
**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT
AND ALLIED SCIENCES (IJBMAS)**
A Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

**A STUDY ON CONSUMER AWARENESS TOWARDS CONSUMER
PROTECTION ACT IN JANGAON DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Consumers play an important role in the Indian economic system. Consumerism is a movement that promotes the interests of buyers of goods and services. Its main aim is to protect the consumer from unsafe or low quality of products, fraudulent advertising, labeling, packing and business practices that limits competition. The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted to provide for better protection of the interest of the consumers. The main objective of the Act is to provide better and all-round protection to consumers and effective safeguards against different types of exploitation such as defective goods, deficient services and unfair trade practices. Most of the consumers have general level of awareness about consumer and purchase related issues.

Key Words: Consumers, Consumer Protection Act, Consumer awareness, Quality, advertising, packing.

Introduction

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted to provide for better protection of the interest of the consumers and for the purpose to make provisions for the establishment of Consumer Councils and other authorities in the settlement of consumer disputes and for matters connected therewith. To promote and to protect the rights of consumers such as protection against marketing of goods which are hazardous to life and property, the right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices, the right to be assured, wherever possible, access to variety of goods at competitive prices, the right to be heard and to be assured that the interest of consumers will receive due consideration at appropriate forums, the right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers and right to consumer education. The object is also to provide speedy and simple redressal to consumer disputes-quasi judicial machinery is sought to be set up at District, State and National Levels.

Consumer Movement in India

Consumerism is a movement that promotes the interests of buyers of goods and services. Its main aim is to protect the consumer from unsafe or low quality of products, fraudulent advertising, labeling, packing and business practices that limits competition. It promotes adequate information about the products. So that consumer can take right decision in purchasing goods and services. It also tries to inform consumers of the effective means of getting compensation for damage or inconvenient caused by defective products and services.

Consumer Protection Act 1986: The Consumer Protection Act was passed in 1986 and it came into force from 1st July 1987. The main objective of the Act is to provide better and all-round protection to consumers and effective safeguards against different types of exploitation such as defective goods, deficient services and unfair trade practices. It also makes provisions for a simple, speedy and inexpensive machinery for redressal of consumers' grievances.

Salient Features of Consumer Protection Act 1986: The salient features of Consumer Protection Act (CPA) 1986 are as follows:

- (1) It applies to all goods, services and unfair trade practices unless specifically exempted by the Central Government.
- (2) It covers all sectors whether private, public or co-operative.
- (3) It provides for establishment of consumer protection councils at the central, state and district levels to promote and protect the rights of consumers and a three tier quasi-judicial machinery to deal with consumer grievances and disputes.
- (4) It provides a statutory recognition to the six rights of consumers.

The Common Problems Prevailing in the Markets are:

- Old and damaged goods sold in the market.
- High price or over charging by the seller/ Manufacturer.
- Improper packing and labeling to misguide the consumers.
- Poor after sale service.
- Lack of safety and absence of quality controls regarding.
- Imitation manufacturer's i.e. mis-branding and duplicate products.

Machinery for Settlement of Disputes:

The judicial machinery set up under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 consists of consumer courts (forums) at the district, state and national levels. These are known as District forum, State Commission and National Commission separately.

A brief idea about the consumer Forums:

District Forum: A written complaint can be filed before the District Consumer forum where the value of goods or services and the compensation claimed does not exceed Rs. 20 lakh.

If a consumer is not satisfied by the decision of the District forum, he can challenge the same before the State Commission, within 30 days of the order.

State Commission: A written complaint can be filed before the State Commission where the value of goods or services and the compensation claimed exceeds Rs. 20 lakh but does not exceed Rs. One crore.

In case the aggrieved party is not satisfied with the order of the State

Commission he can appeal to the National Commission within 30 days of passing of the order.

National Commission: The National Commission is headed by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court. All complaints pertaining to those goods or services and compensation whose value is more than Rs. one crore can be filed directly before the National Commission.

An appeal can be filed against the order of the National Commission to the Supreme Court within 30 days from the date of order passed.

Need for the Study: There are many research articles regarding the consumer's perception towards CPA (Consumer Protection Act), consumer awareness. "A Study on consumer awareness towards consumer protection act in Jangaon region" is an untouched topic, hence the present study has been undertaken to fill up that gap.

Review of Literature

Gupta (2014 a) carried out a study about consumer awareness level monitoring inventory and found that only 14.5% consumers have full awareness about consumer and purchase related issues. 49.17% consumers had general level of awareness and 36.33% consumers had either very low or no level of awareness towards consumers do not look and analyze for much factors. Few factors like maximum retail price, seal and packing material of product for assuring the genuineness of brand, quality of the product, warranty/ guarantee card filled, check the bill after buy, date of manufacturing and date of expiry were much referred than other factors.

Gupta (2014 b) Conducted a study on consumers awareness and action against business malpractices and concluded that majority of consumers had complaints about their purchases. Despite having the complaints, 87.3% consumers either never went for lodging the complaints or sometimes went for lodging the complaints. Although, the correlation between complaint found and complaint lodged had been found significant, the real problem in consumer protection here seemed to be the consumers behavior of accepting the purchase without going for complaining against any complaint.

Chanana (2014) worked on to find the strategies for consumer awareness. She reported that, in general, the consumers were ignorant about their rights. The Government has not been making sufficient attempts to make the consumers aware and its role needed to be improved. Certain rules and regulations were still needed to protect the consumers. The court procedures of consumer forums took a very long time to provide justice and money required was also more.

Objectives of the study: The present study is "A Study on Consumer Awareness towards consumer protection act in Jangaon District." is aimed at analyzing the following objectives:

- 1) To study the consumer protection act and its salient features.
- 2) To study the awareness levels in the rural and urban people about consumer protection act.
- 3) To suggest the ways for making consumers more aware of their rights/ consumer protection act.

Methodology: The present study is based on both the primary and secondary source of data. Primary data was collected by using questionnaire and secondary data have been collected from journals, websites and etc., it is not possible to study the entire population of consumer awareness about CPA in Jangaon region. So the researcher has collected only limited respondents i.e. 50 respondents. 25 respondents from Jangaon town and 25 respondents from Wadlakonda rural village in the Jangaon district. The researcher has selected the method of judgment sampling.

Awareness for Consumers During Purchasing: Today the market is flooded with very large number as well as varieties of goods and services. Many modern goods are technological mysteries. The consumer deserves to get what he pays for in real quantity and true quality. In every, society, consumer remains the center of gravity of all business and industrial activity. He needs protection from the manufacturer, producer, supplier, wholesaler and retailer. The Caveat Emptor- ' Let the Buyer Beware' doctrine of the law concerning the sale of goods, assumed that the consumer was responsible for protecting himself and would do so by applying his intelligence and experience in negotiating the terms of any purchase.

A consumer can keep in mind the following responsibilities while purchasing, using consuming goods and services.

1. The consumer must demand bill of purchase, check the bill after buying and preserve this bill of connected purchase/ payment.
2. The consumer must check the illegal fixation of price stickers on original printed prices.

3. The consumer must check the maximum retail price and compare the actual price paid with maximum retail price.
4. The consumer must check the seal and packing material of product for assuring the genuineness of brand.

The consumer must file a complaint in an appropriate consumer forum in case of a shortcoming in the quality of goods purchased or services availed. Do not fail to take an action even when the amount involved is small.

Table 1: Socio Awareness towards Consumer Protection Act.

S.No	Particulars		No.of. Respondents		Percentage	
			URBAN (25)	RURAL(25)	URBAN	RURAL
	DISCRIPTION					
1	Gender	Male	15	15	60%	60%
		Female	10	10	40%	40%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%
2	Education Level	Primary Level	05	05	20%	20%
		Secondary Level	05	05	20%	20%
		UG	7	09	28%	36%
		PG	08	06	32%	24%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%
3	Awareness about Consumer Protection Act	Yes	18	08	72%	32%
		No	07	17	28%	68%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%
4	Any Idea about Consumer Forums	Yes	16	06	64%	24%
		No	09	19	36%	76%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%
5	Do you know how to file a complaint	Yes	08	04	32%	16%
		No	17	21	68%	84%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%
6	Do you want any awareness programmes on CPA in future	Yes	21	23	84%	92%
		No	04	02	16%	8%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%
7	Any Govt. Dept conducted awareness on Consumer Protection Act	Yes	12	07	48%	28%
		No	13	18	52%	72%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%
8	It will helpful or not?	Yes	17	20	68%	80%
		No	08	05	32%	20%
		Total	25	25	100%	100%

Source: Primary Data

Analysis and Interpretation

60% the respondents are male and 40% of the respondents are female in respect of rural and urban. In the education level we considered the four levels i.e. primary level, secondary level, UG level and PG level, the percentage is 20%, 20%, 28% and 32% respectively in urban area and 20%, 20%, 38% and 24% respectively in rural area. Majority of the respondents (68%) have no awareness about the consumer protection act, where as in the urban area 72% having awareness about it. We observe in generally the urban people education levels are good compared to rural people. Majority of the respondents (76%) in rural have no idea, what are the redressal Forums? and how to solve the problems in consumer forums. 84% of the rural people they aware how to file a complaint against untrade practices and whenever they cheated by retailers in the market. Only 68% of the people have an idea for filing of a complaint in the forums. It will be considered because the percentage of people those who have aware about filing a complaints percentage is very high. We understood from the above table urban people have more awareness about this act and procedures for the filling complaints in respect of rural as well as urban.

In the case of awareness programmes in future 92% and 84% in rural and urban respectively from this they expect more awareness programees about this act. We observe that the urban people also need more awareness because the rural and urban percentage difference is very low i.e. (92-84) 8%. 72% of the respondents express their feeling no one can conduct any awareness programmes, seminar and campaigning about this act. Majority of the respondents in the rural people wanted that the government and related departments should be provide and conduct more campaigning towards awareness about the consumer protection act.

FINDINGS:

The following are the findings of the study:

1. It is found that 60% of the respondents are male.
2. Most of the respondents (32% & 36%) are PG and UG Degree Holders.
3. Majority of the respondents (64%) have an idea about consumer forums.
4. It is found that 76% of the respondents have no idea about the consumer forums.
5. Most of the respondents (84% and 92%) wanted more programmes to create awareness among the people.

SUGGESTIONS

The following are the suggestions of the study:

1. It is suggested that the awareness towards consumer protection act should be provided to the illiterate and the women community.
2. It is suggested that the women awareness is important towards the consumer protection act as well as men.
3. It is also suggested that the government should come forward to take short films with respect to the act and screen the same in popular televisions channels.
4. The educated should provide awareness to the general public so as to promote the advantages of this act and it will helpful to protect the interests of the consumers.
5. Even the educated and the business people are not aware of the various important issues and forums in the consumer protection act, so the Government should take necessary steps to make familiarize the concepts of the consumer protection act in India.

Conclusion

It may be concluded that even several laws meant to protect consumers against such unfair trade practices, false and misleading advertisements continue to exploit the consumers. Most of the consumers have general level of awareness about consumer and purchase related issues. Many consumers faced the problem of unethical practices but the complaint was lodged against very few areas of unethical practices. Consumers were not willing to go to consumer Forums for many

personal reasons. Lack of time and wastage of time, energy and money were reported as most important reasons.

The issue which is being most critical is Consumer Education. Even though the Department of Consumer Affairs is taking major steps but as we can see the outcomes are not that favorable. Consumers became aware of their rights through radio, newspapers, television and other channels.

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