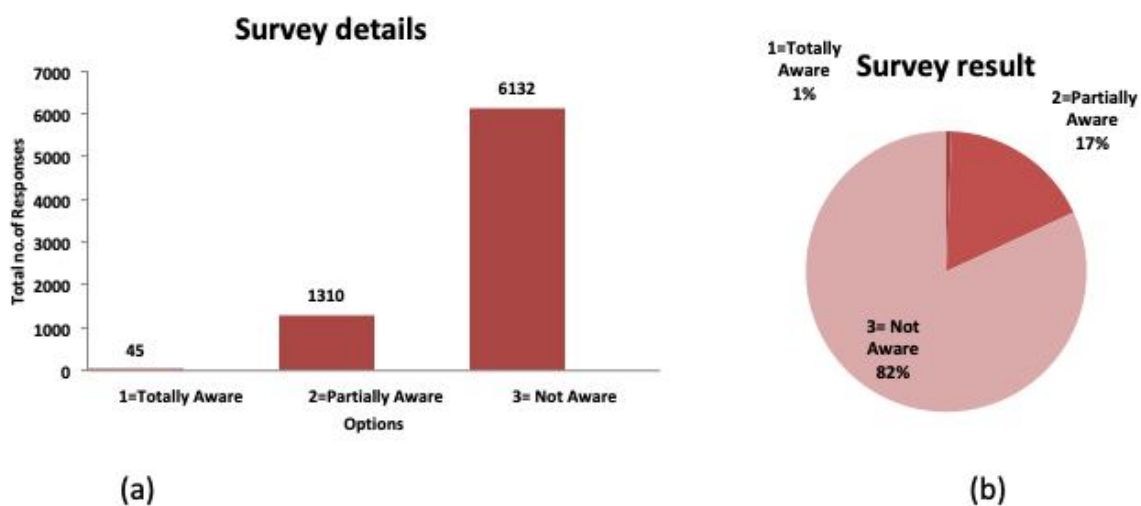


Figure 2: Showing awareness level of respondents on three options. (Source: Primary).

The survey result on the awareness level of undergraduate students has been analysed under three options, in which, there was 45 responses of option titled ‘totally aware’, 1310

responses coming under the option named, 'Partially aware', and majority of responses 6132 falling under the option, 'Not aware'. (Fig.2a). The fig.2b, shows that only 1% of undergraduate students are totally aware, while 17% of undergraduate students come under partially aware, and 82% of undergraduate students are not aware of consumerism under globalisation.

Discussion

The review of literature since two decades has made immense research in the current issue of consumerism under globalisation, has pointed out that there is a clear ignorance on the part of educated and uneducated consumers in India, related to the five dimensions mentioned in this research paper. The recent studies of Natarajan R. et al. (2018), and Kangkana Chaudhury (2017), presented the unpleasant awareness level of the consumers related to consumer awareness, consumer court, their rights and duties as consumers in this globalised world. The responses of undergraduates show that they are not even aware of common practices of obtaining cash receipts after purchases, checking quality marks, consumer rights guaranteed by consumer act of 1986 and so on.

The present consumer awareness survey proved the earlier researches related to lack of consumer awareness and the related dimensions mentioned. The lack of awareness has become the main reason for the producers and suppliers to exploit the consumers. There needs to be promotional programs undertaken by the government along with higher educational institutions and NGOs to increase the consumerism awareness both among the educated and uneducated consumers.

Limitations of the study

This research study of finding out the level of awareness of consumerism is confined to three degree colleges of Bangalore and it may not be possible to generalise the survey to all the colleges.

Suggestions and Educational implications

- ❖ The consumer education to be part of Higher education curriculum of all the degree courses to empower the graduates as able consumers of the future with knowledge and awareness of consumer awareness with its legal aspects to protect from any kind of consumer exploitation.

- ❖ The Higher Education institutions to involve with the government promotional programs related to increasing consumer awareness through seminars, conferences and work-shops in the college premises.
- ❖ The higher Education institutions to begin a student consumer forum to conduct consumer awareness programs with the related updates, facilities provided by government policies, to all the students, parents, and family members of the students,

Conclusion

In India, spite of Consumer protection act of 1986, the various research surveys reveal the lack of consumer awareness among the educated and uneducated consumers. The manufacturers and producers of goods and services are manipulating the ignorance of consumer awareness of the customers leading to consumer exploitation. The findings of the study, reveal that, on the one hand 82% of undergraduate students lack proper awareness of consumerism and on the other hand only 1% of undergraduate students are fully aware of consumerism with all the five dimensions. In this regard, the higher Educational institutions highly responsible for the future of India required to take new initiatives in spreading consumerism and consumer awareness through various mechanism such as seminars, conferences, discussions and to include consumerism as part of the curriculum of all the degree courses, empowering them as able future consumers.

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