



Consumerism: A study for Assessment

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Abstract

Important Acts analyzed in this study are MRTP Act. Industries Development and Regulation Act. Essential Commodities Act, Prevention of Food Adulteration Act. Prevention of Black marketing and maintenance of supplies of Essential Commodities Act. Trade Marks and Merchandise Marks Act. Indian sale of Goods Act. Standard Weights and Measures Act. Imports and Exports control Act. Agricultural Products Grading and Marketing Act. Etc, has been used in this study in order to support the consumer protection measures Act 1986.

INTRODUCTION

During the early stages of trade, when the world was younger, the chances for unfair trade were almost impossible in the life style. One could not comfortably cheat someone in the market place in the morning and break with him the same evening.

The industrial revolution and shift in population from rural areas to towns and the anonymity of urban living gave plenty of scope for malpractice. Consumption came to mean more than just eating and drinking and wearing clothes. It extended to cover the whole business of life and living.

The consumer movement occurred on three occasions in the United States. Formal consumerism started in 1930's as a result of depression with falling money. In 1960's however, consumerism became a vital social movement. It began to encompass the evolving set of



activities of Government, business, independent organizations and concerned citizens, designed to protect the rights of the consumers in the market place. In this century, three consumer movements have shaken the U.S. business scene in the early 1900's, the mid 1930's and the 1960's. The first two were not that much successful. It is interesting that the first consumer movement was fueled by such factors as rising prices, and it paved a way for introduction of pure Food and Drug Act (1906) and the creation of Federal Trade Commission (1914).

The second wave of consumerism in mid 1930s was fanned by such factors as upturn in consumer prices. This paved the way of strengthening the pure Food and Drug Act and enlarging at the Federal Trade Commission's power to regulate against unfair or deceptive acts and practices. The third movement is very successful and brought lot of changes in the business Society.

Taking the UK, the famous organization named as WHICH is providing detailed information about the quality specification of various consumer goods that is marketed in England. WHICH is also been engaged in carrying out tests for product rating.

The Scandinavian Countries are noted for their efforts to protect the consumers. Consumer protection is treated as part of their Cooperative movement in Sweden formulated three important measures to protect the interest of the consumers. They are

1. The false or Deceptive marketing practices of Goods Act.
2. The consumer ombudsman(KO)
3. The market court.

The "KO" has come to stay as a popular organization in Swedish life. Aggrieved consumers turn to this organization for help whenever they apprehend unfitting marketing practices.

The "Market Court" concerns itself with the merchandising of goods and services. The court is empowered to impose fines and forbids the erring firms from resorting to such practices as would affect the interest of the consumers in terms of Packaging. In 1972, the "Food products



Law” was launched which was concerned with the handling and packaging of foodstuffs both domestic and imported and was looked into by National Food Administration.

The Ministry of consumer and family affairs in Sweden passed bills and regulations to protect the interest of the consumer. The institute for informative labeling and National Institute for Consumer Information provide for requisite information to Swedish consumers.

In Denmark, an aggrieved customer can lodge a complaint with the house wives consumer stating that he has been palmed off with the defective product by a certain company. The unsatisfied purchaser will get either replacement or free repair or money back ultimately. As earlier as 1948, the Danish Government Home Economics Council was created to promote healthy, hygiene, standard nutrition and worthwhile household goods.

In Belgium, consumer council was set up in 1964, in order to look into the problem of the consumers. UFIDEC is another voluntary organization devoting its attention to testing and magazine publishing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Shaw et al., (2006)** expressed that increased exposure and accessibility of information in on global matters have stimulated this movement. Information about malfunctioning business practices are increasingly and easily accessible via the internet. This causes a rising number of consumers who want to influence the actions of the corporations in matters as environmental pollution, child labour or animal abuse to take part. An example of influence on environmental pollution is that of the not sinking of the Brent Spar oil platform in the North Sea in 1995.
2. **D.Himanchalam (2006)** came out with Consumer sovereignty in the Indian market milieu is virtually a myth. The Indian consumer is only nominally a king, and in reality a person of no consequences. The root causes the average Indian consumer’s plight are many: the generally low standard of living, widespread illiteracy, ignorance of the



legitimate rights of consumers, lack of sufficient knowledge of the market milieu, and a persistent and negative tendency to resign him to the exploitation in sheer helplessness.

3. **Mr. Mansi Agarwal (2005)** specified certain findings as the first and the foremost step for a consumer to prevent himself from cheating is to keep his eyes and ears open. Know or be aware of what is happening around you. Read the cases of various scams, thefts burglaries, phasing scams etc. in that are highlighted in your local newspaper and also seen on television. This will keep you informed and conscious of what is going on and what can unfortunately even happen with you.
4. **Juris (2005)** claimed that consumer activists on the internet and digital networks on the internet have facilitated the mobilization of thousands of protesters around the world and have social movement. With the rise of the internet since the early '90's the flow of information, which is necessary for social movements, has significantly improved in speed, flexibility, and can be reached by a global community. The technology enables global and real time communication. Digital social networks allow the existence of network-based social movements and for these movements to interact at a local, regional and even global level. The breaking down of the geographical boundaries allows communications and unity of similar organizations within the world.
5. **Jeffrey S. Juris (2005)** examined the types of internet-based technologies used by anti-corporate globalization activists. The results demonstrate that the activists utilized e-mail lists, web pages, and open ending software. According to Juris (2005) these forms of technology were used by activist to organize and coordinate actions, to share information, and to produce documents. The grass-roots environmentalists use internet based technologies to 'access, use, create, and disseminate information'.
6. **Ribstein (2005)** stated that the spreading of information is the key here. Internet-based technologies provide activist with more options to spread their message. For example, blogs are a way to create a dialogue with supporters and even opponents. Web logs or 'Blogs' have been referred to as 'a new form of journalism'.



7. **Kozinets & Handelman, (2004)** took Touraine’s framework (1981) as a basis and applied it to the consumer movement in the US. The common identity of the consumer movements can not only be regarded as caring people, but it is also a reflection of the consumers self. In the theory of Touraine (1981), social movement actors are described as driving forces for positive change and as those who stand up for and protect the oppressed. Activists often link social awareness to spiritual awareness, as in religion. This allows them to leave their own relatively small issues behind, and to connect with the global population or with the earth itself. Like conversion in religion, they claim to see beyond the ideology of consumerisms and see the consequences it has now and will bring in future. Following Touraine (1981), a social movement can only be effective if its opposition is one to which the social has a strong aversion. This aversion has an invaluable function; it unifies and motivates the activists to mobilize and makes the target visible, clear, and despicable. It also allows the activists to refer to the bible by comparing the movement to the story of David and Goliath. In this story a human called David, metaphor for the consumer movement, wins the battle against the giant Goliath, the corporations. Furthermore, the consumer activist states to have not only one but numerous corporations as their opponents. The battle is described as a conflict between one side which cares about products and profits and the other which cares about people. This battle between good and evil is as often occurs in religious settings (Touraine, 1981).
8. **Kozinets & Handelman, (2004)** reiterated that apart from corporations, also certain consumers are opponents of the consumer activist. Activists blame them for not taking any responsibility on for example the way their goods are produced. In this way they too are responsible for the consumption culture. Activists see consumers as “unreflective beings’ unable or unwilling to understand or think about their own consumption”.



9. **Kozinets & Handelman, (2004)** considered consumers as to be incompetent in reflecting on their consumer behaviors and incompetent in taking social and moral criteria into account when making a purchase decision. That is why activists seek to convince consumers to question the moral and ethics of a product or service's origins and its social and environmental implications. This is not easy as the corporations have already infiltrated the consumers' minds and have they made part of the consumption system.
10. **Klein et al., (2004)** expressed that a boycott is an extreme case of consumer behavior where purchase decisions are influenced by social and ethical factors.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

- To know the activities and role of consumer activists performed for consumer benefits.
- To assess the Consumer Activism in India

FUTURE RESEARCH

Another study can be done on On-line shopping which is the most important also for today's environment because the companies are showing one product and sending another product, late delivery etc

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