



## International Journal of Research in Social Sciences

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Title

CONSUMER EDUCATION & AWARENESS

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**ABSTRACT:**

Talking of India with world's second largest population here the issues related to the consumers affects the entire million people since everyone is a consumer in one way or the other. The consumer has to be aware of his rights and play a key role. This is possible through consumerism. The paper is an attempt to study the awareness level of consumers regarding their consumer rights in 5 districts

**Key words:** consumerism, 3-tier, quasi judicial machinery, consumer councils

**INTRODUCTION:**

In country's where the consumer is illiterate innocent, un-organised & where the market is dominated by the sellers leads to exploitation of the consumers in the form of price variation (over charging) adulteration & Sub standard products, sub standard weights & Measures Deceptive Mall practices, Insufficient consumer guidance/ Direction, Lack of standardized products/ hidden declaration To eliminate these unfair practices a consumer Protection Act 1986 came into existence. This act provides better protection to the interests of the consumers and makes provision for the establishment of consumer council & other authorities for the redressal of the grievance of the consumer & matters connected there with. The consumer Protection Act 1986 extends to the whole of India except the state Jammu & Kashmir.

**OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:**

- To study the awareness level of consumers regarding their rights in 5 districts
- To study the reasons responsible for delay in settlement of complaints in consumer courts.
- To provide suggestions for improvement of functioning of consumer courts.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

This paper is an attempt to study the awareness level of consumers of 5 districts i.e. Faridabad, Gurgaon, Karnal, Kurukshetra and Yamunanagar. It provides knowledge related to problems faced by consumers, various rights available to them and various consumer protection laws existing in India. Further 3-tier quasi judicial machinery available to consumers for settlement of their complaints is also discussed. Survey and observation method is used to carry out the research.

### **5 R'S OF CONSUMER**

- Reduce
- Reuse
- Recycle
- Refuse
- Rethink

### **PROBLEM FACED BY CONSUMERS:**

- Price variation (over charging)
- Adulteration & Sub standard products
- Sub standard weights & Measures
- Deceptive Mall practices
- Insufficient consumer guidance/ Direction
- Lack of standardized products/ hidden declaration

### **SOLUTION TO CONSUMER PROBLEMS:**

#### **RIGHTS OF CONSUMERS**

Always adopt market survey in depth and reliability of the sources of information (e.g. T.V., Magazines, newspapers etc.) before they make a buying of a product. As for as possible

shopping from company authorized stores / showroom & check that the material is properly packed & labeled with directions even rates, date of Mfg., Date of Expiry etc.

**1. Right to Safety**

Consumer should have the right to protection of health & safety against foods, which are unsafe to life & health e.g. unsafe of appliances, flammable fabrics, dangerous toys, food additive, food colouring etc.

**2. Right to be informed**

It means right to be informed about quality, quantity, purity, potency, standard & price of foods or services, as the case may be so as to protest the consumers against unfair trade practices. Consumers should be given all the relevant facts about the product so that they can take intelligent decisions in purchasing. Advertising & labeling on the package should provide objective information to buyers.

**3. Right to choose**

The consumers must have access to variety of food & services at competition prices. Free competition provides choice in the selection of foods & services. It is expected from the manufactures not to use aggressive selling technique to sell a particular product without giving the consumer a chance to choose the best among alternative products available.

**4. Right to be Heard**

There should be provision for standing machinery to ensure feedback of informative in business communication to listen to the genuine grievances & complaints from the customers.

**5. Right to get Redressed**

There should be prompt settlement of complaints & claims lodged by aggrieved customers. This will ensure consumer confidence & provide justice to buyers.

**6. Right to Consumer Educations**

The consumer has the right to be aware of his rights remedies available to him, redress his grievances through publicity in the mass media.

**7. Right to Healthy Environment**

In recent years greater attention is being paid to this right because of deterioration of ecological balance, deforestation & environmental pollution. Consumer citizens demand conservation of natural non-renewal resources, preservation of natural beauty & healthy environment.

**8. Right to Satisfaction of Basic Needs**

The consumer has a right to get basic necessities of life such as food clothing & water right to pure & healthy environment. It is latest addition to consumer bill of rights community life should be free from various modes of pollution.

**REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO CONSUMER:**

The consumer can approach for redressal of grievances to the authorities established as per the consumer protection Act, 1986 (District Forum, State commission & National Commission) taking into the consideration the jurisdiction of the authority.

1. Removal of defects in products
2. Replacement of products
3. Refund of amount of cost of product/ services (purchase cost) by the seller or the service provider.
4. Payment of compensation of awarded by the consumer court (District Forum, State Commission and National Commissions) for harassment & mental agony.

**MAJOR CONSUMER PROTECTION LAWS IN INDIA:**

- i) Monopolies & Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act 1969 (Replaced by Competition Act 2002)
- ii) Industries Development & Regulation Act 1951.
- iii) Essential Commodities Act 1955.
- iv) The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954
- v) Prevention of Black-Marketing & Maintenance of essential Commodities Act.
- vi) The Sale of goods Act, 1935
- vii) Trade Mark & Merchandise Marks Act 1958.
- viii) The Agricultural Produce Grading & Marketing Act, 1937
- ix) The Drugs Control Act, 1950
- x) Indian Patents & Designs Act.

- xi) Indian Standard Institute Certification Act, 1952.
- xii) Standard Weights & Measures Act, 1956.
- xiii) Consumer Protection Act 1986.
- xiv) Imports & Exports Control Act 1947.
- xv) Packaged Commodities (Regulation) order, 1975
- xvi) Price & Stock Display Order
- xvii) The Drugs Act 1940.
- xviii) Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act 1990
- xix) The Indian Penal Code 1860
- xx) The Indian Contract Act 1882
- xxi) The Drugs & Cosmetics Act. 1940
- xxii) The Drugs & Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act, 1954.

### **MACHINERY FOR REDRESSAL OF CONSUMER GRIEVANCES:**

#### **A) District Forum**

The state government requires to establish district forum in each district. Each district forum consists of chairman & two members appointed by the state government. It has the power of Civil Courts for enquiring into any complaint. One can file complaint where the value of goods & services is less than 20 lakhs. The appeal against the order of the district forum can be filed to the state commission within 30 days.

#### **B) State Commissions**

It is set by the state government & its jurisdiction is restricted to the boundaries of state concerned. The consumer Protection Act lays down the working of the state commission. It consist of a president who either is or has been judge of a High Court & other two members. All the three are appointed by the state government. One can file complaint where the value of goods or services is between 20 lakh & 1 crore. Any person who is aggrieved by the order of the state commission can appeal against such order to the national commission within 30 days.

**C) National Commission**

National commission is set by the central government. It consist of president who either is or has been judge of the Supreme Court & four members appointed by the central government. The commission shall have the same power as that of a Civil Court. One can file complaint where the value of goods or services is more than one crore. An appeal against the order of the national commission can be filed to the Supreme Court within 30 days.

**Consumer Protection Council:**

**Central Consumer Protection Council:** The Central Government by notification may specify a council to be known as Central Consumer Protection Council. The minister incharge consumer affairs in the Central Government shall be its Chairman. Such number of other official or non-official members representing such interests out of which one member should be women. The council shall meet as and when necessary but at least one meeting of the council shall be held every year. The council shall meet at such time and place as the Chairman may think fit. The objectives of central council are as under.

1. The right to be protected against the marketing of goods which are hazardous to life and property.
2. The right to be informed about quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods. So as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices
3. The right to be assured where ever possible access to variety of goods at competitive prices.
4. The right to be heard and to be assured that consumers interest will receive due consideration at appropriate forums.
5. The right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers.
6. The right to consumer education.

**State Consumer Protection Council:**

The State Government by notification establish with effect from such date may specify a council to be known as the State Consumer Protection Council. The minister in-charge of consumer affair in the State Government shall be the Chairman such number of other official or non-official members representing such interest as prescribed by the state government and number of members not exceeding ten as may be nominated by the Central government of which one member should be women. The council shall meet as and when necessary but not less than two meetings shall be held every year. The State Council shall meet at such time and place as the

Chairman may think fit. The objective of every State Council shall be to promote and protect within the state the rights of the consumer lay down by the Central Council.

### **District Consumer Protection Council:**

The State government shall establish for every district by notification or council to be known as the District Consumer Protection Council with effect from such date as it may specify in such notification. The collector of the district who shall be its Chairman such number of other official and non-official members representing such interest as may be prescribed by the State Government out of which one member should be a women. The District Council shall meet at such time and place within the district as the Chairman may think fit. The objectives of District Council shall be to promote and protect within the district the rights of the consumer laid down by central council.

### **PROMINENT CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN INDIA:**

1. Triplicane Urban Co-operative Stores (TUCS).
2. Indian Association of Consumers (IAC).
3. International Organisation of Consumers Union (IOCU).
4. Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI), Mumbai.
5. All India Bank Depositors Association.
6. Karnataka Consumer Service Society (KCSS), Bangalore.
7. Consumer Forum
8. Consumer Education Society (CES).
9. Voluntary Organisation in the Interest of Consumer Education (VOICE).
10. Consumer Action Group (CAG).
11. Confederation of Indian Consumer Organisation (CICO).
12. Consumer Service Security, New Delhi
13. Indian Federation of Consumers Organisations, New Delhi
14. Common Cause, New Delhi

15. Akhil Bhartiaya Grahak Panchayat, Mumbai.
16. Consumer Flying Squad, Madras
17. Consumer Welfare Society, Tuticorin
18. Consumer Association, Calcutta
19. Consumer Protection Council, Tiruchi
20. Consumer Protection & Research Society, New Delhi.

So far as the consumer protection Act is concerned there is no doubt in pendency of cases as far as data collected upto Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2010. The position is as under.

Table 1

District	Period 2005- 2010	Complaints Received (A)	Complaints Disposed off (B)	Complaints Pending off (C)	%OF DISPOSED (B/A)
Faridabad	-	14107	3621	12398	25.67
Gurgaon	-	16982	5984	10998	35.24
Karnal	-	3857	2620	1237	67.93
Kurukshetra	-	3115	1875	1240	60.19
Yamuna Nagar	-	5806	3826	1980	65.90

(Source : District Consumer Court)

#### Findings of the study:

The table 1 reveals that highest number of complaints have been registered in Gurgaon followed by Faridabad, Yamunanagar, Karnal and Kurukshetra. If we compare the figures of complaints disposed off. Again Gurgaon is at the top followed by Yamunanagar, Faridabad, Karnal and kurukshetra. Now evaluating the pending cased Faridabad is at the top followed by Gurgaon, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra and Karnal. Last but not the least if we compare the % age of

disposed, Karnal is in the best position followed by Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Gurgaon and Faridabad.

In the end I would like to say that awareness level of NCR region( Gurgaon and Faridabad is high regarding their consumer rights as compared to other cities ( Kurukshetra, Karnal , Yamunanagar) as per the scope of my study is concerned

Some of the factors responsible for it are as under.

1. Lack of facilities
2. Lack of staff.
3. Delay in the appointment of Authority established.
4. Delayed tactics

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

The government should take necessary steps to improve the functioning of consumer redressal for quick settlement of complaints by making them available with all necessary amenities such as infrastructure and staff facilities. It should also take necessary steps to avoid delayed tactics. In addition to the above the government should also carry out some consumer awareness campaigns and programs to improve general awareness of consumers of India.

### **CONCLUSION:**

As per the theories of marketing now a days it is well established fact that the consumer is the king so we have to work for the entire satisfaction of the consumer. If we want to establish our unit or service centre, we have to look into the preference, priorities, requirements, needs of the consumer. Even the father of nation **Mahatma Gandhi** before the established of Consumer Protection Act, 1986 observed this very hard fact “A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependant on us. We are dependant on him. He is not an interruption in our work, he is the purposes of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him.”

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