



A Study on Consumer Rights Awareness in Kannur District

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ABSTRACT

All of us are consumers and most of us enjoy shopping. We spend a lot of time as consumer. Consumer is the real deciding factor of all economic activities. It is now universally accepted that the extent of consumer protection is a true indicator of the level of progress in a nation. The growing size and complexity of production and distribution systems, the high level of sophistication in marketing and selling practices has contributed to the increased and urgent necessity to educate and motivate the consumer. Unawareness and lack of knowledge on consumer's rights and claim procedures potentially distort consumer's capacity and ability to defend themselves against cunning trades. Therefore, a thorough investigation is needed to validate the extent of relationship between awareness and effective consumer behaviors. It attempts to analyse the Consumer rights awareness in Kannur district. 100 respondents were selected from Kannur district by using convenience sampling technique. For the analysis and interpretation percentage and chi square has been used.

KEYWORDS : Awareness,consumer right, consumer court, forums

CONSUMERS' RIGHTS - AN OVERVIEW

A consumer is a person who buys a product; he is also called the end user. The consumer has a lot of rights that he can demand when he is buying a product. When a product is sold there are certain rules and regulations the maker and seller have to follow. These rules and regulations are not followed in several cases. When these rules are not followed the consumer has a right to fight for justice. This is called consumer rights. To fight for his rights a consumer, first has to know what his rights are. Hence, there is a need to sensitise people and encourage them to participate in the consumer movement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though the first consumer movement began in England after the Second World War, a modern declaration about consumers' rights was first made by the former US President, John F. Kennedy before the US Congress on March 15, 1962, where four basic consumer rights. After that a number of research studies have been undertaken on consumer rights, awareness among the consumers about protections, against violations at the global level and in India.

Nwaizugbo & Ogbunankwor (2013) examined the level of satisfaction attained by the consumers from different consumer protection agencies in Anambra State, Nigeria. Khurana & Khurana (2012) conducted study on 100 respondents to study the general awareness among consumer regarding consumer protection and specially awareness of provisions of Consumer Protection Act 1986. Krishnakumar & Sakthiventhan (2012) conducted study on 125 rural respondents of Cuddalore district to examine the consumer protection awareness among rural consumers. Chandhiok & Dewan (2011) studied on consumer protection and consumerism in India. Bradgate (2010) in his research report that is prepared for the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills examined that present law on consumer rights on purchase of digital products is unsatisfactory on several grounds.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the level of consumer rights awareness.
2. To find out the effectiveness of consumer court in redressing the grievances of the consumers
3. To find out the level of consumer awareness regarding Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
4. To provide suggestions to improve the consumer rights awareness

METHODOLOGY

The present study has been designed as an analytical and descriptive study. It is conducted for the period of three months and is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through questionnaires using convenience sampling techniques focusing 100 consumers in Kannur district. For analysing percentage and chi-square is used.

Hypothesis testing

H_0 : There is no significant difference between gender and consumer rights awareness.

CONSUMERS' RIGHT'S AWARENESS (CRA)

Modern business is an integral part of current day society. Each company has to deliver the goods and services and the standard of living as per the aspirations of the people. It has a great social responsibility towards the well being of society.

Consumers' rights awareness is largely unknown to many citizens irrespective of whether they are educated or uneducated. With an enormous population along with high levels of poverty, unemployment and poor literacy levels, consumers' rights awareness continues to remain low. Consumer education is an important part of education and is a basic consumer right that must be introduced at the school level. However, consumer education is incomplete without the responsibilities and duties of consumers, and this influences individual behavior to a great extent. There are 8 rights of consumer which are provided in the Consumer Protection Act, 1986

NATURE OF CONSUMER RIGHTS



Fig. 1.1

1. Right to Safety: The right to be protected against goods which are hazardous to life and property.

2. Right to Information: The right to be informed about the quality, quantity, purity, price and standards of goods. Mostly we find out hidden costs, lack of suitability, safety hazards and quality problems only after we have purchased the product.

3. Right to Choose: The right to be assured access to a variety of products at competitive prices, without any pressure to impose a sale, i.e., freedom of choice.

4. Right to be Heard: The right to be heard and assured that consumer interests will receive due consideration at appropriate forums. This right is supposed to empower Indian consumers to fearlessly voice their complaints and concerns against products and companies to ensure their issues are handled efficiently and expeditiously.

5. Right to Seek Redressal: The right to get relief against unfair trade practice or exploitation. The Indian Government has been slightly more successful with respect to this right. Consumer courts such as District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forums at the district level, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions have been established through the *Consumer Protection Act*.

6. Right to Education: The right to be educated about rights of a consumer. Consumer education may mean both formal education through school and college curriculums and also consumer awareness campaigns run by both Governmental and Non Governmental agencies (NGO).

7. Right to Basic Needs : The basic needs mean those goods and services which are necessary for a dignified living of people. It includes adequate food, clothing, shelter, energy, sanitation, health care, education and transportation. .

8. Right to Healthy Environment: This right provides the consumers, protection against environmental pollution so that the quality of life is enhanced. Not only this, it also stresses the need to protect the environment for the future generations as well.

CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 1986

An important landmark in the history of consumer protection legislation in India is the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, which provides for a system for the protection of consumer rights and the redressal of consumer disputes. Even though the act was passed in 1986, the provisions of the act came into force with effect from 1st July, 1987. the act acclaimed to be the 'Magna Carta' of Indian consumers, has been amended in 1993 and in 2002. \

FEATURES OF THE ACT

- It applies to all goods and services other than specifically exempted by the Central Government.
- All suppliers of goods and services, private, public, and the co-operative sector are covered by the Act.
- It safeguards the consumers against different types of exploitation such as defective goods, un satisfactory services and unfair trade practices.
- The hallmark of the act is that it has set a time frame for disposal of cases.
- Act provides a simple speedy and inexpensive redressal of consumer grievances relating to defective goods, and unfair trade practices.
- During the year 1993, due to the pressure from various voluntary organizations all over the country the government brought amendment to the Act by an ordinance on 18th June, 1993. The ordinance was replaced by an Act on 27th August, 1993.



fig.1.2

Table 1.1 shows-

Comparative analysis of District forum, State commission and National commission

	District Forum	State Commission	National Commission
Hearing	It is a consumer dispute redressal forum working at district level.	It is a consumer dispute redressal forum working at state level.	It is a consumer dispute redressal forum working at national level.
Established by	State Government	State Government	Central Government
Composition	President + 2 Members (Min)	President + 2 Members (Min)	President + 4 Members (Min)
Qualification of President	Who is or has been or is qualified to be a District of a high Court.	Who is or has been a judge of a high Court.	Who is or has been a judge of the Supreme Court.
Duration / Tenure	Term of 5 years or upto age of 65 whichever is earlier.	Term of 5 years or upto age of 67 whichever is earlier.	Term of 5 years or upto the age of 70 whichever is earlier.
Monetary Jurisdiction	Value of goods or services and the compensation claimed is less than Rs. 20 Lacs.	Value of goods or services and the compensation claimed is more than Rs. 20 Lacs but less than Rs. 1 crore.	Value of goods or services and the compensation claimed is more than Rs. 1 crore.
Area	It covers a particular district.	It covers a particular state.	It covers the entire country.
Nature of Complaints	Only original complaints can be entertained.	Original Cases + Appeals against orders of District Forum + Supervisory / Revisional	Original Cases + Appeals against orders of State Forum + Supervisory / Revisional + Improper jurisdiction

ROLE OF MEDIA IN CONSUMER RIGHTS AWARENESS

While the first amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, journalism ethics require journalists to use that freedom wisely and only publish stories which can be verified as truthful. However, as consumers depend more upon the media for awareness, issues arise in knowing which publications adhere to journalistic standards and which are more opinion- or advertising-based. Nowadays internet is one of the most popular media. Journalists have the responsibility to practice the same ethics when publishing online that they use for print media, including double-checking facts and reporting without bias. Even though online media may seem less permanent than print, it actually reaches more consumers in a shorter time. Consumers have the responsibility to ensure any website they take advice from practices journalistic standards rather than simply publishes opinions. Government websites or online versions of print publications are good starting sources.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The table 1.2 shows consumer rights awareness

Responses	No of respondents	Percentages
Yes	60	60
No	40	40
Total	100	100

Source: Field study

The table 1.3 shows genderwise awareness classification

Gender Wise classification			
Awareness level	Male	Female	Total
Aware	60	40	100
Unaware	40	60	100
Total	100	100	200

Source: Field study

Calculation of Expected frequencies

Ho: There is no significant difference between gender and consumer rights awareness

Gender wise classification			
Awareness level	Male	Female	
Aware	$(100 \times 100) / 200 = 50$	$(100 \times 100) / 200 = 50$	100
Unaware	$(100 \times 100) / 200 = 50$	$(100 \times 100) / 200 = 50$	100
Total	100	100	200

Observed frequencies (O)	Expected frequencies (E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² / E
60	50	100	2
40	50	100	2
40	50	100	2
60	50	100	2
Total			8

Calculated value of $\chi^2 = 8$

Degree of freedom = $(r-1)(c-1) = (2-1)(2-1) = 1$

Table value of χ^2 at 5% level of significance at one degree of freedom is 3.84. Calculated value is more than the table value. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis so there is significant relation between consumer rights awareness and gender.

The table 1.4 shows awareness about different forums in consumer court

Responses	No of respondents	Percentages
Yes	38	38
No	62	62
Total	100	100

Source: Field study

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

(60%) of respondents are aware about consumer rights, (50%) update their knowledge, (78%) are not sharing their knowledge, (88%) are willing to join consumer clubs, (56%) are aware about consumer court, (32%) did not file any complaints, (62%) are not aware about different forums. (34%) have not trust in consumer court, (68%) believe that court are performing its duty promptly, (88%) have the opinion that media play an important role in providing awareness, (58%) have not attended any workshops about consumer awareness, (56%) have the opinion that consumer rights are properly protected in Kerala.

SUGGESTIONS

They are as follows:

- Provide consumer education in schools and colleges
- Establishment of voluntary consumer organizations
- Telecast Consumers' Awareness Programmes through media
- Government should take strong action against merchants who cheat the consumers.

CONCLUSION

Governments bring out lot of measures to protect consumers but the consumers are not using it properly. On the part of the sellers they still remain as dominators of the market. A co-operative effort on the part of the consumers, businessmen and the government is necessary to protect the consumers. Consumerism is not going to be a threat but only a better opportunity for business. So the consumer awareness programmes still deserve special importance.

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