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Consumers Perception and Attitude Towards Consumerism

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ABSTRACT

A consumer is a person who buys any goods or hires any service for valuable consideration. The term does not include a person who obtains goods or services for resale or for any commercial purpose. However, persons who avail goods or services exclusively for the purpose of earning their livelihood by means of self employment are considered as 'consumers'. Consumer must be aware of his rights, raise voice against exploitation and seek redressal of his grievances. Consumers' consciousness determines the effectiveness of consumerism. For this study I framed four objectives. Both primary and secondary data are used for the study. The area taken for the study is Coimbatore District. The following are the tools that are used in the study, Simple Percentage Analysis, T- test and ANOVA. The Consumer Protection Act 1986 plays a vital role to safeguard the interest of the consumers. In order to utilize this Act to the maximum extend possible thorough awareness about various aspects of the act is essential. In this regard Government, Associations and Consumers should come forward and try to improve the concept of consumerism.

Keywords : Association, Act, Consumer, Consumerism, Protection.

INTRODUCTION

In the present economic and social scenario, the subject of consumer protection is of vital concern and importance for every citizen of the country as each one of them is a consumer in one form or the other. Although various scientific and technological developments have brought about perceptible socio-economic changes, the consumers control over the market mechanism has gradually diminished. His suzerainty in choice of goods and services has been greatly eroded by various forms of unfair monopolistic and deceptive trade practices.

CONSUMER

A "consumer" is a person who buys any goods or hires any service for valuable consideration (including deferred payment). The term does not include a person who obtains goods or services for resale or for any commercial purpose. However, persons who avail goods or services exclusively for the purpose of earning their livelihood by means of self employment are considered as 'consumers'.

CONSUMER PROTECTION IN INDIA

Consumers play a vital role in the economic system of a nation because in the absence of effective demand that emanates from them, the economy virtually collapses. Mahatma Gandhi said, "A consumer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us, we are on him. He is not an interruption to our work; he is the purpose of it. We are not doing a favour to a consumer by giving him an opportunity. He is doing us a favour by giving us opportunity to serve him. But, of late, unfortunately cheating by way of overcharging, black marketing, misleading advertisements, etc has become the common practice of greedy sellers and manufacturers to make unreasonable profits. In this context, it is the duty of the government to confer some rights on consumers to safeguard their interests.

CONSUMERISM

In the good olden days the principle of 'Caveat emptor', which meant buyer beware governed the relationship between seller and the buyer. In the era of open markets buyer and seller came face to face, seller exhibited his goods, and buyer thoroughly examined them and then purchased them. It was as-

sumed that he would use all care and skill while entering into transaction. The maxim relieved the seller of the obligation to make disclosure about the quality of the product. In addition, the personal relation between the buyer and the seller was one of the major factors in their relations. But with the growth of trade and its globalization the rule no more holds true. It is now impossible for the buyer to examine the goods before hand and most of the transactions are concluded by correspondence. In spite of these views consumerism is still in its infancy in our country, thanks to the sellers market and the government monopoly in most services. Consumer awareness is low due to the apathy and lack of education among the masses. No one has told them about their rights - to be informed about product quality, price, protection against unsafe products, access to variety of goods at competitive prices, consumer education etc. What consumerism lacks here are education and information resources, testing facilities, competent leadership, price control mechanism, and adequate quasi-judicial machinery. The providers of goods and services have been reluctant to give due consideration to consumer interest protection.

COMPONENTS OF CONSUMERISM

There are various components of consumerism. First and foremost is self-protection by consumers. Consumer must be aware of his rights, raise voice against exploitation and seek redressal of his grievances. Consumers' consciousness determines the effectiveness of consumerism. It is the duty of the consumer to identify his rights and to protect them. Voluntary Consumer Organizations engaged in organizing consumers and encouraging them to safeguard their interests is another important element of consumer movement. The success of consumerism lies in the realization of the business that there is no substitute for voluntary self-regulations. Little attention from the business will not only serve consumers interest but will also benefit them. Some businesses in India have come together to adopt a code of conduct for regulating their own activities. Regulation of business through legislation is one of the important means of protecting the consumers. Consumerism has over the time developed into a sound force designed to aid and protect the consumer by exerting, legal,

moral and economic pressure on producers and providers in some of the developed countries.

OBJECTIVES

- Ø To give a brief historical review on consumerism and the consumer protection act.
- Ø To find out the awareness of the consumers towards the trademark of the products.
- Ø To find out the group has higher level of awareness regarding consumer protection act.
- Ø To offer suggestions to improve the awareness among the consumers regarding consumerism.

METHODOLOGY

Simple random sampling method was used for collection of sample. The sample size was restricted to 209. The primary data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from books and journals and also downloaded from the Internet. The area taken for the study is Coimbatore District. The following are the tools that are used in the study, Simple Percentage Analysis, T- test, ANOVA.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In an exploratory study on consumer attitudes towards consumerism conducted by Rajbir Singh (1990) it is noted that consumers are dissatisfied with the information provided by businessmen and most of the consumers are in favour of government regulations in the field of consumerism.

Gulshan. S.V has pointed out the position of Indian consumers and their problems. He has appraised the consumer protection act and its allied acts. The details of redressed machineries at District, State and National levels form the high nights. The important decisions affecting consumers have been discussed in the book.

STUDY RESULT

TABLE 1- GENDER

GENDER	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
MALE	114	54.5
FEMALE	95	45.5
TOTAL	209	100

Source: primary data

It is noted from the above table that out of the total respondents, 54.5% are male and 45.5% are female. Hence, it may be inferred that majority of the respondents are male.

TABLE 2- OCCUPATIONAL STATUS

OCCUPATION	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
AGRICULTURE	4	1.9
BUSINESS	4	1.9
EMPLOYED	118	56.5
PROFESSIONALS	11	5.3
OTHERS	72	34.4
TOTAL	209	100

Source: primary data

Table 2 shows the occupational status of the respondents, 1.9 per cent is belonging to agriculture, 1.9 per cent is doing business, 56.5 per cent of the respondents are employed, 5.3% of the respondents are professionals and 34.4 per cent are belonging to others. Hence the majority of the respondents are employed and others.

TABLE 3- DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS BY THEIR SELECTION OF SHOPS

REASON	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
NO ADULTERATION	68	32.5
CORRECT WEIGHT MEASURES	75	35.9
REASONABLE PRICE	66	31.6
TOTAL	209	100

Source: primary data

It is clear from the above table that 35.9% of respondents have selected that particular shop due to correct weight measures, 32.5% of respondents have selected that particular shop due to good quality of the products and 31.6% respondents have selected that particular shop due to reasonable price.

TABLE 4- DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS ON THE BASIS OF AWARENESS OF TRADEMARKS

AWARENESS OF TRADEMARKS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	184	88.0
NO	25	12.0
TOTAL	209	100

Source: primary data

From the above table it is clear that out of the total respondents 88% are aware of trademark given to the products and the remaining 12% are not aware about the trademark given to the products.

TABLE 5- LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CONSUMER RIGHTS

LEVEL OF AWARENESS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
HIGHLY AWARE	99	47.37
AWARE	83	39.71
NOT AWARE	27	12.92
TOTAL	209	100

Source: primary data

Table 5 shows the level of awareness of consumers on consumer rights, 47.37% are considered highly aware of the consumer rights, 39.71% are considered aware of the consumer rights and the remaining 12.92% are not aware about the consumer rights. Hence the majority of the respondents are highly aware about the consumer rights.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: The male and female have the same level of awareness of trademark.

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS: The male and female do not have the same level of awareness of trademark.

TABLE 6

SEX WISE LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON TRADEMARKS

T-TEST

SEX	NO.OF RESPONDENTS	MEAN	t _o	Sig.
MALE	114	2.0965	1.414	0.159
FEMALE	95	1.9158		

From the above table, the significant level is greater than the level of significance 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that the male and female have the same level of awareness of trademarks.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: The male and female have the same level of responsibilities of checking the specifications while purchasing the consumer goods.

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS: The male and female do not have the same level of responsibilities of checking the specifications while purchasing the consumer goods.

TABLE 7
SEX WISE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHECKING THE SPECIFICATIONS

T- TEST

SEX	NO.OF RESPONDENTS	MEAN	t _o	Sig.
MALE	114	3.5965	-0.182	0.855
FEMALE	95			

The significant level is greater than the level of significance 0.05; hence the null hypothesis is accepted. It is concluded that the male and female respondents have the same level of responsibilities of checking the specifications while purchasing the consumer goods.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: Various literary level respondents have the same level of awareness of trademark.

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS: Various literary level respondents do not have the same level of awareness of trademark.

TABLE 8

EDUCATIONAL STATUS WISE LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF TRADEMARKS

	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	Sig.
Between Groups	54.637	4	13.659	22.780	.000

Within Groups	122.320	204	.600		
Total	176.957	208			

Since the significant level is less than the level of significance 0.05, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The various educational levels of respondents do not have the same level of awareness of trademark.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: Various literary level respondents have the same level of awareness on consumer rights.

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS: Various literary level respondents do not have the same level on consumer rights.

TABLE 9

EDUCATIONAL STATUS WISE LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON CONSUMER RIGHTS

	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	Sig.
Between Groups	208.039	4	52.010	15.185	.000
Within Groups	698.736	204	3.425		
Total	906.775	208			

The significant level is less than the level of significance 0.05; hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The various educational levels of respondents do not have the same level of awareness on consumer rights.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to create awareness among the consumers, the advertisement is the only way as it reaches all types of consumers. The Government can try to give advertisement regarding consumer educations in radio, TV, newspaper and magazine.

The respondents belonging to school level education do not have more awareness about trademarks, consumer rights and legislative measures. The Government should try to provide basic consumer educations to the students from the school level itself.

CONCLUSION

The Consumer Protection Act 1986 plays a vital role to safeguard the interest of the consumers. The consumers in India should give importance to protect their rights, by fully utilizing this Act. In order to utilize this Act to the maximum extend possible thorough awareness about various aspects of the act is essential. In this regard Government, Associations and Consumers should come forward and try to improve the concept of consumerism.

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