
A STUDY ON CONSUMER AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS ON CONSUMER PROTECTION LAWS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ERODE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Goods are produced or services provided with the ultimate object of satisfying Consumer wants. In a free economy, it is the consumers who determine what goods are to produced, they who influence the prices and determine where, when and how goods and services are to be marketed. Therefore the consumers not only determine the income of the business but also directly influence its success and survival. The goodwill of the consumers is often a critical factor in the success and survival. As corollary consumer satisfaction is the need to protect him against monopoly and restrictive trade practices. In this, circumstances a study has been made to assess the awareness and satisfaction of consumers on consumer legislations of our country. The findings of the study reveals that consumers have less awareness on consumer laws and they have not attained full satisfaction on the implementation of the legislations.

Key Words: Consumer Awareness, Consumer Satisfaction, Protection Law, Consumer Council, Right to Safety.

INTRODUCTION

Consumers are generally ignorant, ill-informed, unorganized and isolated. When they awake and unite irrespective of caste, creed, or status as human beings, they can protect effectively their own interest against unfair practices. The consumers expect

correct weights and measures, reasonable prices for the product, unadulterated goods and after-sale services. Finally every consumer expects from sellers that they should not resort to anti-social activities such as hoarding, profiteering, black marketing and deceitful practices. The cardinal objective of any production

activity is consumption. "Consumption is the sole end purpose of all production". As such, consumers serve as the basis for many activities performed by businessman. Every one is a consumer wherever they live and whatever activities they pursue irrespective of their age, gender, colour and creed.

Consumers form the main part of the economic cycle of the country because other development activities have around them. In a competitive economy,

"A consumer is the most important visitor in our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work. He is not an outsider in our business. He is a part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him. He is doing a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so".

But in reality the consumer is not recognized as the king. He is exploited by the producers, wholesalers, retailers and others. The main reason behind this exploitation of the consumers is their heterogeneous character. It is very difficult to organize them. At the same time the sellers are well organized and their objectives coincide. Naturally the consumers become the victim in the

competitive world and they are subject to all kinds of exploitations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are

- To describe the various consumer legislation in India.
- To know the extent of consumer awareness on different consumer protection laws of our country.
- To assess the problems of consumers in securing their rights under consumer protection laws.
- To assess the level of satisfaction on the implementation of consumer legislations.
- To give suggestions to the enforcing authorities for the improved implementation of the consumer legislations.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In developing countries like India the manufacturers and sellers are highly organized, physically as well as financially sound enough to dominate the interest of their customers. The consumers have to depend the sellers to avail the benefit of the products or services which they want to make use of them. Because of their dominate character, mostly the suppliers of the product exploit the interest of their

consumers in several forms. In some cases the details related to products are falsely representing that the goods or services are of a particular standard, quality, quantity, grade, composition, style or model which do not comply as specified. Similarly false representation of any re-built, secondhand, renovated, reconditioned or old goods as new goods; falsely represents sponsored of the product and such goods or services not have approval, performance, characteristics, accessories, uses or benefits; In some other cases , it represents that the seller or the supplier do not have a sponsorship or approval or affiliation which such seller or supplier; similarly makes a false or misleading representation concerning the need for or the usefulness of any goods or services; gives to the public any warranty or guarantee of the performance, efficacy or length of life of a product or of any goods that is not based on an adequate efficiency. In all the cases the burden of proof shall lie on the person raising such defence in case if it is required to be proved.

Several legislations like Consumer Protection Act, Standards of weights And Measures Act, Agricultural Produce (Grading & Marketing) Act,

Drugs & Cosmetics Act, Prevention of Food Adulteration Act., have been initiated to protect the interest of consumers. But in practice none of them provide complete remedy to the entire group of people exploited by the sellers of the products. Still now there is a gap between what the legislators intended to provide and what the affected consumers actually acquired out of the legislative support. There are plenty of reasons held responsible for the poor implementation of the consumer legislations. This can be of either from the part of negligence of implementing authorities or from the part of Ignorance of consumer rights of the affected consumers. In this study an attempt has been done by the researcher to elicit the causes for the slow progress in the development of the implementation and enforcement of consumer protection laws in India.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

There is no doubt consumers have the basic right to be protected from the loss or injury caused on account of defective goods and deficiency of services. However, consumers are unable to make use of their rights due to lack of awareness and ignorance. Under certain circumstances, the consumers are

exploited due to the inability to verify the quality of products. The clever shopkeeper can deceive them by their persuasive words. If the date of expiry on a strip of medicinal tablets is not legible, consumer may be in a hurry and depending on what the seller tells him.

In such kind of consumer researches are conducted and their perceptions on consumer laws are find out, that will increase the expectations of consumers from their suppliers and give scope to the improvement in the standard of product or services besides that it also offers added value to them. Similarly these studies can also amounts to reduce the dishonest, unfair and unethical trade practices of the manufacturers and traders and enable to enhance the socio-economic development of our country. So this topic is chosen for this research work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is an empirical research based on survey method. Data collected for this study includes both primary and secondary data.

Method of Data Collection

The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The Primary data was collected through

structured questionnaire using convenient sampling technique. The secondary data was collected through magazines, periodicals and websites, apart from this the researcher also conducted personal discussions with respondents and officials like advocates, social workers, etc. that helps to enhance the required information.

Primary Data

The structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. In few cases to collect data from the illiterate respondents the personal interview was made. These data collected were used for analysis after proper scrutiny.

Secondary Data

The researcher referred several magazines, journals, periodicals about consumer laws and obtained the necessary secondary data.

Sampling Design

Sampling Technique

Convenient sampling technique was followed to collect data of this study. It is a non- probability sampling method, which is used in this study since the population is indefinite.

Sample Size

There are 300 respondents from different parts of Erode District which consists of urban and semi-urban centers were taken as samples. The researcher conveniently selected these 300 respondents and the opinions on the various aspects of consumer laws were collected.

Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data was carefully coded, with the tabulation was made in scientific and systematic way. Further, the collected data was classified, tabulated and analyzed using simple statistical tools like percentage Analysis, Chi Square Test and Weighted Average Ranking.

PERIOD OF THE STUDY

The sample respondents are initially informed about the objects of the present study and are met at various intervals for the purpose of collecting primary data.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The Study is limited to Erode only.
- Due to time constraint, the sample size is limited to 300 consumers only.
- The study being a primary one, the accuracy and reliability of data

depends on the information provided by the respondents.

- The findings of the study depend on the responses given by sample respondents.

FINDINGS

- Majority (32.66 per cent) of the respondents belong to the age group between 40 to 50 years.
 - Most (65 per cent) of the respondents are male.
 - Majority (62 per cent) of the respondents are married.
 - Majority (35.67 per cent) of the respondents are residing at rural areas.
 - Majority (34.0 per cent) of the respondents are qualified school level education.
 - Majority (32 per cent) of the respondents are professional.
 - Majority (31.33 per cent) of the respondents are earn below Rs.10000 as monthly income.
 - Majority (66 per cent)of the respondents are not aware about Consumer Protection Laws.
 - Majority (28.43 per cent) of the respondents are got the source of awareness about consumer
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protection law by Electronic Media.

- Majority (80 per cent) of the respondents understood the right to safety that need of consumer legislations.
- It is found that majority (31.37 per cent) of the respondents are know about Standards of weights and measures Act.
- Most (68 per cent) of the respondents are not member of consumer council.
- Majority (71.33 per cent) of the respondents have indicated correctly the duration taken by the consumer court to dispose the cases.
- Majority (67.33 per cent) of the respondents noted three of Consumer Court.
- Majority (58 per cent) of the respondents had face problems regarding consumer implementation Protection Laws.
- Majority of the respondents have awareness about consumer protection law in ISI which as ranked first with the weighted score of 566.

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

- There is no significant relationship between Age Group and Overall Satisfaction Consumer Protection Law.
- There is significant relationship between Gender and Overall Satisfaction about Consumer Protection Law.
- There is significant relationship between Marital Status and Overall Satisfaction Consumer Protection Law.
- There is significant relationship between Residential Area and Overall Satisfaction Consumer Protection Law.
- There is significant relationship between Educational Qualification and Overall Satisfaction Consumer Protection Law.
- There is no significant relationship between Occupation and Overall Satisfaction Consumer Protection Law.
- There is significant relationship between Monthly Income and Overall Satisfaction Consumer Protection Law.

SUGGESTIONS

- Consumer organizations, voluntary public service organizations like

Lions Club, Rotary Club, and National Service scheme functioning in schools and colleges can be used to update the consumer rights in the mind of ignorant consumers.

- Consumerism as a subject of study may be included in education system at high school and college level.
- Public awareness can be created through the Mass medias like Television and Radio to enable the rural and illiterate consumers to understand the consumer laws.
- Majority of the respondents have face problems regarding consumer implementation Protection Laws, it should be clarify and give the details about consumer protection law.
- Public programs such as essay, quiz competition and games can be organized very often to create awareness among the people.

CONCLUSION

Consumers are core element of any economic system. The other sectors of the economy like industry and commerce depends on their consumption. After, economic liberalization every

developing nations expected to compete with the developed countries in order to promote their products and services. The standard of product and services of a country in turn is based on the awareness and capacity of users. Hence, every country has taken keen steps to enhance the standard of buyers by creating public awareness and legislative measures. In our country also there are several legislations formulated to protect the interest of consumers, but its effectiveness is not up to the requirements. From the analysis of the study, it is concluded that the success of consumer movement is possible not by the mere legislations alone, there is an immense additional need of public support and non-government organizations is required to make the successful implementation of the consumer legislations in India.

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Table 1
Demographic Profile

		Number of Respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 30 Years	68	22.67%
	31 to 40 Years	80	26.67%
	41 – 50 Years	98	32.66%
	Above 50 Years	54	18.00%
Gender	Male	183	61%
	Female	117	39%
Marital Status	Married	186	62%
	Un-married	114	38%
Residential Area	Rural	107	35.67%
	Semi-urban	101	33.67%
	Urban	92	30.66%
Education Level	Illiterate	43	14.34%
	School Level	102	34.00%
	College Level	85	28.33%
	Professional	70	23.33%
Occupation	Govt. Employee	43	14.33%
	Professional	96	32.00%
	Self-Employed	48	16.00%
	Businessmen	86	28.67%
	Other	27	9.00%
Monthly Income	Below Rs.10000	94	31.33%
	Rs.10001-Rs.20000	86	28.67%
	Rs.20001-Rs.30000	66	22.00%
	Above Rs.30000 and above	54	18.00%

Awareness	Yes	102	34.00%
	No	198	66.00%
Source	Electronic Media	29	28.43%
	Press Media	20	19.61%
	Voluntary consumer organization	26	25.49%
	Advocates	15	14.70%
	Others	12	13.77%
Choice	Right to Safely	240	80.00%
	Political Rights	25	8.33%
	Salesman Ship Rights	35	11.67%
	None of these	0	0%

Table 2

RANKING METHOD – AWARENESS OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW

S. No	Source	Weighted Score	Rank
1	Trade Mark	518	II
2	ISI	566	I
3	ISO	456	V
4	SILK MARK	424	VI
5	AGMARK	487	III
6	BIS	484	IV

Table 3
Chi-Square Test

Factor	Calculated Value	Table Value	Degree of Freedom	Hypothesis Accept / Reject	Significant Level
Age Group	12.107	12.592	6	Accepted	NS
Gender	10.418	5.991	2	Rejected	Significant
Marital Status	8.382	5.991	2	Rejected	Significant
Residential Area	20.044	9.488	4	Rejected	Significant
Educational Qualification	29.731	12.591	6	Rejected	Significant
Occupation	4.465	15.507	8	Accepted	Not Significant
Monthly Income	28.649	12.591	6	Rejected	Significant