

CONSUMERISM IN INDIA

Meaning of Consumerism

Consumer : One who consumes or uses goods and services, ism – principles and doctrines.

Social Meaning : Ideology of consumption or possession of goods and services in greater quantities for pursuit and satisfaction of emotional fulfillment and to build some status.

Economic Meaning : Doctrine that ever - increasing consumption of goods and services forms the basis of a sound economy.

Ethical Meaning : Protecting the rights and interests of consumers.

Combined Meaning : the term 'Consumerism' refers to consumption of goods at a higher rate along for self-satisfaction and improving the economy with protection or promotion of consumer's interests.

History of Consumerism

The tendency of people consuming greater than their basic needs was even seen during ancient civilizations.

The TRIPPLICANE URBAN CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY (TUCS) was started in 1904 in i, Tamil Nadu. It was the first consumer co-operative society in Indi.

' The term 'Consumerism' had been first used in the year 1915 and referred to 'advocacy of the rights and interests of consumers'.

In 1956, the 'Indian Association for Consumers' and all India Association for Consumer Interest was setup with Government support, but the organization failed to fulfill its objectives. In 1960, 'Emphasis on or preoccupation with the acquisition of consumer goods.

In 1966 focus again shifted to rights and interest of consumer.

In 1966 – Consumers Guidance Society of India (CGSI)

It is one of the leading consumer organization in India. It is a voluntary, non-profit, non-political organization established in 1966 by 9 Housewives and few social workers to unite the Indian consumers in a strong enduring movement. Today it is the leading consumer organization with representative at Central and State bodies. The Society takes up consumer complaints, fights all kinds of complaints and give information through it monthly publications to create awareness among consumers. The organization not only relied on holding conferences and meetings, infact, its started testing and reporting the quality of products manufactured and delivered in the market by the industries.

1970 – 'Karnataka Consumer Services Society' (KCSS)

This Bengaluru based organization conducted seminars in the areas of consumers advocacy, environment, food adulteration, health etc. in schools and other places and was very much successful in making true impacts.

1973 – Visaka Consumers Councils (VCC)

Started in 1973, based in Vishakapatnam, AP, is another consumer organization which was successful in redressing the plight of the poor ration card holders and LPG gas users, who had to stand in long queue because of lack of accountability with the concerned Authorities.

1973, March 15th was proclaimed as 'World Consumer Rights Day'.

1978 – Consumer education and research center,

An organization started in 1978, based in Ahmedabad used the legal machinery to protect consumer human rights. It has its own laboratories for testing of food, pharmaceuticals and domestic appliances. It publishes the finding and takes strict actions against unsafe products. CERC also undertakes internship training for any consumer organization, besides publishing routine the magazine 'Consumer Confrontation'.

The consumer movement has been totally absent in the past and at present is growing extremely slowly in India for number of reasons.

Reason for slow growth of Consumer Movement in India.

Poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, lack of consumer education and guidance, general passive attitude of consumers against malpractices of traders.

1986 – The consumer Protection Act, 1986

Thus a need was felt to provide protection to these helpless consumers and reach the democratic goal of 'justice within reach'. To this end, Consumer Protection Act 1986 was enacted.

National Consumer day is celebrated on December 24th every year as the Consumer Protection Act 1986 came into force on 24.12.1986 across India

Section 2(d) of the act recognizes two categories of consumers-

Consumer of goods-

Consumer of services-

Any person who-

- (i) Buys any goods for a consideration which has been paid or promised or partly paid and partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment and includes any user of such goods other than the person who buys such goods for consideration paid or promised or partly paid or partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment, when such use is made with the approval of such person, but does not include a person who obtains such goods for resale or for any commercial purpose; or
- (ii) 12 [hires or avails of] any service for a consideration which has been paid or promised or partly paid and partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment and includes any beneficiary of such services other than the person who 12 [hires or avails of] the services for consideration paid or promised, or partly paid and partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment, when such services are availed of with the approval of the first mentioned person 13 [but does not include a person who avails of such services for any commercial purpose];

The term consumer however does not cover a person who obtains goods for resale or commercial purposes. It also does not cover a person who avails of services for any commercial purpose.

Consumer Court

For redressal there are quasi-judicial machinery at three levels. They are district level called District Consumer Dispute Redressal Forum for settlement of complaints claiming compensation up to 20 lakhs.

District Court Campus, Sathuvachari, Vellore: 632 009. Phone & Fax No.: (0416) 2254780
vellore.dcdrf@gmail.com

The district forum is established by the state government in each district. This consists of a person who is qualified to be the judge of a district court and two other members, one of whom shall be a lady social worker. Every member shall have a tenure of five years with age limit of 65 years.

Voluntary Organizations in Vellore District

Consumers Welfare Protection Council, 38, Big Mosque Street, Peranampet, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu – 631 001. Phone No: 04177-233329

State level for settlement of complaints claiming compensation between 20 lakhs to 1 crore

Tamil Nadu State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission,

No.212, R.K. Mutt Road, Mylapore, Chennai : 600 004. 2464 0687 24618900
(Registrar-District) email: scdrc@tn.nic.in; [tn.scdrc@gmail](mailto:tn.scdrc@gmail.com)

National level for settlement of complaints claiming compensation above 1 crore

At New Delhi

48 lacs filed 44 lacs settled 4 lacs pending 91% settled

How to make a complaint to Forums

Complaint can be made out on an ordinary paper. No court fee stamps or revenue stamp are necessary.

The petition which is sent to consumer redressal forum should contain-

Name and address of complaint.

The name and address of person against whom the complaint is made.

Complaint details.

Complainants claim Amount

If one is not satisfied with the order of the district or state commission, they can appeal to the state or national commission respectively even if the value of the complaint is less.

CONSUMER RIGHTS:

Right to Safety-

Right to Information-

Right to choice-

Right to representation-

Right to redressal-

Right to Consumer Education-

Consumer Responsibilities

To be aware of his/her rights in all aspects of consumption.

To look for the specifications of the good he/she wishes to buy.

To abide by the instructions that are affixed on the packet or offer, and apply it as instructed, especially when it comes to the storage and preservation method and conditions.

Not to be tempted by misleading advertisements. Advertising Standards Council of India

1. Rin Antibac, Kills germs
2. Standard Chartered Bank-10% cash back credit cards
3. Airtel – Fastest Network
4. Maggi- monosodium glucomate Madhuri

To read the content of the goods warranty card before purchasing.

To verify the date of expiry for the goods, materials or medicine before purchasing and refrain from using expired items.

To make sure that the prices of items purchased are reasonable, either by checking the market prices, or based on his/her purchasing experience, or by comparing the quality of the product or service with its price.

To request proper receipt from shopkeeper.

To cooperate with the consumer protection authorities by reporting any wrongdoing or fraud.

CONSUMER RIGHTS VIOLATION :

Following are common violations of consumer rights :

1. Under weighing
2. Adulteration
3. Not providing proper bill
4. Poor quality goods / spoilt / damaged goods.
5. Poor maintenance
6. Cheating on contract terms / hidden clauses in contract
7. Price higher than Maximum Retail Price on cover (MRP)
8. Forcing / misleading into buying unwanted goods
9. Misleading advertisement, especially aimed at children
10. Selling goods whose expiry date is over
11. Bogus companies, who cannot be contacted after sales.
12. Overloading of interest especially in credit purchase
13. Dangerous, hazards or unsafe goods.
14. Deficient or discourteous service.

Impact of Consumerism – Positive consumerism effects are :

More industrial production.

A higher growth rate economy.

More goods and service available.

Increased production will result in more employment opportunities

A variety of choice for goods and services.

Negative effects are :

One is in a rat race to earn more and is forced to cope up with stress and other work related tensions.

Material wealth is the deciding factor about whether a society is highly developed or not. Our ethical and spiritual values are left unimportant under the circumstances.

Over-dependence on labor saving devices

Crime rate also increases as wants to possess expensive gadgets increase. Theft become common and daylight robberies take place.

Personal relationships also get affected as people are busy trying to earn more to maintain their standard of living.

CONSUMER CLUB :

Tamil Nadu is perhaps one of the state that has shown keen interest in getting regular funds from the Central Government to run the consumer clubs. As it can be seen from the table 2.2 & 2.3, Tamil Nadu has availed grants for all three phases. In fact it is the only State in India which has gone for the third phase of the grant. Therefore, most of the consumer clubs in the state are getting funds regularly to manage their activities. Structurally, the Commissioner of Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department of Tamil Nadu is the Nodal State Coordinator for the consumer clubs. It is important to note that within the district more than one Voluntary Consumer Organization are selected as the coordinating agency. Further, the concerned District Supply Officer is also given the responsibility to monitor and help the Voluntary Consumer Organizations as well as the Consumer Clubs. At present there are 1500 consumer clubs (500 clubs in each phase), establish in Tamil Nadu.

SUGGESTION FOR IMPLEMENTATION

FUNCTIONS OF A CONSUMER CLUB IN COLLEGES :

Monthly meeting and demonstration for one hour after school hours on the First Thursday of each month. Each month a topic / activity may be scheduled as in the model calendar.

Days of National and International importance to consumer may be celebrated in the School / College. Poster / Speech / Essay competitions can be organized at school level by the Consumer Club.

Field visit to local markets / Consumer courts and door to door campaign in the local community etc., may be organized for at least 4 days in a year. It can be done on Saturdays by prior arrangements.

Minutes of each activity have to be recorded by the Student and Teacher Coordinator jointly to document.

A Consumer Club notice board shall be opened to be updated daily by the Teacher and Student with consumer related news.

DUTIES OF A CONSUMER CLUB MEMBER :

To learn and follow the traits of a responsible citizen and aware consumer.

To disseminate information gained through the club among fellow students, parents and other people in the Community.

To organize and activity participate citizen building and consumer protection programs being organized by the club as well as in their locality, mobilizing general public.

To observe all important international and national days especially Republic Day (26th January), National Consumer Day (24th December) and World Consumer Rights Day (15th March).