
A STUDY ON CONSUMER AWARENESS ON CONSUMER PROTECTION FORUM IN CALICUT CITY, KERALA

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Abstract

In this competitive era, consumer is considered as the king in the market, but actually the king is misguided and exploited by his kingdom especially in the developing and underdeveloped countries like India. Even though Govt. of India has established many laws and organizations in order to protect the interests of consumers, still now majority of Indian consumers are exploited. In such a context, this study focuses to analyze consumer awareness on Consumer Protection Forum in Calicut city, Kerala. The results of the study disclose that majority of the respondents are not interested to go court against unfair trade practices by traders, even though they know about Consumer Protection Act and District Consumer Protection Forum. The study concludes that proper consumer education and awareness should be imparted to consumers and proper and immediate action should be taken by government in order to enhance faith of the consumers on legislative machineries.

Keywords: *Consumer Protection, Awareness, Consumer Forum, Unfair Trade Practices, Consumer Rights*

Introduction

When a person is born in this world, he starts to consume. He needs milk, soap, clothes, water and many other things. So in short, we all are consumers. When a person goes the market as a consumer, he expects some value for his money, i.e. right quality, right quantity, right prices, information about the mode of use etc. The industrialization and the development in international trade have resulted in rapid increase in variety of consumer goods in the market place to satisfy the needs of the consumers. With a view to maximize profits many manufacturers and traders exploit consumers by supplying goods of inferior quality at higher prices. They indulge in unfair trade practices such as misrepresentation, false advertising, tied selling and other acts that are declared unlawful by statute.

The consumer has the right to reject any product or services provided by any manufacturer in the market and can require them to produce goods of their choice. But majority of the Indian consumers are ignorant, illiterate and do not know the role of consumption. When they are ignorant of their rights, they cannot know their responsibility as consumers. At present, in India, majority of the people are not even aware of consumerism which is closely related with the protection of their rights and interests. In our country various state governments and central government have established many constitutional provisions to protect the consumers. But these provisions are not much availed by the consumers well. In such a context, the present study is undertaken to examine the level of consumer awareness on consumer legislation organizations and consumer protection laws.

Scope of the Study

The success of the consumer movement in India to an extent depends upon the level of awareness of the consumers about various aspects of consumer movements such as Consumer Protection Act 1986, consumer rights and responsibilities, various judicial mechanisms involved in the Consumer Redressal Forums. This study attempts to analyze the level of consumers' awareness regarding consumer movement and protection measures. To meet the objectives the researcher has selected Calicut city, Kerala. A sample of different categories of consumers in different parts of Calicut city has been considered for this study.

Statement of the Problem

At present, as a result of development of communication and information technology, the present world has become a global village. Introduction and development of new tools and strategies lead to rapid increase in the supply of consumer goods but the positions of consumers has not changed well. Yet now consumers are cheated by a large no. of restrictive and unfair trade practices such as spurious drugs, abuse of monopoly positions, high prices, poor quality, non-standard goods, poor after sales services etc. Poor and helpless consumers are always exploited by the unscrupulous traders, manufacturers and petty street vendors. The proposed study is an attempt to examine the level of awareness of the consumers about their rights and responsibilities among selected sample consumers in Calicut city, Kerala and to provide some suggestions in order to overcome the problems.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the level of consumer awareness on Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- To understand the functioning of consumer organizations in Calicut city.
- To find out opinion about consumer protection measures from consumers of Calicut city.
- To give suggestions that would help in enhancing consumer alertness and awareness on consumer protection measures.

Hypothesis

H_0 = Educational qualifications and major components are independent.

H_1 = Educational qualifications and major components are dependent.

Methodology of the Study

Data has been collected from a sample of 90 consumers in Calicut city, Kerala by applying simple random sampling method. Primary data has been collected by using questionnaires and secondary data has been obtained through books, magazines, journals, articles, newspapers, annual reports, government reports and published data. Collected data was analysed by using percentage analysis and Chi-square analysis.

Limitations

The sample size is restricted to only 90 respondents. The data have been collected from consumers in Calicut city only. The study was conducted within a small time frame. Results are based on the opinions and responses of the respondents. So, hidden information and lack of interest on the part of respondents cannot be easily identified.

Table 1: Percentage Analysis

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 20 years	10	11.11
21 to 35 years	42	46.67
36 to 50 years	24	26.67
Above 50 years	14	15.55
Total	90	100
Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	68	75.56
Female	22	24.44
Total	90	100
Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
School Level	10	11.11
College Level	65	72.22
Professional	15	16.67
Total	90	100
Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Employee	32	35.55
Business	14	15.56
Professional	10	11.11
Housewife	15	16.67
Student	19	21.11
Total	90	100
Awareness about Consumer Protection ACT 1986	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	64	71.11
Unaware	26	28.89
Total	90	100
Awareness about Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	50	55.56
Unaware	40	44.44
Total	90	100
Awareness about the place to file a complaint	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	41	45.56
Unaware	49	54.44
Total	90	100
Have you faced any unfair trade practices	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	73	81.11
No	17	18.89
Total	90	100
Reaction against cheating by manufacturers or traders	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Do not react	22	30.14
Insist the seller that do not repeat the practice	40	54.79
Inform the manufacturer or customer care	3	4.11
File a complaint	8	10.96
Total	73	100
Satisfaction level on the functioning of Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Fully Satisfied	4	4.45
Satisfied	39	43.33
Dissatisfied	47	52.22
Total	90	100

Source: Primary Data

Chi- Square Test**Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis between Educational Qualifications and Major Components**

Components	Degree of Freedom	Calculated Value	Table Value	Results
Awareness about Consumer Protection Act 1986	2	10.2206	5.991	Dependent
Awareness about Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum	2	14.3115	5.991	Dependent
Awareness about the place to file a complaint	2	7.8196	5.991	Dependent
Facing any unfair trade practices	2	0.9807	5.991	Independent
Satisfaction level on the functioning of the Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum	4	21.8689	9.488	Dependent

Source: Computed Value

On the basis of the chi- square analysis it is identified that the null hypothesis is rejected in four cases and it is accepted in one case. In other words, educational qualifications of the respondents have significant association with the Awareness about Consumer Protection Act, Awareness about Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum, and Awareness about the place to file a complaint and Satisfaction level on the functioning of the Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum. Hence educational qualification of the respondents has not significantly associated with facing any unfair trade practices by respondents.

Findings

- It is revealed that majority (46.67%) of the respondents is in the age range of 21 to 35 years.
- It is identified that majority of the respondents (75.56%) are male.
- 72.22% of the respondents have the educational qualification of college level and 16.67% of the respondents have professional qualification.
- Majority of the respondents are employees (35.55%) and students(21.11%). The remaining part of the respondents has the occupation status of housewife (16.67%), business (15.56%) and professional (11.11%).
- It is inferred that majority of the respondents (71.11%) are aware about Consumer Protection Act 1986.
- It is proved that majority of the respondents (55.56%) are aware about Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum.
- It is identified that majority of the respondents (54.44%) are unaware about the place to file a complaint.
- 81.11% of the respondents have faced many types of unfair trade practices from manufacturers and traders.

- It is revealed that only 10.96% of the respondents have filed complaints against cheating of traders or manufacturers.
- It is inferred that majority of the respondents (52.22%) are dissatisfied on the functioning of Calicut District Consumer Protection Forum. Whereas 43.33% of the respondents are satisfied.

Suggestions

- Consumers should be aware about their rights and responsibilities themselves by collecting as much as information from different sources. Government and non-government organizations should organize awareness camps both to rural people and urban people.
- Proper publicity should be given about consumer rights and consumer protection acts on mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc. In this era of information technology, various Social Medias and new medias can be used to spread awareness.
- Consumers should check the marks of standard like AGMARK, ISI, BIS etc. in order to avoid malpractices by manufacturers and traders to an extent. Government should take immediate action against malpractices of manufacturers and traders.
- The consumers' grievances should be finalized within reasonable time and with reasonable compensation.

Conclusion

Consumer protection means and aims at protecting interest of consumers from various unfair trade practices. Even though many consumer protection legislations and organizations have been established in India, many Indian consumers are still unaware of consumer protection and consumer rights. Majority of the consumers who are aware that they are cheated by businessmen in different ways do not fight against the malpractices because they do not know how to get justice under law. Most of the people think that instead of spending time for approaching court, it is better to solve it with the trader himself. Even though government is playing an important role in protecting consumer rights, if the customer is not aware himself, the problem cannot be addressed well. So proper consumer education and awareness should be imparted to consumers, so that individual consumer will be able to make rational choice and to fight against unfair trade practices by manufacturers and traders.

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