

A Study on Rural Consumers Awareness Towards Consumer Protection Laws with Special Reference to Vattamkulam Gramapanchayath

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Abstract: Rural consumer buys a product when it is required for his/her own use, and most often they prefer local markets for making purchase. But according to them it is just a transaction. They are not conscious about unethical practices faced by them in the market and never raise their voice against seller. Are they aware about their rights and duties in market? The consumer protection act, 2019 ensures effective protection of consumers and as such makes provision for the development of consumer dispute forums on a three-tier basis. It is the duty of consumer to identify his rights with the help of a local body and voluntary organizations. This research reveals the unethical practices faced by rural consumers at the point of sale and the extent to which they are aware of consumer rights and responsibilities.

Keywords: awareness, consumer goods, protection laws, rural consumer, unethical practices.

1. Introduction

Consumer denotes a person who consumes or uses an article in an economy and one who purchases goods and services for his/her use. And the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (CPA), (it was replaced by the consumer Protection Act, 2019) is a milestone in the history of socio-economic legislation in the country and that provides effective protection of interests of consumers and as such makes provision for the establishment of consumer councils and other authorities that help in settlement of consumer disputes and matters connected therewith.

2. Statement of the Problem

Consumer awareness is an act of making sure that the buyer is aware of the information about goods and services and rights and responsibilities. Consumer who aware about their rights can take the right buying decision and make the right choice of their consumption. The purpose of this research is to get an idea about rural consumer's awareness towards consumer protection law.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To study the behaviour of rural consumers while purchasing consumer goods.
- To identify the unethical practices faced by consumers while purchasing consumer goods.
- To analyze the awareness of the consumers towards consumer protection laws.

4. Hypothesis

- H_0 : There is no significant difference between age of rural consumers and unethical practices faced by them while purchasing consumer goods.
- H_0 : There is no significant difference between gender of rural consumers and the unethical practices faced by them while purchasing consumer goods.
- H_0 : There is no significant difference between the demographic factors of rural consumers and their level of awareness about consumer protection legislations.

5. Research Methodology and Design

The universe of the study area is rural consumers of Vattamkulam Gramapanchayath. There are 19 ward involved in Panchayath, located in Ponnani taluk of Malappuram district. It is therefore decided to use convenience sampling for identifying the rural consumers belonging to village and data was collected from 100 consumers. Simple frequency, ANOVA and independent t test is used for analyzing the data in SPSS and study is descriptive as well as empirical in nature.

6. Review of Literature

D. Venkatesan and R. Leelavathi (2020) "A study on consumer rights awareness among rural consumers – A study in rural areas with special reference to Chegam block of Tiruvannamalai District". Analyze eighty responses using percentage analysis and cross tabulation and states most of the consumers are unaware about their rights due to illiteracy,

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unemployment, poverty, and most of them are exploited in markets.

Mrs. R. Latha and Dr. M. ThamaraiKannan (2019), “A study on consumer awareness on consumer awareness on consumer privileges in Erode district”. Simple percentage, factor analysis and Chi-square test is applied to find out different objectives. The study reveals that fourteen percent of respondent consumers have abnormal state of awareness on perceived six consumer rights and the awareness level on staying eighty-six percentage is not much great.

Vanisree, D. (2013) in her study “Role of Media in Consumer Protection” states that television was the main media which influence their buying. There is a significant difference between the awareness levels of the respondent of different age group about consumer organization working in and around their area. Respondent above the age group of forty-two were more aware about the consumer organization working in their area than the respondent below the age group of forty-one.

Yamuna Krishna B. and Suganya Y. (2011) in their study “A Comparative study of Consumer Courts in Tamilnadu and Kerala states -A Statistical Survey Report” state that Indian courts suffer from severe weaknesses which reduce its popularity and create a negative opinion among Indian consumers on its functioning. The researchers conclude that consumer courts in Kerala are functioning more efficiently than consumer courts in Tamilnadu. Neither the Government nor the consumer can be individually blamed for any cause and benefit.

Praveen S. (2009) in his study “Consumer Protection in India (With Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh)” states that consumer protection and welfare is not the task of a single entity or the society. Rather it is the collective responsibility of the state. The consumer must be aware of his basic rights and should fight for these rights.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Respondents are classified based on their demographic factors such as gender, age, and educational qualification. Consumer goods are products bought for consumption by the average consumer. In this research consumer goods are classified in three categories are food, cloth, and durable goods. The classification of respondents based on demographic factors is given below.

Table 1
Demographic Factors

Variable	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	57	57.0
	Female	43	43.0
Age	Up to 30	22	22.0
	31 to 40	23	23.0
	41 to 50	23	23.0
	Above 50	32	32.0
Education qualification	Below SSLC	13	13.0
	SSLC	27	27.0
	Plus two	25	25.0
	Graduation	23	23.0
	Post-Graduation	12	12.0

Table 2
Buying behaviour of rural consumers

Classification	Variables	Mean	Rank
Food items	Price	4.7100	2
	Quality	4.7800	1
	Package	3.9800	6
	Taste & appearance	4.0100	5
	Availability	3.3300	9
	Colour	3.3600	8
	Variety	3.1500	10
	Weight	3.9100	7
	Freshness	4.6100	3.5
	Manufacture/expiry date	4.6100	3.5
Clothing	Colour & design	4.2100	3
	Material& quality	4.5300	2
	Price	4.6300	1
	Brand	3.4900	6
	Discount/gift	4.1900	4
Durable goods	Fashion and suitability	3.7800	5
	Quality	4.6000	2
	Price	4.6900	1
	Life and durability	4.4500	3
	Standard mark	3.8700	5
	Appearance	3.5600	6
Energy savings	4.3600	4	

Interpretation: Rural consumers consider price and quality as important factor while purchasing consumer goods. It is most influencing factor for buying because consumers are rational; they have limited income as well as limited budget. And as per this research, researcher can state that rural consumers are brand unconscious.

Table 3
One-way ANOVA on unethical practices and age

Items		Df	F	Sig.
Food	Between Groups	3	2.061	.037
	Within Groups	96		
Cloth	Between Groups	3	8.161	.000
	Within Groups	96		
Durable goods	Between Groups	3	2.082	.034
	Within Groups	96		

Interpretation: Above ANOVA tables shows the association of age and unethical practices faced by respondents while purchase consumer goods like food item, cloth item, durable goods. Here the calculated significant value is less than 0.05. So, the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant association between unethical practices faced by respondents and their age.

Table 4
Independent sample t test on unethical practices and gender

Items		Sig.	T	Df
Food	Equal variances assumed	.000	-2.003	98
	Equal variances not assumed		-2.086	97.99
Cloth	Equal variances assumed	.000	-2.003	98
	Equal variances not assumed		-.643	97.99
Durable goods	Equal variances assumed	.0185	-2.013	98
	Equal variances not assumed		-2.150	79.421

Interpretation: Unethical practices faced by rural consumers while purchasing consumer goods the P value is less than table value. So, we reject the null hypothesis. Hence there is a

significant difference between unethical practices faced by rural consumers while purchasing consumer goods and gender of respondents.

Table 5
One-way ANOVA on awareness and educational qualification

ANOVA		DF	F	Sig. value
Quality mark awareness	Between Groups	4	29.55	.000
	Within Groups	95		
Consumer rights awareness	Between Groups	4	51.08	.000
	Within Groups	95		
Consumer forum awareness	Between Groups	4	30.11	.000
	Within Groups	95		

Interpretation: ANOVA table (table 5) shows the significant difference between rural consumer's legislation awareness and educational qualifications. The legislation involves quality mark awareness, consumer right awareness, and consumer forum awareness. And shows that there is a significant difference between consumer awareness about consumer protection legislations and age of the respondents. As per the data collected the respondents with high education are more aware about consumer protection legislations. The post graduated respondents are more aware about consumer protection laws than basic educated respondents.

Table 6

ANOVA		DF	F	Sig. value
Quality mark awareness	Between Groups	3	4.79	.004
	Within Groups	96		
Consumer rights awareness	Between Groups	3	8.65	.000
	Within Groups	96		
Consumer forum awareness	Between Groups	3	2.98	.035
	Within Groups	96		

Interpretation: Above ANOVA table shows the significant difference between consumer legislation awareness and age of consumers. As per the data collected the respondents under the group up to thirty are more aware about consumer protection legislations.

8. Findings

- The major factor that influences rural consumers are price and quality. Buying decisions of female and male consumers are different. From the data collected we can find that the female consumers are price conscious and male consumers are quality conscious. And majority of rural consumers are not brand conscious.

- The unethical practices faced by rural consumers while purchasing consumer goods and age are significantly different. That means the problems are arising differently in age group of respondents.
- Unethical practices faced by male consumers are different from female and vice versa because their attitude of buying is different. Problems faced by rural consumers are different in case of male and female buyers.
- Respondents under the group up to thirty are more aware about consumer protection legislations. In 21st century the importance of education is increased, and majority of the peoples are well studied. But the respondents above forty are not included in this category. So, we can conclude that the education and age of respondents are significantly different from the awareness of consumer protection legislation.

9. Conclusion

The research work has revealed that rural consumer's awareness regarding the various legislations, their rights and responsibilities is at the bottom level. Government should include consumer education in the curriculum of schools and colleges. And Department of Consumer Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development should take initiatives to have mandatory meetings of the Grama Sabha on 24th December (National Consumers Day) where the villagers could properly be educated about their rights. To reach many rural consumers, a vigorous campaign with the involvement of the panchayats needs to be taken up. The suggestions made if implemented and consumers benefited, the study may be on the worthy direction.

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