

A Study on the Consumer Rights Awareness among Graduate Students of Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Understanding, and knowledge of customer's legal rights, and obligations in the marketplace is referred to as consumer rights awareness. It involves being conscious of one's rights to knowledge, safety, choice, remedy, and equitable treatment. This knowledge enables customers to steer clear of exploitation, make educated judgments, and pursue redress when unfair business practices, or subpar goods occur. The goal of the current study was to determine how much knowledge Kerala graduate students had on consumer rights. The study sought to determine if significant disparities exist in consumer rights awareness among graduate students in Kerala, based on gender, and locality sub-samples. According to the study's findings, Kerala's graduate student's knowledge of consumer rights is, mediocre. Additionally, the results of the survey showed that, for the sub-sample Locale, graduate students in Kerala varied significantly in their awareness of consumer rights. The sub-sample of gender among Kerala graduate students exhibited no substantial variations in their awareness of consumer rights. According to the findings, in order to properly raise awareness of consumer rights among the younger generation, who will be our society's future citizens curriculum planners, and educational administrators should incorporate consumer rights education into graduate courses at different universities.

Keywords: Consumer Rights, Awareness, Graduate Students.

Introduction

In order to guarantee fairness, safety, and access to correct information when participating in the marketplace, consumers are provided a number of rights, and protections known as consumer rights. These rights give customers the ability to voice their complaints, make educated decisions, and avoid being taken advantage of by companies. When U.S. President John F. Kennedy established four fundamental rights in 1962, the right to safety, the right to information, the right to make one's own decisions, and the right to be heard the idea of consumer rights, which has its roots in the notion of consumer sovereignty was formally established. In order to handle the complexity of contemporary markets, these rights have been modified, and extended throughout time.

Core Consumer Rights

- **Right to Safety:** Protection from hazardous goods, or services that may harm health or life. Example: Bans on unsafe pharmaceuticals, or defective consumer electronics.
- **Right to Information:** Access to accurate, and transparent information about products, including pricing, ingredients, and potential risks. Example: Mandatory nutritional labelling on food products.

- **Right to Choose:** Access to a variety of products, and services at competitive prices without coercion. Example: Anti-monopoly regulations to ensure fair competition.
- **Right to Be Heard:** The ability to voice complaints, or concerns, and have them addressed effectively. Example: Ombudsman services for consumer disputes.
- **The right to redress:** Just compensation or recourse for subpar goods or services. Refund policies, and warranties are two examples.
- **The right to consumer education:** The capacity to make educated judgments, and the knowledge of one's rights and obligations. Campaigns to raise consumer awareness of internet fraud are one example.
- **The right to a healthy environment:** This promotes sustainability by shielding people from environmentally damaging goods, and behaviors. Example: Eco-friendly packaging regulations.

Challenges in Ensuring Consumer Rights

- **Globalization:** Because of jurisdictional concerns, it is more difficult to defend consumer rights in cross-border transactions.
- **Digital Markets:** E-commerce sites frequently lack strong dispute resolution, and accountability procedures.
- **Knowledge Gaps:** A lot of customers, particularly in developing nations, are still ignorant of their rights.
- **Corporate Resistance:** Because consumer-centric policies are more expensive, businesses may be reluctant to adopt them.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Data breaches, and spying have become problems as a result of the quick development of data-driven marketing.

Strategies for Strengthening Consumer Right

- **Legal frameworks:** Bolstering laws protecting consumers, and making sure they are strictly enforced. For instance, putting laws like the GDPR into effect to protect data.
- **Consumer education:** raising awareness via seminars, advertising campaigns, and curriculum development in schools. Government-sponsored initiatives to detect online frauds are one example.
- **Technology Integration:** Blockchain technology, and artificial intelligence are used to ensure safe transactions, and open complaint processing.
- **International cooperation:** International norms for safeguarding consumers should be adopted to facilitate cross-border trade.
- **Corporate Accountability:** Encouraging companies to follow ethical standards, and implement consumer-friendly policies is known as corporate accountability.

Need and Significance of the Study

Kara and Min (2024) explored the sustainable consumption patterns of Gen Z (Gen Z), consumers on a university campus, examining many antecedents, and moderating factors. A structured questionnaire was distributed to Gen Z consumers (young college pupils), who were enrolled in a large U.S. state university ("n" = 279). The findings revealed that social responsibility, and outside incentives have a favorable impact on Gen Z consumer's sustainability interests, which in turn affects their sustainable purchasing behaviors. Furthermore, perceived barriers, learned helplessness, and awareness of the consequences of sustainable consumption acts had no significant effect on Gen Z consumer's sustainable consumption behaviour.

The current study emphasized the importance of educating the younger generation of students about their rights as consumers. According to the study, students can form sustainable buying habits with the support of appropriate awareness. There aren't many studies on student's awareness of consumer rights, the researcher discovered. This made the current study's conduct much more important. By assessing graduate student's awareness of consumer rights, the researcher intends to inform education stakeholders on the significance of student community awareness of these rights.

Research Questions

The principal investigation questions formulated for this study are:

- How well-informed would Kerala graduate students be about consumer rights?
- Does the gender sub-sample significantly affect graduate student's awareness of consumer rights?
- Does the sub-sample Locale have a substantial impact on graduate student's awareness of consumer rights?

Objectives of the Study

The subsequent primary objectives that arose from the study are as follows:

- To assess the extent of consumer rights awareness among graduate students in Kerala.
- To determine if there is a significant difference in consumer rights awareness levels among graduate students depending on gender sub-samples.
- To ascertain if graduate student's awareness of consumer rights significantly differs based on the sub-sample location.

Hypotheses of the Study

The principal ideas proposed for this investigation are:

- Graduate students in Kerala will have varying degrees of awareness on consumer rights.
- Graduate student's awareness of consumer rights will fluctuate significantly depending on their gender sub-sample.
- The awareness of consumer rights among graduate students will dramatically differ based on the specific locality of the sub-sample.

Methodology

The present investigation employed the normative survey method (Best and Kahn, 2010). Considering the subsequent elements, the investigator employed a consumer rights awareness scale: the right to safety, the right to information, the right to the choice, the right to be heard, the right to redress, and the right to consumer education. Using a consumer rights awareness measure that the investigator had created, and standardized, the researcher gathered the replies of graduate students. Descriptive, and inferential statistics were employed in the collecting, scoring, tabulation, and interpretation of the response forms.

Population and Sample of the Study

The subjects of this investigation are graduate pupils enrolled in undergraduate degree programs at several universities in Kerala. A fundamental random sampling method was employed to pick 300 graduate student instructors from institutions affiliated with Kerala University, Mahatma Gandhi University, and the University of Calicut. Samples are selected by categorizing based on gender, and location, with appropriate weighting applied.

Tools Used for the Study

This study's instrument is the consumer rights awareness Scale, which assigns appropriate weight to the following: the right to safety, the right to information, the right to the choice, the right to be heard, the right to redress, and the right to consumer education. Thirty items on a five-point scale made up the standardized scale. The statements on the scale were all positive. Responses were scored on a scale of 0 to 4, with the following possible scores: never, seldom, occasionally, often, and always. Consequently, the scale's smallest score is 0, and its maximum is 120. The scale established reliability using test- re-test reliability test, and the reliability coefficient obtained for the whole scale is 0.91. The scale's validity was guaranteed by the establishment of face validity, and content validity.

Statistical Techniques Used for the Study

Garrett (2005) states that the following are the main statistical methods employed in this study:

- Descriptive Statistics
- Assessment of the significance of the disparity between means.
- Percentage analysis

Limitations, and Delimitations of the Study

The attributes of the students, the duration of the investigation, and the contextual factors are the primary limitations of this study. These constitute the principal delimitations:

- The research was confined to the districts of Ernakulum, Thrissur, and Alappuzha.
- The research was restricted to graduate students from Calicut, Mahatma Gandhi, and Kerala universities.
- Only the subsamples based on gender, and locale were incorporated in the study.

Analysis, and Discussion of Results

The following data delineates the level of consumer rights awareness among the total sample of graduate pupils.

Table 1: Descriptive Data Regarding the Overall Scores of Graduate Student's Awareness of Consumer Rights

Item	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Level of graduate students about consumer rights awareness	79.72	86.0	19.2	- 0.632	- 0.854

The mean, and median values are nearly identical, according to Table 1. Additionally, the standard deviation value demonstrates how little the distribution deviates from the norm. High scores are predominantly located at the higher end of the distribution, as seen by the negative skewness value. Consequently, a greater number of individuals possess elevated scores within the population. The kurtosis value was less than 0.263. The distribution is hence leptokurtic.

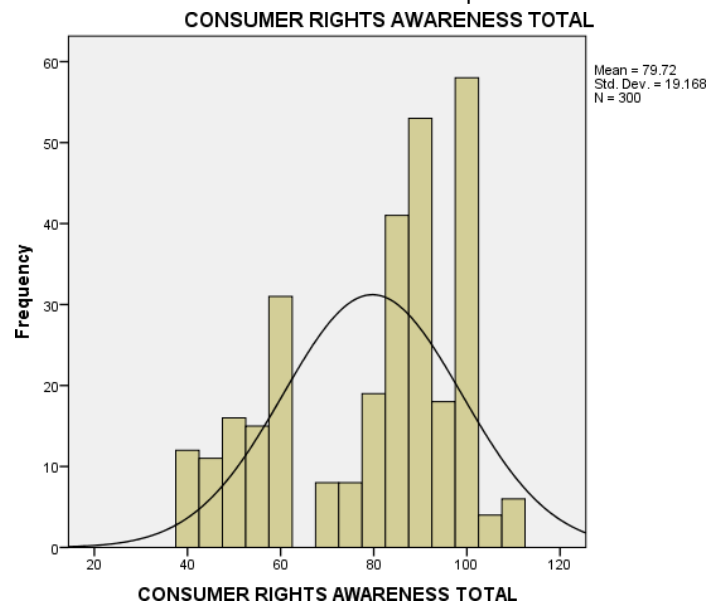


Figure 1: Shows the Histogram of Graduate Student's Overall Consumer Rights Awareness Scores

The percentage analysis of graduate student's ratings on their understanding of consumer rights is displayed in table 2.

Table 2: Degree to Which Graduate Students Scored Overall on Consumer Rights Awareness

Item	Low Level	Average Level	High Level
No. of Students	74	173	53
Percentage	24.7	57.7	17.6

It is evident from Table 1.2 that most graduate students have an average awareness of consumer rights. Figure 1.2 illustrates how graduate student's levels of consumer rights awareness differ from one another.

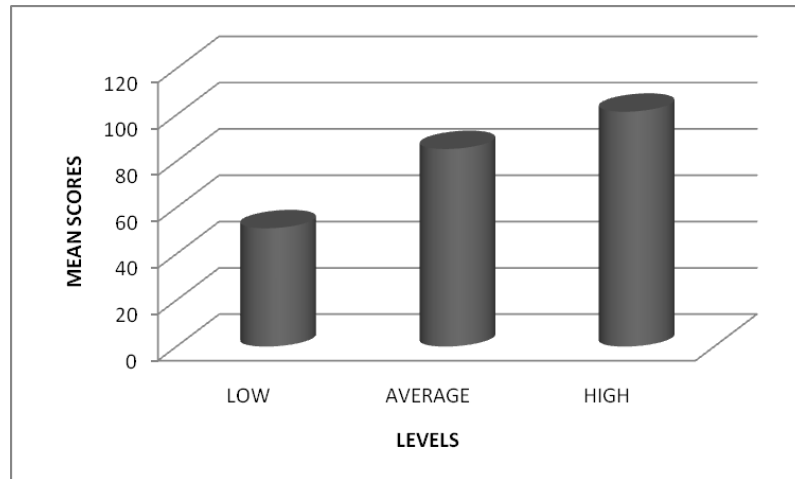


Figure 2: Compares Graduate Student's Varying Degrees of Consumer Rights Understanding

Therefore, it is evident from tables 1, and 2 as well as figures 1, and 2 that awareness of consumer rights varies among Kerala's graduate students. The graduate student's awareness of consumer rights is merely ordinary, as Table 2 makes evident. The implication was that graduate students in Kerala had varying degrees of understanding regarding consumer rights. Consequently, Hypothesis I is approved.

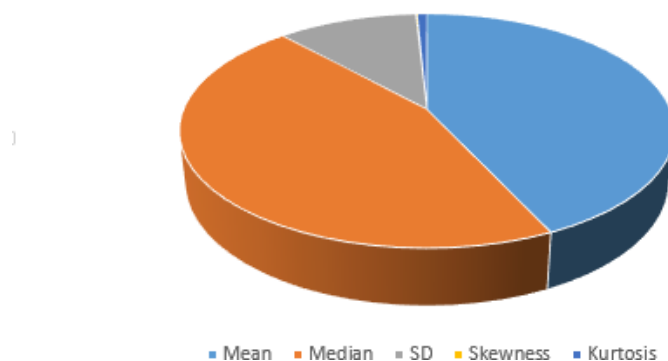
Table 3 presents the descriptive data for the total consumer rights awareness scores among graduate students, categorized by gender sub-sample.

In Table 1.3: Descriptive statistics for the overall consumer rights awareness scores of graduate students in the gender subsample.

Item	Sub Sample	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Consumer rights awareness of graduate students for the Sub sample – Gender	Male	76.19	80.0	19.3	- 0.206	- 1.33
	Female	83.25	88.0	18.5	- 1.143	0.289

Table 3 demonstrates that the mean, and median values for male, and female graduate students are virtually identical, and the standard deviation figures suggest that the patterns of distribution are not particularly anomalous. The skewness values for male, and female graduate students are significantly skewed downward, signifying that the scores are concentrated at the upper end of the scale; the distribution for males is leptokurtic, with a kurtosis value below 0.263, while for females, it is platykurtic, with a kurtosis value exceeding 0.263.

Consumer Rights awareness of graduate students for the Sub sample – Gender Male



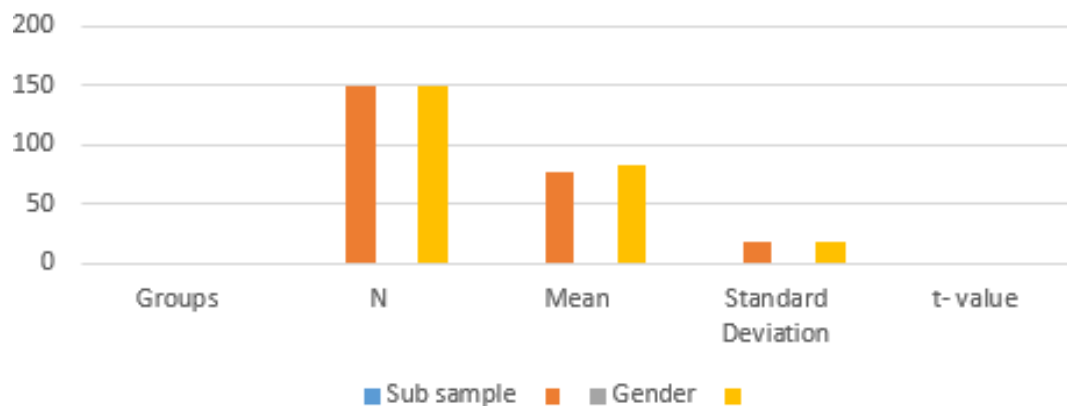
Utilizing the significance of the difference between means, the mean scores of male, and female graduate students on the sense of consumer rights awareness were compared. A summary of the findings is provided in table 4.

Table 4: Comparing the Average Scores of Graduate Students for the Gender Subsample on Consumer Rights Awareness

Sub Sample	Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t- value
Gender	Male	150	76.19	19.3	3.24**
	Female	150	83.25	18.5	

The t-value ($t = 3.24$) obtained from Table 1.4 is significant at the .01 level, meaning that the mean scores of male, and female graduate students on consumer rights awareness differ significantly. Thus, Hypothesis II is approved.

*Comparison of Mean Scores of graduate students on
level of Consumer Rights awareness for the Sub sample
– Gender*



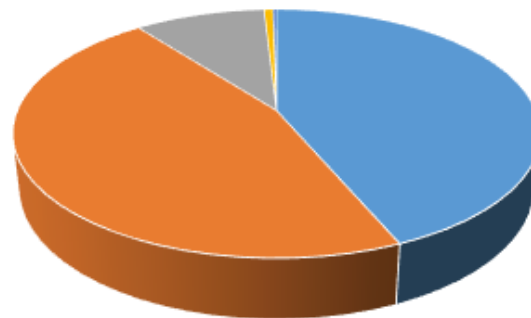
The descriptive statistics for the total scores on consumer rights awareness among graduate students for sub-sample Locale are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the Total Scores of Consumer Rights Awareness of Graduate Students for the Sub Sample Locale

Item	Sub Sample	Mean	Median	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Consumer rights awareness of graduate students for the Sub sample – Locale	Rural	83.39	88.0	18.3	- 1.245	0.505
	Urban	76.50	80.0	19.41	- 0.189	- 1.304

The mean, and median values of graduate students in rural, and urban areas are nearly identical, as can be shown in Table 1.5. The distribution's minimal divergence from normalcy is further demonstrated by the standard deviation figures. Both urban, and rural graduate students have adversely skewed skewness values. This indicates that toward the higher end of the scale, the scores are more evenly distributed. The distributions are leptokurtic, since the kurtosis value for graduate students in rural, and urban areas is smaller than 0.263.

Consumer Rights awareness of graduate students for the Sub sample – Locale Rural



■ Mean ■ Median ■ SD ■ Skewness ■ Kurtosis

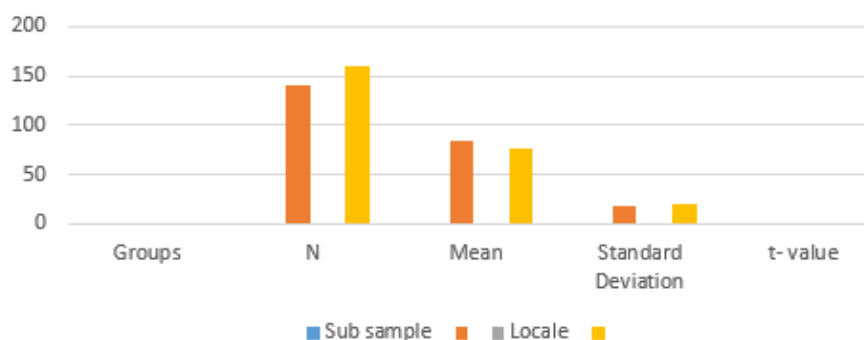
The mean scores of graduate students regarding consumer rights knowledge in rural, and urban locations were compared using the significance of the disparity between means. Table 6 is a summary of the results.

Table 6: Comparison of Graduate Student's Mean Scores for the Sub-sample of Locale's Consumer Rights Awareness Level

Sub Sample	Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t- value
Locale	Rural	140	83.39	18.3	3.15**
	Urban	160	76.50	19.41	

The mean scores of graduate students in rural, and urban areas differ significantly in their perceptions of consumer rights awareness, as indicated by table 1.6's t-value ($t = 3.15$), which is significant at the .01 level. Thus, Hypothesis III is approved.

Comparison of Mean Scores of Graduate students on level of Consumer Rights awareness for the Sub sample – Locale



Major Findings of the Study

- The perception of consumer rights awareness among graduate students varies significantly.
- Graduate student's perceptions of consumer rights awareness are largely mediocre.
- Graduate student's perceptions of consumer rights awareness varied significantly depending on the sub-sample of gender.
- The perceptions of consumer rights awareness among graduate students differ considerably according on the sub-sample location.

The findings of this research correspond with those of Kara and Min (2024), which indicated pupils can develop sustainable purchasing habits with appropriate understanding. According to the statistical study, graduate students in Kerala had an average level of consumer rights knowledge, which suggested that stakeholders were paying attention to the need to include consumer rights awareness programs in the curriculum of higher education.

Educational Implications of the Study

- The components of consumer rights awareness should be a mandatory part of the curriculum for higher education.
- To encourage the younger generation to adopt sustainable consumer practices, graduate-level students should be given proper orientation classes, and seminars on the subject of consumer rights awareness.

Conclusion

Understanding consumer rights is essential for graduate students as they negotiate financial independence, and make wise choices in a competitive market. When people know their rights, they can avoid being victims of unfair tactics, obtain their money's worth, and prevent further harm. Additionally, this information fosters financial literacy, and ethical consumption, empowering students to successfully manage their resources, steer clear of exploitation, and support an open, and equitable economy. Their understanding of consumer rights as aspiring professionals, and leaders can promote accountability, and encourage constructive modifications to corporate procedures.

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