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- Garg, Bhavet (2011): Towards a New Gas Policy, Political Weekly, Viewed on January 01, 2012 <http://epw.in/user/viewabstract.jsp>

CONSUMERISTIC CULTURE AMONG CONSUMERS IN THOOTHUKUDI DISTRICT**Dr. T. RENUHA****HEAD****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
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TIRUCHENDUR****S. CHELLAPRIYA****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
GOVINDAMMAL ADITANAR COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
TIRUCHENDUR****ABSTRACT**

The study seeks to assess the consumeristic behaviour of consumers and perception of complainants towards consumer forum in Thoothukudi district. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The unit of sample was individual complainants who filed complaints at District Consumer Forums and Non-Complainants. The sample consisted of 160 respondents as non-complainants and 160 respondents as complainants. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for selecting the respondents. Questionnaire was used for collecting the primary data. Various statistical tools and techniques viz. average, the Pearson Chi-Square test, and 'Z' Test were used to analyze the data. The study revealed that maximum number of consumers has medium level of awareness on consumer rights and there is significant relationship between level of awareness and response to inferior goods received. Overall perception of the consumers with respect to consumer forum are studied under 4 heads namely 'Time and Cost', 'Fairness', 'Procedures' and 'Awareness' and the result is favourable. The study has implications for policymakers to enhance the effectiveness of amended Consumer Protection Act to improve the quality of justice to consumers.

KEYWORDS

complainant, consumer forum, consumer perception, consumer grievances.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the recent trend of Marketing, the buyer is the embodiment of all its operation and functioning. The market gets insightful, and in some cases, the purchaser needs to experience its repercussion. In this manner, buyer assurance is a demonstration of furnishing shoppers with complete data about the services, their rights, and merchandise. Consumer awareness is vital as they put their time and cash into promotional exercises, and they reserve an option to straight forward data. Misdirecting commercials, risky or unsafe items, cheating and unweighing, and different acts of neglect are performed by corrupt business entities. Consumer awareness is a demonstration of saving buyers from such wrongdoings. This study is undertaken to identify the level of protection availed and unveiled by the consumers inspite of various laws enacted by the government.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are many studies and surveys relevant to consumer awareness of which relevant to the study are:

Mrs. T. Sangeethasudha, Dr. B. Revathy (2020) conducted a study and proves that awareness level of Consumers is low and they have no knowledge about consumers' rights in depth, so enforcement of these rights is not possible by them. Similarly, it is proved that no consumers are willing to file case in the consumer court due to the complicated procedures of filing complaint and due to wastage of time and money².

Chaudhary (2017) conducted the research study on consumer awareness among college student in Assam, Tejpur and he concluded that right from birth each and every one of us becomes a consumer but people are less aware about the rights and responsibilities they have as a consumer. There is a need of education for awareness of consumer rights, responsibilities and the complaint handling among people of all age groups. People are less aware of the movement of consumerism and handling customer complaints³.

Ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution (department of consumer affairs), government of India & Shri A. K. Venkata Subramaniam chair of excellence on consumer law and jurisprudence, the Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar law university, Chennai December – 2016, identified that awareness about consumer rights, laws relating to consumer protection and consumer redressal fora is not high. Government agencies and voluntary organizations can play an effective role in increasing awareness in these respects, especially in rural areas. There is need for more consumer organizations in the western and southern regions of the State. There is also a crying need to tighten enforcement with regard to adulteration and sale of spurious goods, especially medicines¹.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Consumer awareness is the process that consumers aware of their rights while purchasing goods and services. It involves educating the consumers about their safety, information and redressal options available to them. One of the most persistent problems government faces in this modern world is lack of consumer awareness and it leads to exploitation of consumers by producers⁴. To resolve this problem government has come up with various methods over the years. The study aims to identify how far the consumers aware of their rights and their response and behaviour when they expose to inferior goods, and this may be helpful for the government to take further measures in this regard.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"A study on consumeristic culture among consumers in Thoothukudi" – was conducted to assess what extent consumers aware of their rights and how they behave at the purchase point and respond to inferior goods. It also probe into what the complainant respondents feel about the procedures of filing complaints and their perception on consumer forum. For the purpose of study, 160 complainants and 160 non complainants are purposively chosen and surveyed. Since the consumer forums are set up at district level the study has been carried out at Thoothukudi district.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim is to know the extent of awareness on Consumer Rights amongst the consumers also carried out with the objectives of

1. Studying behavioral patterns of respondents at purchase point.

2. Assessing the response of the respondents to inferior goods
3. Analyze the opinion of the complainant respondents on consumer forum

6. HYPOTHESIS

The hypotheses framed are:

1. There is a no difference between complainants and Non-complainants with respect to buying behavior.
2. There is no significant relationship between level of awareness and response to inferior goods received.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design is used in this study. Totally 320 respondents were surveyed, 160 constituting Complainants and 160 constituting Non complainants from Thoothukudi district. The statistical tools used here are Percentage analysis, Chi square test and 'Z' test and Likert five point scale to analyze the primary data.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

8.1 THE DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINANTS AND NON-COMPLAINANTS RESPONDENTS

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Demographic Variables	Non Complainants	Complainants
Gender	50% of the respondents are male and 50% of the respondents are female.	71% respondents are male.
Age	41% of the respondents are at the age group of upto 25.	41% of the respondents are at the age group of 36-45.
Marital status	58% of the respondents are married.	92% of the respondents are married.
Educational Qualification	32% of the respondents have completed UG.	39% of the respondents have completed UG.
Family Size	55% of the respondents are having the family size of 4-5.	54% of the respondents are having the family size of 4-5.
Occupation	43 % of the respondents are pensioners.	50% of the respondents are private employee.
Family Income per month (Rs.)	47% of the respondents are having the family income between 10000-20000.	42% of the respondents are having family income between 10000-20000.

8.2. BEHAVIOUR OF RESPONDENTS WHILE PURCHASING A PRODUCT

The behaviour of the respondents are examined with respect to the following identified factors.

TABLE 2: BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF THE RESPONDENTS

Factors	Mean score		Results of Z Test S/NS
	C	N.C	
Examination of expiry date of the product	2.89	2.6	S
Preference to ISI mark	2.55	2.25	S
Comparison of price of goods	2.64	2.36	NS
Reputation of manufacturer	2.49	2.19	S
Examination of quality and package	2.81	2.55	S
Preference for frequently advertised product	2.02	1.6	S
Purchase of branded products	2.71	2.42	S
Selection from variety of products	2.46	2.23	S
Verification of weight, MRP and Nutritional information of the product	2.77	2.39	NS
Awareness on guarantee & warranty	2.81	2.84	NS
Impact on environment	2.45	2.33	S
Wellness of the product	2.67	2.54	S

Source: Primary data

S-Significant NS-Non significant

The complainants and non-complainants are significantly differing with respect to

- Examination of expiry date of the product
- Preference to ISI mark
- Reputation of manufacturer
- Examination of quality and package
- Preference for frequently advertised product
- Purchase of branded products
- Selection from variety of products
- Impact on environment
- Wellness of the product

The complainants and non complainants do not significantly differ with respect to

- Comparison of price of goods
- Verification of weight, MRP and Nutritional information of the product
- Awareness on guarantee & warranty

8.3 LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF RESPONDENTS

84% of the respondents have medium level of awareness on consumer rights. Here the responses are categorized as seek redress from seller, word of mouth communication and take legal action, where the first two category refers to the non-complainants and last category refers to the complainants. Chi square test is applied to test the significance between the level of awareness and the response to inferior goods received. It is proved that that there is significance difference between level of awareness and respondents response to inferior goods received.

8.4 PROCEDURAL AWARENESS OF THE CONSUMER

The analysis of procedural awareness of the consumers shows that

- 100% of the respondents' expectations have been fulfilled.
- 95% of the respondents have filed case through lawyers.
- 57% of the respondents are completely aware of the procedures for making complaint.
- 97% of the respondents have observed the issue raised during proceeding of case.

- 60% of the respondents' says, forum members behaviour is very good.
- 64% of the respondents' experience was pleasant while filing a complaint.
- 57% of the respondents' proceedings took 6 months.

8.5 PERCEPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS FUNCTIONING OF CONSUMER FORUM

The perception of the respondents with respect to four contributing factors with five statements under each contributory factor like "Time and Cost", "Fairness", "Procedures", and "Awareness" towards functioning of Consumer Forum are analyzed using Likert five-point scale, and the results are shown in table 3:

TABLE 3

S. No.	Factors	Most Favourable Percentage
1	Time and Cost	69
2	Fairness	85
3	Procedures	76
4	Awareness	93

Overall perception of the consumers in respect of all four factors studied namely 'Time and Cost', 'Fairness', 'Procedures' and 'Awareness' is favourable.

9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The analysis of procedural awareness of the consumers shows that
- The complainants are more cautious and aware of their rights and preferences.
- The response of the respondents significantly depends upon their level of awareness on consumer rights.
- 95% of the respondents have filed case through lawyers as they are not completely aware of the procedures for making complaints and the respondents expectation have been fulfilled.

10. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above result, the following suggestions are made:

- Government can come up with toll free number to register the complaints and the process should not be tedious one.
- Government can issue periodicals, magazines etc to encourage the consumer protection activities.
- Consumer forum can create digi-lockers to protect the information regarding the complaints registered and redressed.
- Organize a database enabling the consumer to retrieve the information less expensive and quicker way.
- The consumer should ask for a cash memo while making a purchase.
- Government at the centre and state should feel necessity of consumer awareness programmes and consumer education in rural areas, since the level of awareness about consumer protection laws is medium.
- Special advertisements should be created to educate the consumers regarding procedure of filing complaint. As to where to file complaint and when to file complaints.
- Consumer must be educated about the procedure to file complaint in District Forums and must be motivated in this regard.
- Local Newspapers, cable operators NGO's and consumer association should work more to inform and educate the consumer about the rights of consumer and availability of redressal mechanism to raise voice aggenized exploitation.

11. CONCLUSION

The advancement of technology and advent of sophisticated gadgets in the market and aggressive marketing in the era of globalization have not given the wide range of choice of products but also the vulnerable consumer problems. The non-complainants here should be very conscious about while purchasing the product and they should check for the standard marks that have been introduced for the authenticity of the quality of the product like ISI, Hall mark etc. whereas in other hand overall perception of the consumer-in respect of all four factors studied namely "Time and Cost", "Fairness", "Procedures", and "Awareness" is favourable.

12. LIMITATIONS

- The respondents are selected on purposive sampling method which has its own limitations
- The area of study is limited to Thoothukudi district. It may not be applicable to other areas.
- Only 320 respondents are studied.

13. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study can be extended by analyzing complainants in particular fields like medicines, electronic items etc. in various districts

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