

Consumer Rights Awareness Among Consumer: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract: Awareness refers to knowledge of a whole problem. Consumer rights awareness means the level of knowledge of various consumer protection rights and the knowledge's of various consumer movements. A consumer protection right consists of laws and organizations aimed at ensuring consumer rights, as well as fair commercial competition and the smooth flow of truthful information in the market. The modern era of business has prompted an increased focus on the consumer and the responsibility of corporations to consider their ethical and social obligations to their customers. The rise of the consumer movement has encouraged further research and development on the topic of consumer rights enabling business to succeed in a consumer-driven market. Consumer rights have been the subject of considerable discussion over the last four decades. This social movement- which has sought to help consumers attain safer products, more information, adequate selection, and better access to redress mechanisms--has been examined by researchers from numerous disciplines using a wide variety of research approaches.

Design / Methodology -The present research paper is based on various secondary data obtained especially from research papers. The paper studied the paper highlighting the need and challenges of consumer rights.

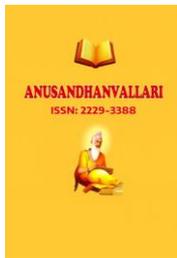
Findings- This study found that there is still need of awareness of consumer regarding their rights as a consumer. Overall there is affirmative relationship between awareness campaigns and consumer rights.

Practical implications- This study will encourage people to better utilize their rights as a consumer.

Keywords: Awareness, Consumer Rights, Protection, Unfair trade

INTRODUCTION

Selvi and Anusuya stated that consumerism is an organized movement of citizens and governments to enforce buyer rights and power over sellers. It is an ideology and a concept that has come to stay in corporate literature. The consumer is exposed to multiple physical, environmental and exploitation risks due to unfair commercial practices. Consumer rights are rights conferred on the consumer to protect them from being cheated by unscrupulous merchants and service providers. Consumer rights are designed to guarantee fair commercial competition, the free flow of truthful and market information, and can provide additional guarantees for the weak and the powerless. These rights are well defined by consumer protection law and there are organizations such as the government, consumer courts and voluntary consumer organizations that work to safeguard consumer rights. Kautilya's monumental treatise on state art "Arthashastra" addressed the issue of knowing consumers and protecting their interests. Awareness denotes awareness of a particular issue or problem. Here, awareness of consumer rights means the level of awareness of various consumer rights and the activities of various consumer movements. Consumer protection consists of laws and organizations designed to guarantee consumer rights, as well as fair competition between companies and the free flow of truthful information in the market, consumer protection is linked to the idea of "consumer rights " and the formation of consumer organizations, which help consumers make better decisions in the marketplace and get assistance with consumer complaints. Consumer awareness is an act of making sure that the buyer or consumer is aware of information about products, goods and services.



Consumer rights are as follows.

Right to safety: Consumers are allowed to protect themselves from the marketing of life- and property-threatening services and goods. If the particular service or goods is dangerous and dangerous to life and property, consumers should be informed and clearly instructed on how to use the service and goods.

Right to information: consumers have every right to be informed about quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of the service or goods, in order to protect the consumers against unfair commercial practices. Adequate information must be provided consumer so they can choose exactly what fits their budget, lifestyle and fashion.

Right of choice: Consumers have the right to access a variety of services and goods in competitive prices. Furthermore, fair competition should be promoted to provide the wider ranges of services or goods at the lowest and most competitive prices for consumers.

Right to be heard: this right is the crux of the Consumer Protection Act, because based on this Well, consumers are certain that if something goes wrong with consumers, their interest

will receive due attention in the corresponding consumer forum.

Right to redress: if a consumer has suffered a loss or injury as a result of an unfair trading practice or the restrictive business practice has been demonstrated and the claims contained in the complaint, Forum, in the event of a complaint, will indemnify and compensate the consumer.

Right to education: this right informs the consumer about the prevailing practice in the market and what remedies can be used against them. To spread this education, The media, or the school curriculum and cultural activities can be exercised as a medium.¹

NEED FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION

Consumer protection rights are to protect consumer from the seller. Every day people consume, use or simply come into contact with uncountable products. These entire products should be consumable and safe. The goods they buy have become increasingly more complex. Modern technology and mass-marketing methods combined with high-pressure salesmanship and sharp advertising can mislead the consumer. It is not always possible or practical to examine every things before purchasing. This is all ready packed, ready-processed age where the gap between producer and purchaser has widened enormously. Very few traders actually produce, pack, distribute and sell their own goods as there is usually a chain of other people involved increasing the chances of something going wrong. Thus, people need an effective system to safeguard consumer to deal with any problems and, to help prevent them from arising again in the future.²

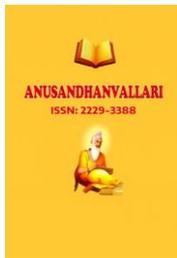
PROBLEMS FACED BY CONSUMERS

Consumers may be deceived in various ways by unscrupulous businessmen including traders,dealers, producers and manufacturers as well as service providers.

1. Adulteration that is, adding something inferior to the product being sold or providing poor services. This is a practice people come across in the case of cereals, spices, tea leaves, edible oil, petrol, etc. Sometimes, the inferior material used with the product may be injurious to health.

2. Sale of spurious products, that is, selling something of zero value instead of the real product. This is most of the time found in the case of medicines and drugs or health care products.

3. Use of false weights and measures is another malpractice which some traders adopt while selling the goods. Goods which are sold by weight like vegetables, cereals, sugar, etc., those sold by measures like textile fabrics,



suit pieces, are sometimes found to be less than the actual weight or length. Sometimes packaged goods and sealed containers contain less quantity than what is stated on the label or packet.

4. Sale of duplicates, that is, goods that indicates a mark which shown it is of superior quality than what it actually is. For example, goods which are locally made are sold at a higher price as imported items expected to be of superior quality.

5. Hoarding and black-marketing is another problem that consumer often face. When any essential commodity is not made available in the open market and stocks are intentionally held back by dealers it is known as hoarding. Its purpose is to create an artificial scarcity, to push up the prices. Black marketing is the practice of selling hoarded goods, secretly at a higher price. These practices are sometimes adopted when there is short supply of any product.

6. Tie-in-Sales: Buyers of durable consumer goods are sometimes required to buy some other goods as a pre-condition to sale or may be required to pay after-sales service charges for one year in advance.

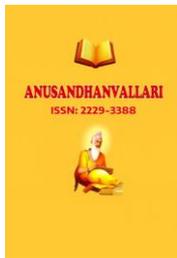
7. Offering gifts having no additional value or coupons to collect a gift on the next purchase of some product are practices aimed at alluring consumers to buy a product. Often gifts are offered after the price of the product on sale has been increased.

8. Misleading advertisement is yet another practice by which consumers are deceived. Such advertisements falsely represent a product or service to be of superior quality, grade or standard, or falsely assert the need for or usefulness of a product or service. A company announced in its advertisement that it was manufacturing 150 cc. scooters in technical collaboration with a foreign company, although no such collaboration had been entered into.

9. Sale of sub-standard goods i.e., sale of goods which do not conform prescribed quality standard particularly for safety. Such products include pressure cookers, stoves, Electric gadgets (heaters, toasters, etc.) and cooking gas cylinders.³

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In any country, consumers drive the economy as their demand for goods and services services facilitates their production and continuous supply. Generation of employment and income are the result of consumer demand. Fluctuations the demand for goods and services leads to a recession, depression, recovery or boom in the market and economy. This suggests that consumer rights must be protected strong legal framework, which can encourage consumers and consumerism in a unhindered way. However, consumer rights and their protection are being ignored comprise various segments such as rich and poor, literate and illiterate, urban and rural, men and women etc. So, they are not organized, they are not educated in their rights, they are not aware of the same and there is no quick mechanism to fix consumers complaints, disputes The advent of modern technologies such as computers, the Internet and cell phones. has made a paradigm shift in the way of marketing. Online shopping for almost everyone convenience and the possibility of online payment for any service, no doubt, helped a lot to consumers, saving them time, money and energy, even if it has exhibited to high-tech fraud such as cybercrime. Sellers and consumers don't need to meet personally to carry out your business transaction and they do not need to know each other, since operate in the virtual market. The current consumer protection law at present, it does not cover any of the internet marketing or cyber marketing activities or shop online. In this evolving world of marketing, the role and importance of consumers are totally curtailed, their rights are inadequate and protection is ongoing dismantled Therefore, it becomes important to examine the protection of consumers, their rights and the degree of awareness between them in the context of the changing world consumers, as is attempted in this study.



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The legal protection of consumer law is of recent origin in India, which was introduced in 1986 and the Consumer Protection Act was introduced. Today, in the last decade, the world of marketing has suddenly changed profoundly with the advent of modern technologies. In the virtual market nobody knows the identity of the consumer or the seller, I learn the way to the new method of fraud and deception. It has become too easy for vendors, manufacturers, manufacturers, brokers, wholesalers and retailers to tempt fraudulent businesses, as existing laws have not been required to address the changing nature. The market, the nature of marketing, the way we benefit and the service we have bought and sold, and the way in which the payment is made and paid on a permanent basis, while the legislation that protects and protects the consumer and the interests of the consumer are obsolete. , leaving large loopholes to be manipulated by the organized group of suppliers and manufacturers. In the meantime, it is pertinent to directly analyze the consumer's opinion, the protection legislation and the knowledge of the evolving market. This helps to understand the degree of awareness among consumers about their rights and consumer protection laws in today's world.⁴

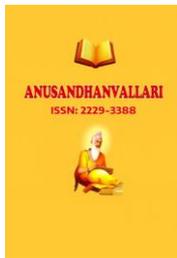
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the broad objectives of the study:

1. To know the awareness of the consumer rights in the process of Consumption of goods and services.
2. To study knowledge of the consumer towards complains filing procedure.
3. To suggest for raise the consumer awareness towards consumer rights.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

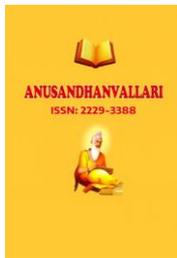
Jayasubramanian and Vaideke (2012) stated that consumer protection measures are not known to the general public due to a lack of adequate communications. So, in this context, it goes without saying that information has to reach every single consumer. Furthermore, it reveals that the government proposes many measures to safeguard the consumer, but the consumer is not using them properly⁵. Sundaram & Balaramalingam (2012) pointed out that Female consumers have a low level of awareness of consumer rights. The main reason for the low awareness of consumer rights among consumers is low literacy and low socio-economic status. It can also be concluded that, as women's awareness of consumer rights decreases, the use of their rights also decreases⁶. Nair (2012) found out that only few students from all the six colleges taken together were aware of the law. Majority of the students were unaware of the law⁷. Chandra and parvez (2012) stated that before buying any goods or services as educated and aware consumers should seek full information regarding quality and price of the goods and services. Consumers should be aware false and /or misleading information. Consumers should not purchase blindly and ask full information before buying⁸. Sewanand (2012) in his study entitled Consumer Awareness and Consumer Protection Act-A study. He pointed out that most of the consumers have general awareness towards consumer protection right. They are well known with jago grahak jago , Quality standards Like ISO, ISI Agmark etc⁹. Hamid and Ananda (2013) stated that Most of the people in Bangladesh do not know about the existence of their rights as consumers. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of basic education. So, if all the parties (government, non-profit organizations, consumers) take initiatives, consumers will become aware about their rights. Enforcement of law by government can make businessmen do the right things¹⁰. Singh and Grewal (2013) stated that several laws have been formed to protect consumers against unfair trade practice in spite of that wrong and misleading advertisements continue exploit the consumers¹¹. Deepika and Kumari (2014) in her study entitled A Study on Awareness on Legal act of Consumer Protection among Students. She conducted to study to find the awareness level among the students towards various consumer protection legislations. Most respondents are aware of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Most respondents are aware of various acts. Less awareness was reported towards the hire Purchase Act and the Railway Claims and



Tribunal Act. In the study, it was found that most students getting information through newspapers, journals and from course syllabus. The awareness towards Consumer Protection right is average¹². Jamuna (2014) The study was conducted to find the level of consumer awareness. In the study, the answers were drawn from the respondents in relation to consumer responsibilities. Most of the respondents had given first place to get the warranty and the warranty certificate. It was also found that the majorities of respondents are aware of consumer forums and believe that the procedures are straightforward. Most of the respondents disagreed with the argument that consumer awareness has increased with the Consumer Protection Act¹³. Gurusamy et al (2014) stated that there is the correlation between the education level and awareness level with reference to Coimbatore district¹⁴. Njuguna et al (2014) stated that level of consumer rights awareness was high among household consumers. Most household consumers were aware of their basic rights as compared to the complex rights. Most of the respondents were not utilizing their rights due to complex procedure of filing complain in the country¹⁵. Arora et al (2014) stated that Teens are not fully aware of the quality assurance marks on different products. They usually check information such as price, expiration and production date, brand, etc. listed on product labels. Research also indicates that teenage boys are more aware of consumer rights than teenage girls¹⁶.

Tamilmani (2015) stated that very few consumers are aware of their rights or understand their fundamental rights as consumers of the various laws that have been enacted to protect consumer rights in India, the most important is the Consumer Protection Act of 1986¹⁷. Sundaram and Sriram (2015) stated that the government continually strives to regularize the problems faced by consumers, but until and unless the consumer is ready to be aware regarding their right as a consumer the government's effort will not work¹⁸. Cihatpolat (2016) examined the types of problems faced by Turkish consumers on the ground, how they use consumer rights in practice when they have problems, what kind of remedy they get when applied to the competent authorities¹⁹. Islam et al (2016) stated that consumer illiteracy is the main reason for poor consumer rights protection²⁰. Kirillova et al (2016) examined the details of e-commerce and online consumer rights protection issues²¹. Devi and Rao (2016) stated that most consumers, both educated and uneducated, are unaware of their rights, laws and consumer protection provisions. They do not have enough confidence in the government other than having a negative opinion on existing measures²². Kumar (2016) stated that most of the respondents showed a low level of awareness and a low level of use of consumer rights²³. Burna (2017) stated that customers buy products, both branded and non-branded, and most customers experience quality defects. Most of the customers reject the product and complain to the merchants and more than 54% of the customers are aware of the Consumer Protection Act and 92% of the consumers do not receive the reply within the specified time²⁴. Chaudhury (2017) concluded that most of the students were unaware of their rights. Some of the graduate students are unaware about their rights as a consumer. Lacks of knowledge tells them that only the one who pays for the product / service is a consumer²⁵. Rambabu (2017) concluded that there is a correlation between awareness of consumer rights and education. There is a significant difference in profession, age and income. There is no significant difference between consumer rights awareness and gender²⁶.

Sadyojathappa (2017) stated that the government has continually sought to protect consumer interests through legislation and the 1986 CPA is considered the most progressive consumer protection statute. Implementation of the law reveals that consumers' interests are better protected than before²⁷. Alsmadi and Alnawas (2018) stated that public policy makers should regularly review product safety standards and give preference to environmentally friendly products²⁸. Boro (2018) concluded that only 40% of the respondents know the consumer protection law and 60% of the respondents do not know it in kamrup district Assam²⁹. Natarajan et al (2018) stated that only fourteen percent of consumers surveyed have a high level of awareness of the six recognized consumer rights, and the level of awareness of the remaining eighty-six percent is not good enough in Dindigul District³⁰. Latha and Thamaraikannan (2019) stated that respondents in 21 to 40 age categories who are professionals earn an income of Rs. 10001 to Rs. 20,000 were well aware of the right to consumer



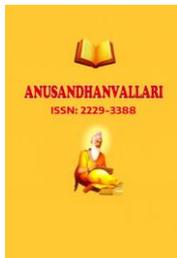
protection. Most of the consumers were aware of the consumer rights and corrective measures of the consumer forum, such as payment of the insured sum, compensation and replacement of the goods³¹.

Kalra (2019) stated that consumers are exploited in many ways through the most dominant and informed sources. On the other hand, consumers need to be aware not only of the commercial aspects of buying and selling goods, but also of the health and safety aspect³². Rane (2019) stated that there is a real need for consumers to speak out against any kind of exploitation to contribute to a progressive nation and safeguard the consumer³³.

Chhetri (2020) stated that college students knowledge level on consumerism is quite good. It is noted that practices and behavior during the buying process are appreciable. They checked the tools and instruments used in the measurement during the purchase. They also checked the details of MRP, production date and expiration date. The awareness level of UG students is good compared to PG students in several aspects³⁴. Venkatesan and Leelavathi (2020) pointed out that most of the respondents do not know their rights as consumers. It refers to the fact that 43% of the respondents always check the MRP, 41% of the respondents never check the MRP and 16% of the respondents sometimes check the MRP when buying goods and services³⁵. Nedumaran and mehala (2020) stated that most of the consumers were unaware about their right and did not know about filing the complaint procedure. Media and educational institution always plays an important role in consumer awareness and sharing information regarding organizations working for the consumer satisfaction in their area³⁶. Chawala and Kumar stated that the lack of confidence in the goods and their suppliers / producers was one of the main reasons people don't shop online. Widespread Internet penetration and increasing use of computers / tablets / smart phones have driven e-commerce growth in all countries, including India. fast e-commerce the development brought with it a new distribution methods. It has brought new opportunities to consumers, forcing vulnerable consumers to new forms of unfair trade and immoral business.³⁷

CONCLUSION

The Consumer rights provided the Indian consumers a great opportunity to realize and protect their rights as consumers. It provided necessary protection to them against different unfair trade practices in order to safeguard the interests and rights of the consumers. It also consisted of redressal mechanism and clauses for compensation to the aggrieved consumers. However, such legislation has to be backed by well informed and responsive citizenry and strong consumer protection groups should take up issues fearless of opposition. This study has brought out the fact that people are still not taking sufficient care in verifying the MRP of the products they purchase, their expiry date, genuineness of the products and their degree of awareness in demanding replacement for defective products is also less. Moreover, most of them do not ask for the sales receipt from the shopkeeper or seller of the goods. This underscores the extent of ignorance that prevails among the consumers. Also, there is still lack of knowledge about the existence of CPA and various measures which are available under the Act. Respondents also opinion that it takes undue time in getting a complaint heard by the Commission and for the award of compensation. Moreover, the arrival of corporate houses into retailing, globalization and information technology has changed the nature of trade in the country. This calls for thorough changes in the existing consumer protection measures so as to include these new facets of business. If need be, the Government can also consider about bringing new Consumer Protection bill in order to strengthen consumer rights and protection. Consumer awareness and consumer movement has an important role to play in augmenting consumer protection and also consumerism in a society. Many countries have acknowledged the significance of consumer protection by enacting legal measures to safeguard the interests of consumers and by allocating huge amount on consumer education and their awareness. However, consumer awareness and development of a country are seemed to be directly related, since in most of the developing countries consumer exploitation is quite proliferating. The developing countries lack sufficient capital to invest on education among



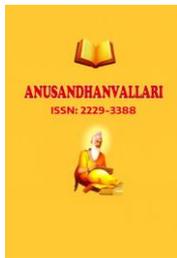
the people and more so for consumer education. This is also the reason for lack of consumer awareness towards consumer rights.

SUGGESTIONS:

- 1) It is quite necessary for carry out the programs and meetings necessary to raise awareness of the consumers on various provisions of the consumer protection rights .
- 2) Efforts can also be made to include consumer awareness in the school. Curriculum, which will help even the youngest to understand the importance of consumer protection and consumer rights.
- 3) Unfair trading practices should be more punitive, reinforcing the consumer protection measures.
- 4) The existing CPA must be completely modified to include the change of nature and business model. It must include online shopping and shopping by correspondence.
- 5) Time to time seminar should be organize to raise the awareness of consumer rights.
- 6) Complain filing and redressal procedure should be in such a manner that there should not be any problem to the consumer.

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