



Initiatives Taken By Consumer Councils in Safeguarding the Consumer Rights in India-A Study

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ABSTRACT: Every individual is a consumer and always depends upon many goods and services. Consumer play vital role in attaining the success for any business. The Educated and aware consumer is always an asset for the nation. Consumers are availing many services and buying different goods in many different ways through offline and online which are increased the fraud and misleading cases in India. Here comes the role of consumer forums and consumer councils in safeguarding the consumer rights and benefiting the consumers with the right products and services. The government established consumer forums at district, state and central level to protect the interest of consumers and providing justice to them. As the India is booming market place, different companies are up with different types of products, services and technologies. Even though there are many Acts for protecting consumer rights still some companies are misleading the consumers with fraudulent and fake information.

This paper focused on the different initiatives taken by consumer forums and councils in protecting and the consumer rights. And also addresses importance of the consumer councils and forums in safeguarding the consumer rights.

KEYWORDS: Consumer, Consumer Rights, Consumer Forum, Consumer Council.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The consumers play a prominent role in the development of economy. Consumers of present days are expecting high quality in products and services for which they pay. The consumers are misguided by the different manufacturers or sellers by their products. The government also ready to provide many services for the better utilization of the different policies which were implemented at different levels. They are national commission at central level, state commission at state level and district forum at district level for quick solution for the dispute settlements. These consumer forums established under the **consumer protection Act 1986** to protect the interest of the consumers and for the speedy and quick justice for unfair trade practices.

These Consumer Protection Council Acts as a platform to solve the disputes among the two parties. One party which is having a grievance against firm or trader can file a case in district forum up to the value of 25 lakhs, file a case in state commission for the value up to 1 crore, file a case in national commission for the value above the 1 crore in respect of deficiency in the goods and services. Many companies are exploiting the consumers with unfair trade practices like high prices, misleading advertisements etc. There is responsibility on the government to provide the fairness in trade practices for the achievement of consumer satisfaction and protection.

II. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

The global market is witnessing the tremendous changes in the taste and preferences of the consumers. The technology is turning every complex thing in to simple one where as the issue raised in the safety and protection of the consumer is more. Thus there is absolute need to study about the consumer forum and councils

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and their mechanism in solving the issues and providing better consumer protection and safety through high quality and safe products and services.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To know the importance of consumer councils in safeguarding the interest of the consumers.
- To study the functioning of the consumer councils and forums in India.
- To understand the mechanism of consumer council in resolving the grievances and complaints of consumers in India.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study for the present paper is from both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary data is collected from selected consumers and consumer forums.

Secondary data is collected from various articles published in different journals, magazines, news papers, reports and websites.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Mr. Shivayogappa . R. Yemmi and Dr. Shivalingappa . G. Vibuthu (2018) has made an attempt to analyze the concept of consumerism and consumer protection through the consumer forums in India. They concluded that consumer dispute redressal agencies in India at various levels like district, state and central are playing a vital role in solving the issues in short period of time. They also suggested that still there is need of more efficiency in consumer protection councils and forums in order to reduce the pending cases.

Mrs. Tharanjit kaur and Mrs. Preethi (2014-2015) they analyzed about the consumers to what extent they are aware of the consumer rights provided by the government and who they are utilizing them. They made a detailed view on the consumer commissions and forums at different levels and noticed that lack of proper accommodation, poor infrastructure facilities and vacancies of managers or members of the commission.

Suresh Chandra. Ch and A. laxmi (2011) has made study on working and evaluation on consumer forums in Warangal. They found that the consumer forums at national, state and district level are working efficiently to resolve the grievances of the consumers who were affected by different manufacturers. They focused specially on the performance of the consumer forum in Warangal district. They compared the number of cases filed in different states and in Warangal district and they found less number of cases filed in Warangal among the other districts.

Dr. Shambav Garg(2010) in his paper titled “ An exploration into working and performance of Consumer Dispute Redressal Agencies in India” analyzed the performance of consumer protection agencies in achieving the solutions for the consumer issues and dispute in an effective manner.

Mr. Himachalam D. and Jayachandra K. (1990) in their study analyzed that there is need to create more awareness and consumer education for consumers in India. They also stated that knowing the rights and privileges of the consumer protection is on the part of the consumers. They also suggested that by developing a strong organization will really help in building up efficient consumerism in India.

VI. CONSUMER AWARENESS AND PROTECTION

As India is a growing economy, the role of a consumer is vital in the business activities. The changing needs and preferences of consumers are making business more complex. The consumer of present world is having knowledge, education with proper awareness over the different Act of consumer protection. As history passes India is experiencing tremendous changes in the mindset of the consumer especially in raising their voice against the unfair trade and business activities. High completion in the markets is creating the scope of misleading advertisements in public and social media. Hence there is a emergence of complex mechanism for protecting the consumers interest and also need to stop frauds and unfair trade practices by the companies.

VII. CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

Consumer protection Act 2019 repeals and replaces the consumer protection Act 1986 which was enacted with the objective of providing a better protection for the interests of the consumers in India. It is more important to provide a fair trade practices and quality in goods and services by the manufactures to the consumers. This Act is applicable to all types of goods and services except specifically exempted by the central government. All kinds of manufacturers like private, public and cooperative sectors are covered under this Act for speed actions against the issues raised by the consumers. There is wider responsibility on the government in providing the better solutions for the consumer complaints and grievances throughout the country.

VIII. CONSUMER RIGHTS

Consumer protection and promotion in India is still at infancy stage only. Even though the government of India is taking many steps to create awareness among the consumer in knowing their right and privileges, there is gap continuing from the past in getting complete knowledge over the rights of consumers.

- The right to know about the goods and services quality, quantity, standard and price and etc.
- The right to get detailed information about the manufacturer of the concerned product and service.
- The right to be protected by the hazardous goods which are dangerous to the life and property.
- The right to seek information and file a complaint against the manufacturer if any deviations observed.
- The right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements and etc.

IX. INITIATIVES TAKEN BY CONSUMER FORUMS AND COUNCILS

Government of India has taken up many initiatives for safeguarding the consumers and their rights. By creating consumer awareness programs and amending the old Acts as per the need and requirements of the consumer in present era of trade. Some of the initiatives are

- **Consumer Protection Act 2019** By replacing the consumer protection Act 1986 with Consumer Protection Act 2019 the Government of India paved the ways for achieving effective consumerism in our country. The existing Act provided the legislative framework for resolving the consumer grievances in fair manner. The Act also provided a three-tier quasi judicial consumer dispute redressal mechanism for protecting the consumer interest at the district, State and National level, which are known as consumer courts. To avoid many misunderstandings and loopholes of the Act the Government of India is passed a new law namely Consumer Protection Bill 2015 and New Consumer Protection Act 2019.

- **Establishment of a separate department to consumer protection**

Government of India established a separate department for consumer affairs which is one of the parts of two departments under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution. The Consumer affairs department was constituted as a separate department in the June 1997 which is very necessary at that time to till now. This department mainly focuses on providing the awareness and consumer education in India. Apart from this it had taken many initiatives and implemented them in an appreciable manner. Some of those initiatives are Multimedia publicity campaigns which work through the print and electronic media. By the slogan “Jago Grahak Jaho” and other advertisements in print and electronic media which is most common, powerful and preferred medium for the mass communication the department created maximum awareness among the consumers in the country.

The advisements during the sports events, exhibitions and trade fairs also helped the department to reach maximum no. of consumers to get access to consumer education. The advertisements in different journal and magazines also touched the different segments of people in the country. Thus Government of India, Department of Consumer affairs and Consumer forum are taking many initiatives in making the consumer to know his rights and privileges and for getting a quality consumerism in India.

X. CONCLUSION:

The study concluded that there is need to put more effect in increasing the consumer education in the country. There is absolute relation between the consumer literacy and awareness of consumer protection mechanism. The latest Consumer Protection Act 2019 was also addressed almost every aspect related to consumer protection and redressal mechanism in depth. The consumer councils at district, state and national level are contributing their efforts in resolving consumer complaints and grievances significantly.

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