

Need of Awareness among Indian Public Regarding their Consumer Rights

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Abstract: Consumer rights are seen as fundamental human rights, and they are violated when they are not upheld. One of the most important contributing factors to the country's inadequate system for protecting consumer rights is customers' ignorance of and lack of awareness of their rights. Every economy in the world depends on consumers because without the strong demand they generate, the whole system would almost collapse. Any individual who spends money and utilizes economic products and services is considered a consumer. It suggests that all people in our world are referred to be consumers at some point in time. This research aims to ascertain the development of consumer rights and the degree of knowledge among the sample population of 150 respondents. We utilized both primary and secondary data. The degree of consumer rights knowledge and the presence of diverse dispute resolution tools will be signs of the consumer protection movement's effectiveness.

Keywords: - Consumer Rights, Awareness, Public, Redressal machineries

I. Introduction

The period we live in now is the era of the consumer. Any individual who consumes products or services in any way is referred to as a "consumer." Additionally, since the consumer is not only the focus of the market but also the one who controls how it operates, any infringement of his rights must be taken seriously. Despite being schooled that it is vital to examine a product's quality, its standard trademarks, its expiration date, etc. before purchasing it or using a service, we have become so careless about our rights in today's busy world that we also lack the time to do so. There is just one option if a loss occurs later: contact the consumer forum. Due to the fact that too many consultations are conducted before to visiting the forum, only if the consumer believes the forum will be able to compensate him for his loss will he go; otherwise, he won't.

It is crucial to take consumer knowledge of product pricing and quality seriously. In the era of globalization, advances in technology, the release of high-end products into the market, and aggressive marketing strategies have not only given consumers a wide range of alternatives but have also protected them from the many problems caused by such fast change.

It is critical and becoming more and more vital to educate customers about product quality as well as possible service issues in the growing sector of public utilities.

To put it simply, the customer has to be aware of his rights. He should possess the information necessary to protect himself from any malpractice on the side of the merchant. To help customers in this circumstance, it is essential to provide them with reliable, thorough information that is easy and affordable to get. In response to these issues, the Government of India and the State Government created the Consumer Protection Act in an effort to develop a

dispute settlement procedure. In terms of spreading awareness, there is still work to be done. There should always be a workable answer available for each demand. The significance of this grows in rural places.

II. Methodology Adopted

For this investigation, a survey approach was used. The utilization of primary and secondary data was widespread. A well-structured interview schedule was used to gather the main data from the general public, while the secondary data came from a variety of published sources.

Sample design

For this research, 150 sample respondents were chosen. Each from an urban, rural, and semi-urban region made up 50 of them. The multi-stage random sample procedure was used, and then the final respondent customers were chosen simply at random.

Statistical tools

F test and simple percentage analysis were used to determine how informed respondents were of their rights as customers.

III. Analysis And Interpretation

Awareness on consumer rights

Today, the majority of the respondents may learn about consumer rights and other relevant topics via watching television, listening to radio, reading daily and magazines, and surfing the internet. With a five point scale, the researcher has generated five statements about the origins of consumer rights knowledge. They are categorized according to their views, the mean score and "F" statistics are computed, and the findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sources of awareness on consumer rights

Sl. No.	Source	Mean score				F statistics
		Urban	Rural	Semi urban	Overall	
1	Print media	2.4800	2.4200	3.6600	2.8533	43.195**
2	Electronic media	2.3333	2.5000	2.0000	2.3333	0.553NS
3	While shopping	1.8000	1.8200	2.3200	1.9800	36.877**
4	Friends and relatives	3.9800	3.5600	3.1400	3.5600	18.851**
5	Just by looking around	1.8293	2.1481	2.1724	2.0206	5.054**

According to Table 1, "friends and family" and "print media" are the respondents' most significant sources of knowledge on consumer rights awareness, with mean scores of 3.9800 and 2.4800, respectively. These two were "friends and family" and "electronic media" among the rural respondents since their corresponding mean scores were 3.5600 and 2.5000. Given that their mean scores are 3.6600 and 3.1400, respectively, the semi-urban respondent consumers said that they learned about products from "print media" and information from "friends and family." Since their total mean score is 3.5600, the responding customers have generally given "friends and family" a greater priority. Because their respective "F" statistics are significant at the one percent level, it has been determined that there is a significant

difference between urban, rural, and semi-urban respondents' perceptions of various sources of information, including print media, shopping, friends and family, and simply looking around.

Awareness on right to safety

It's possible that many customers don't know how to utilize the items safely. Additionally, they lack the technical expertise needed to evaluate the safety features of goods and services. Therefore, from the perspective of the customer, product safety is of the biggest significance. As a result, Table 2 lists the sources from which respondents' respondents learned about safety precautions.

Table 2: Sources of awareness about safety measures

Sl. No.	Source	Mean score				F statistics
		Urban	Rural	Semi urban	overall	
1	Enquire the sellers	3.0000	3.1000	3.5400	3.2133	7.184**
2	Refer the internet	2.3333	2.0000	2.0000	2.1667	0.375NS
3	Talk with the users	3.3333	2.0000	5.0000	3.1667	24.281**
4	Read user manual	2.4783	2.1500	3.3500	2.6508	21.691**
5	See the product labels	1.9130	3.4500	3.5000	2.9048	29.636**

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents learned about safety precautions solely through "the vendors," with a mean score of 3.2133, followed by "conversation with the users," with a mean score of 3.1667. Referring to the internet, with a mean score of 2.1667, is the least valuable source among all respondents who were customers. Given that their respective "F" statistics are significant at the one percent level, four factors have been discovered that show a significant difference between urban, rural, and semi-urban respondent consumers regarding the sources of their knowledge of safety precautions.

Awareness on Right to Be Informed

Consumers who responded were questioned about the information they referenced while purchasing the goods. Six factors that are assessed on a five point scale were used to calculate the respondent customers' views, and the findings are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Awareness towards right to be informed

Sl. No.	Detail	Mean score				F statistics
		Urban	Rural	Semi urban	overall	
1	Product name	2.8200	2.6200	2.5400	2.6600	2.802NS
2	Quantity	2.7800	3.4200	3.5400	3.2467	14.270**
3	MRP	4.1515	4.0625	4.0238	4.0748	0.507NS
4	Direction for use	1.4800	1.7600	1.9400	1.7267	15.660**
5	Warning on label	2.7600	2.6000	3.0400	2.8000	5.503**
6	Manufactured date and expiry	3.2121	3.0313	3.5238	3.2804	4.662*

With high mean scores of 4.0748, 3.2804, and 3.2467, respectively, all categories of respondent consumers were highly aware of the statements "manufactured date and expiration" and "quantity" from the aforementioned six statements relating to the degree of awareness towards the right to be informed. "Directions for usage" is the consumer product category with the lowest level of knowledge among the three. From the above table, it can also be deduced that there are significant differences between the three respondent consumer groups with regard to the statements involving awareness of the right to information, particularly when it comes to quantity, use instructions, label warnings, and manufactured and expiration dates, since their respective F statistics are significant at the one percent and five percent levels.

Awareness on right to choose

The right of customers to choose and purchase the goods of their choosing is unalienable. The market offers a range of commodities, offering customers a selection from which to choose. One way analysis of variance is used to examine the respondents' customers' knowledge on how to choose various product qualities. Table 4 displays the final mean score and the corresponding "F" statistics.

Table 4: Awareness towards right to choose

Sl. No.	features	Mean score				F statistics
		Urban	Rural	Semi urban	overall	
1	Refer the prices of different brands	4.2400	4.1400	4.3800	4.2533	2.321NS
2	Refer the quality of different brands	3.4200	3.1400	3.8200	3.4600	12.838**
3	Refer the quantity of different brands	2.4800	2.8400	2.5600	2.6267	4.453*
4	Refer the discount rate of different brands	3.0732	2.7778	3.1034	3.0000	2.060NS
5	Refer the attractiveness of different brands	2.3600	2.9000	3.1200	2.7933	18.022**

Since their respective mean scores are 4.2400 and 3.4200 for urban respondents, 4.1400 and 3.1400 for rural respondents, and 4.3800 and 3.8200 for semi urban respondents, it can be deduced from Table 4 that all categories of consumers were highly aware of two statements, "refer the prices of different brands" and "refer the quality of different brands" while exercising their right to choose. With an overall mean score of 4.2533; all respondents are quite aware of the statement "refer the costs of various brands." When customers are asked to "refer the quality of various brands," a substantial disparity between the three types of responder consumers is found. Refer to the quantity of various brands and the "attractiveness of various brands" since their respective "F statistics" are significant at the 1% and 5% levels.

Awareness towards Right to Be Heard

Numerous forums have been developed to hear consumer-related complaints. Others are advisory bodies, while others are adjudicatory entities. Table 5 lists the respondents' degree of familiarity with the various dispute resolution tools available to them when they need them.

Table 5: Awareness towards redressal machineries

Sl. No	Authority	Mean score				F statistics
		Urban	Rural	Semi urban	overall	
1	Consumer protection council	2.8600	2.5600	2.9600	2.7933	5.475**
2	Consumer disputes redressal forums	3.6829	3.6667	3.6897	3.6804	0.011NS
3	Voluntary consumer organization	2.9756	3.4815	2.2759	3.2062	5.622**
4	Legal experts	2.6600	2.5400	2.8400	2.6800	2.574NS
5	Consumer protection department officials	1.5854	2.3704	2.4828	2.0722	23.469**

Table 5 suggested that both urban and respondent customers were well-versed in the redressal mechanisms. Consumer dispute resolution forums came in second, followed by "volunteer consumer organizations," who scored well on average. Additionally, the semi-urban respondents' customers had high mean scores for their knowledge of "consumer disputes redressal forums followed by consumer protection councils." With a high mean score of 3.6804, the majority of respondents who are customers are aware of consumer dispute resolution platforms. Since the "F" statistics are significant at the one percent level, it has been determined that there are significant differences in respondents' awareness of dispute resolution mechanisms between respondents in urban, rural, and semi-urban areas who use "consumer protection councils," "voluntary consumer organizations," and "consumer protection department officials."

Awareness towards Right to Consumer Education

Table 6: Awareness towards right to consumer education

Sl. No	Area	Mean score				F statistics
		Urban	Rural	Semi urban	overall	
1	Knowledge on consumer disputes redressal agencies	4.3333	3.5000	3.0000	3.8333	5.526*
2	Knowledge on consumer legislations	3.3333	3.0000	2.0000	3.0000	1.105NS
3	Knowledge on consumer rights	2.6087	3.3000	3.5000	3.1111	7.215**
4	Knowledge on deficiency in service	2.8261	3.2000	4.0500	3.3333	22.042**
5	Knowledge on unfair trade practices	4.5000	3.7200	3.9000	4.0400	25.264**

Five factors are used to determine the areas where customers require consumer education. One way analysis of variance has been utilized to examine the respondents' degree of knowledge on the aforementioned factors linked to consumer education. In Table 6, the calculated mean score and the corresponding "F" statistics are shown.

All respondent consumer categories have high mean scores for the statements "knowledge on unfair trade practices," "knowledge on consumer dispute redressal agencies," and "knowledge on deficiency in service" out of the five variables pertaining to the areas where consumers need

consumer education. These scores are 4.0400, 3.8333, and 3.3333, respectively. Since four variables' respective "F" statistics are significant at the 1% and 5% levels for the locations where consumer education is required, it has been possible to identify the significant differences between respondents from urban, rural, and semi-urban areas.

We have examined the respondents' knowledge of each of the six consumer rights independently so far. The respondents' customers were divided into three categories—high, medium, and low level—based on their overall scores in order to determine their general understanding of consumer rights. All 150 respondents' arithmetic mean scores and standard deviation scores were calculated. As a result, 14 percent of respondents who were consumers reported having a high degree of knowledge, 69 percent had a medium level, and 17 percent had a low level of understanding of various consumer rights.

IV. Conclusion

We may conclude by saying that safeguarding consumer rights is one of the most crucial issues for all growing nations. Like in any industrialized country, consumers take use of their legal rights. In developed nations, illiteracy and lack of awareness are the major causes of this, while literacy is the key factor in underdeveloped nations. The consumer has a right to protection from illegal business practices as a citizen of the state and the nation, but this is not possible due to consumer ignorance, a lack of voice from consumers and consumer associations, consumers' compromised attitudes, pervasive corruption, and violations of consumer rights. The aforementioned debate leads to the conclusion that, if customers are informed, they may exhibit this characteristic by prioritizing things according to their requirements. There are several laws in place to protect consumers, and the number is growing as needed. However, its success and implementation greatly rely on customer awareness, actor honesty, and infrastructure.

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