

IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMER AWARENESS ABOUT CONSUMER RIGHTS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Recent time in India, consumer protection act 2019 is one of the most discussed topic that is implemented to replace consumer protection act 1986. In spite of the changes in laws, consumers in India are suffered with various and large number of problem. The unfair or restricted trade practices, adulteration, cyber crimes while e- purchasing, rising price, a lot more which add to the already existing problem of the consumers. Mostly people are ignorant and unorganized and unaware that are easily exploited by sellers and middlemen. It is therefore compulsory for the consumer to be aware about their rights and consumer protection act during and after purchases. For this study available literature on consumer awareness and protection that is in Indian context, has been surveyed. On going through this study many facts revealed about importance of consumer awareness.

KEYWORDS: *Consumer Awareness, Consumer Rights and Consumer Protection Act.*

Introduction

Nowadays India is vast market. A person consume product and services from birth to till grave. Every citizen of India is a consumer and crores of consumer in India are ready to purchase and consume any product offered to them by companies whatever its Indian or big multinational. People purchase and consume variety of product and services every day. But this does not mean that they will accept everything whatever proposed to them for purchase. Consumers are the largest economic group that is affected by every economic decision and affecting also almost every economic decision. It is the backbone of all marketing activities. To protect these economic group interest in 1985 the UN promulgated the basic guidelines regarding consumer rights protection. After this guideline consumer rights got international recognition. The UN guidelines said that "all citizens, regardless of their incomes or social standing, have basic rights as consumer". The consumer movement now marks March 15 every year as a day of raising global awareness about consumer rights. National consumer right day was observed across India on 24 December. The day being observed on 24 December, since the consumer protection act 1986, was enacted on this day in 1986. Recently the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 has replaced the old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Consumer Right

Consumer rights are the rights given to a 'Consumer' to protect them for being cheated by shopkeeper. It refers to a consumer's rights to safety, to be informed, to choose and to redressal. There are clear and strong laws in India to defend consumer rights. Out of the various laws have been enforced to protect the consumer rights in India the most important is the consumer protection act, 1986 which defines consumer rights as the "rights to be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property". This act came into force in the country except Jammu and Kashmir to protect the following consumer rights:

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- **Right to Safety:** This right to be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property.
- **Right to Information:** The right to information is defined as 'the right to be informed about the quantity, purity, quality potency, purity, price and standard of goods or services. This rights states that businesses should always provide complete, truthful, appropriate information to consumers to make intelligent and informed product choice.
- **Right to Choose:** This rights states that consumer should have rights to free choice from variety of goods and services provided by different companies at competitive price.
- **Rights to be Heard:** This right helps to empower the consumers of India for putting forward their complaints and concerns fearlessly and raising their voice against products or even companies and ensure that their issues are taken into consideration as well as handled expeditiously.
- **Right to Redressal:** This right provides for consumers to receive a fair settlement of claims, including compensation for misrepresentation, low quality of goods, or unsatisfactory services.
- **Right to Consumer Education:** The right of every Indian citizen to have education on matters regarding consumer protection as well as about her/his right is regarded as the last right provided by the Consumer Protection Act 1986.

Consumer Protection Act

The Government understood the need to protect consumers from dishonest suppliers, or shopkeepers. Several laws have been made for this purpose. We have the Indian Contract Act, the Sale of Goods Act, the Dangerous Drugs Act, the Agricultural Produce Act, the Indian Standards Institution Act, the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, the Standards of Weights and Measures Act, etc. which to some extent protect consumer interests. However, these laws require lengthy legal process which is very expensive and time consuming.

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted to provide a simpler and quicker access to redressal of consumer grievances.. It applies to all goods, services and unfair trade practices unless specifically exempted by the central government. Under this Act there is provision to settle the complaint within three months from the date of receipt of notice by opposite party. If the complaint needs laboratory testing, the period is extended to five months. There is no necessity to appoint advocates. Compared with the court fees of the civil courts, the fee payable in the district forum is very meager and negligible. Under this system, many forums and commissions have been set up at various levels where consumers can lodge their complaints:

- The consumer disputes redressal forum to be known as the district forum for every district, having jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services and the compensation, if any, claimed does not exceed rupees twenty lakhs. (pecuniary jurisdiction has been increased upto rs. 1 crore in consumer protect act 2019)
- The state commission for every state, having jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services and the compensation, if any , claimed exceeds rupees twenty lakhs but does not exceed rupees one crore. (pecuniary jurisdiction has been increased upto rs. 10 crore from upto 1 corore in consumer protect act 2019)
- The National Commission for entire country, having jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of the goods or services and the compensation, if any, claimed exceeds rupees one crore and appeals against the orders of any state commission. Supreme Court is the final deciding authority. (pecuniary jurisdiction has been increased to over and above 10 crore in consumer protect act 2019)

Consumer Protection act 2019

On 6 August 2019, the Indian Parliament passed the new Consumer Protection Bill, 2019 which aims to provide the timely and effective administration and settlement of consumer problem. The New Act is came to 20 July 2020 to replace the old Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (Act).

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the concept of consumer rights and consumer protection act
- To study the importance of consumer awareness about consumer rights and consumer protection act.

Hypothesis of the Study

Awareness about consumer rights and consumer protection act is so important in consumer's life.

Research Methodology

This paper is theoretical based on the extensive research. For this study secondary data were obtained from report of the working group of consumer protection, various journals, books, articles and reports prepared by research scholar. Internet has been the pool of information during whole period.

Finding

On going through this study many facts revealed about the importance of consumer awareness and consumer protection act. Consumer awareness is not only beneficial for to protect consumer from many exploitation by shopkeepers but also beneficial for construct health society and induces efficiency, honesty accountability and transparency in the entire manufacturing and service sector. These findings can be summarized as follows:

Importance of Consumer Awareness in Present Era in India

- **Aware consumer can protect themselves against exploitation-** consumer are exploited in many ways as substandard quality of goods, increase selling price and adulteration, short weights of goods etc. An aware consumer protects themselves against these type of exploitation in present globalised environment.
- **To get adequate satisfaction from goods and services:** Human desire are unlimited against his income. He wants to get more to maximum goods and services with his limited income. For this consumer should be made aware to get goods which are pure and measured appropriately.
- **To protect consumer from consumption of harmful goods:** Several goods are available for consumption in the market that are harmful for consumers health like cigarette, liquor, etc. An aware consumer not to purchase such goods that consumption are harmful for them.
- **To control wastage of money:** An aware consumer neither attracted by misleading advertisement nor to wastage their money according sellers opinion. The awareness controls people to take rights decisions.
- **Knowledge regarding procedural of complaint in relevant consumer forum:** The consumer are exploited due to unawareness and lack of information about their rights and legislation that are implemented to protect them. Therefore it becomes important that consumer should aware about that.
- **Encourage honesty in Businessmen:** Need of consumer awareness is to encourage the honesty in businessmen. if consumer are aware about their rights and consumer protection act , businessmen cannot think about exploit the consumer. It will build honesty in businessmen.
- **For healthy environment:** As a consumer every citizens have a international rights that is "right to healthy environment. So, if the consumer is aware about their rights then environment become healthy.
- **Redressal of Complaints:** importance of consumer awareness about consumer protection act is to present the consumer complaint in appropriate consumer courts or commission and make sure that justice is done to consumer.
- **Unity amongst consumers:** Consumer awareness bring unity among consumers to fight against the exploitation of business organizations. Consumers have to encouraged to established co- operative societies sot that the focus is on giving services to consumer rather than earning profit.
- **Quality life of consumer:** An aware Consumer always thinks about all aspects of goods and services before buying that. It purchase best quality of product and services that is available in market than an unaware consumer.

Conclusion

The consumer is the main elements for all economic actions An aware consumer can become an empowered consumer. An aware consumer not only protects himself from exploitation, but induce effectiveness, truthfulness, responsibility and transparency in the whole manufacturing and services

sector. The Government should make sufficient try to educate the consumers . They must be educated through awareness programs like Jago Grahak Jago, seminars , conference, workshops, etc. Effectively educational and marketing programs are important and still needed to protect the consumer.

“BE AN ALERT CONSUMER”

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