



Awareness of Consumer Protection Mechanisms and Consumer Experiences in the Marketplace: An Empirical Exploration in Kodumba Panchayath

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Abstract: Consumer protection is important, particularly in developing economies, for ensuring fairness, safety, and trust, where consumers become vulnerable due to information asymmetry and less awareness of legal safeguards. This study examines consumer awareness regarding consumer protection initiatives, the major problems faced while purchasing goods and availing services, and the resolution measures, with special reference to Kodumbu Panchayath. The data were collected through a structured interview schedule from 120 consumers identified through Multi-stage sampling. Data were analysed using MANOVA, one-way ANOVA, and the Kruskal–Walli's test. The findings show significant variations in consumer awareness of protection mechanisms, product standards, and legislation based on gender, education, and occupation. Female respondents have higher awareness levels than males. The analysis of problems faced revealed that high price, low quality, and adulteration were among the most common serious concerns. The problems faced while purchasing by consumers differ significantly, including false weights, misleading ads, adulteration, and poor after-sales services across the 3 ward categories. About false weight, misleading ads, and adulteration, the selected consumers belonging to ward number 4 are facing those problems majorly, apart from other ward categories. With respect to the resolving mechanism, occupation-based differences were significant for changing shops and lodging complaints, while other measures had no significant variation. The study highlights the ongoing gap between the existence of consumer protection provisions and consumers' practical awareness and usage. The findings call for the need for targeted consumer education programmes, simplified complaint procedures, and high local-level support to improve consumer welfare and enhance consumer rights.

Keywords: Consumer awareness; Consumer rights; Consumer protection initiatives; Unfair trade practices; Consumer complaint measures.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Consumer protection is inevitable for maintaining fairness, and trust in consumer' marketing experience involtini a high number of purchases of goods and availing services. While comparing with sellers, the consumers are weaker due to less access to information, especially awareness, and a lack of ability for verification of the product quality, standards, and the legal protection aspects. This information asymmetry is mostly seen in developing emerging economies, and this is one of the reasons for the market failure and the loss for consumers (Rizzi, 2017).

Consumer protection legislation and awareness initiatives are essential. Consumer protection is important (Lakhota & Chaware, 2025). This is not getting adequate importance in the developing countries at the policy-making level due to a lack of focus and extensive attention only give into the immediate goods, which are catalyzing financial development, alleviating poverty, and reducing illiteracy (Rizzi, 2017). This difference in priorities is not able to mitigate the consumer exploitation in the marketplace in everyday transactions.

While looking into the Indian context, there are different unfair and unethical trade practices experienced by consumers while purchasing goods and accessing services. The major common practices faced by consumers include adulteration, underweighting, lower quality goods, duplicate products, and misleading advertisements, which lead to consumers being cheated and experiencing un-satisfactory experience in the marketplace (Panicker, 2021). The existence of these problems is aligned with the lower awareness of the rights and consumer protection measures prevailing among the



consumers (Panicker, 2021). This is the worst case for the consumers who are representing poor, illiterate, passive, and unorganised sections, which makes them more leads to exploitation. The adulterated food, spurious and substandard products, black marketing, profiteering, and manipulative advertising practices indicate the ongoing reality of unethical practices to the consumer (Scott, 2021).

The protection of the rights of consumers and ensuring their welfare, the consumer protection initiatives are executed through consumer protection mechanisms, product standards, and legislation. Whereas, the effectiveness of these support measures is correlated with the level at which consumers are aware of these means and provisions in the actual purchasing platforms. The consumers' awareness of the Maximum Retail Price (MRP), certification marks such as ISI, hallmarking, and expiry dates indicating quality is most fundamental elements for protection from exploitation and ensuring informed decision-making (Boatwright et al., 2024). Likewise, the awareness is not only means the understating and realizing rights, but it also covers the idea of the complaint mechanisms, procedures, and the administrative or legal process highlighted in the Consumer Protection Act. The proper complaint filing procedures increase the ability of consumers to use legal protection effectively (GUPTA, 2023).

Consumer protection is also one of the most important elements in the service sector. The service deficiency is one of the major reasons for consumer disputes, and there is a need for clear measures for the welfare (Majumdar & Gupta, 2020). Accessible, fair, efficient mechanisms must be developed, and that is able to ensure the welfare. For this success, the mechanisms must provide accurate and detailed information to the consumers through awareness initiatives for ensuring consumer protection (Benöhr & Micklitz, 2018). These highlight the importance of consumer awareness of consumer protection mechanisms, the need for examining the problems faced during the purchase of goods and availing of services, and the measures adopted to resolve such problems effectively.

Effective consumer protection initiatives are needed to reach the beneficiaries and safeguard their interest. Therefore, consumers should be aware about consumer Act and consumer protection initiatives whenever they are purchasing a product. The study will explore a better understanding among consumers towards consumer protection measures in the study area of Kodumbu Panchayath. Further, this study identifies the consumers' awareness of food protection. It also discovers which problems are most affected by consumers while purchasing products or services.

In this age of high competition and globalization, every manufacturer is trying to maximize profits and, in the process, is resorting to such aggressive and misleading advertising and marketing practices, forgetting the interests of consumers. It is therefore extremely important for the consumer to be well informed about the goods or service he/she is purchasing /availing of and protect their own interests. This is where consumer rights and consumer protection come in. The problem is derived by facing violation of consumer rights, such as the right to information and the right to choose, while purchasing products. There are various ways in which the consumer gets exploited by the trader, such as giving incomplete or wrong information, weighing less, charging more, or giving low-quality goods. These unfair practices may harm the customer not just monetarily but also by causing health hazards or mental stress. While the government has been initiating various schemes and programmes for the protection of the consumer, it is necessary that the consumer takes the onus to make use of all the protection mechanisms and asserts some self-care in buying goods / availing of services. It is only by exercising their rights that the consumer can be in the driving seat. Hence, this research exploring the customer awareness on consumer protection initiatives, problems faced while purchasing goods and availing services, and the mechanisms to solve the problems during the experience of purchasing and availing are relevant and timely important.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Consumer protection is most important in modern markets due to the complexity of relationships exists among buyers and sellers. In developing economies, consumer protection legislation and initiatives are having less policy priority due to the focus of the government on the immediate and most necessary socio-economic objectives like economic development, poverty mitigation, and illiteracy reduction measures (Rizzi, 2017). However, this focus creates more welfare losses because of the market failure through information asymmetry, in which the high reliance of consumer to the better-informed sellers (Rizzi, 2017). This imbalance highlights the prevailing approach that consumer protection is treated as a legal requirement. Whereas, it should be need to develop as a welfare-oriented necessity.

The existing literature highlights that there are different means of malpractice prevailing in the marketplace, such as unfair practices, such as adulteration, underweighting, lower quality goods, duplicate products, and misleading advertisements, which are the major concerns affecting consumers in India (Panicker, 2021). These conditions of exploitation are very severe for the poor, illiterate, passive, unaware, and unorganised vulnerable groups. This is seen in everyday market transactions as one of the serious practices (Scott, 2021). Therefore. There is a need for effective consumer protection initiatives on both the legal provisions side and consumer empowerment in actual practice.



The awareness campaigns on making the consumers aware of the foundational aspects, such as Maximum Retail Price, hallmarking, ISI marks, and expiry dates, as these indicators directly support their purchasing decisions and prevent exploitation (Boatwright et al., 2024). Awareness needs to expand to ensure health, safety, and environmental concerns (Boatwright et al., 2024). However, the existing body of literature highlights that awareness is not simple everywhere. For example, a study in Himachal Pradesh identified that fifty percent of respondents had low awareness levels in the consumer terminologies, legal laws, and consumer organisations, while television comes as the common source of consumer information, and their participation in consumer organisations is low (Kishtwaria, 2017). This highlights the uneven awareness.

In addition to this, there is less legal and procedural awareness among consumers; consumers may only benefit if they have a clear understanding of the rights and the procedures required for filing complaints and the redressal mechanism. The lack of awareness of the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, is less (GUPTA, 2023). This reduces the practical effectiveness of consumer protection laws. This is essential for both physical goods and service sectors, in which deficiency compromises consumer welfare protection (Majumdar & Gupta, 2020). Effective accessible dispute resolution mechanisms and the availability of accurate information are required for consumers pre and post purchasing goods or services (Benöhr & Micklitz, 2018).

The existing literature emphasized the importance of awareness campaigns, product standards, and consumer protection laws. However, most of the previous studies are either general or focus particularly on legal provisions. There is limited empirical examination that covers consumer awareness of consumer protection initiatives, the practical problems faced by consumers in purchasing, and the problem-handling behaviour. Along with this, localized assessment from Panchayath-level settings, capturing the grassroots level, is not sufficient, even though consumer experiences and awareness are influenced by everyday local market conditions. Therefore, this study in Kodumba Panchayath is essential to provide context-specific understanding of consumer protection awareness, their difficulties in the experience, and responses for resolving such issues.

3. OBJECTIVES :

- 1 To evaluate the level of consumer awareness regarding consumer protection initiatives, including consumer protection mechanisms, product standards, and relevant legislation.
- 2 To examine the major problems faced by consumers while purchasing goods and availing services.
- 3 To analyse the measures adopted by consumers to resolve the problems experienced during the purchase of goods and utilisation of services.

4. RESEARCH METHOD :

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature to identify the level of awareness of consumers on consumer protection initiatives and the purchase behavior of consumers. It also evaluates the level of experience or exercise of consumer rights and responsibilities. The problems faced while purchasing are analyzed, while also identifying the factors influencing purchase decisions. For this, primary data were collected from customers in Kodumba Panchayath using an interview schedule. The secondary data relating to the Consumer Protection Act, consumer rights and responsibilities, consumer protection mechanism, consumer redressal system, various schemes for customer education were obtained from the websites of Google Scholar, Shodhganga Inflightnet, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public distribution, and research gate etc and from the journal Yojana, December 2017 Edition.

Survey research using a well- structured interview schedule for selected consumers was adopted for this study. The population for the study covers consumers in Kodumba Panchayath. From this, a sample of 120 respondents was selected to form the sample, and data were collected from them for the study. Kodumba Grama Panchayath has 15 wards. A sample of 120 customers was fixed statistically to represent the whole population. Multi stage sampling method was applied for the selection of samples. In the first stage, total wards were classified into 3 groups (1-5, 6-10, and 11-15). In the second stage, one was selected from each group. In the third stage, the selected wards were classified based on gender into male and female, and finally, the sample size was allocated proportionately to the population of males and females in each ward.

5. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS:

The major analysis and results are discussed here.

5.1. Sample Demographic Profile

The profile of the sample explaining the demographic and personal data of respondents is presented in the table given below.



Table 5.1 Sample Profile

	Categories	Frequency	Per Cent	Cumulative per cent
Age	≤ 25	28	23.3	23.3
	26 - 35	34	28.3	51.7
	36 - 45	37	30.8	82.5
	> 45	21	17.5	100
Gender	Male	50	41.7	41.7
	Female	70	58.3	100
Ward No	4	40	33.3	33.3
	7	40	33.3	66.6
	14	40	33.3	100
Type of family	Nuclear	66	55.0	55.0
	Joint	35	29.2	84.2
	Extended	19	15.8	100
Education	Up to primary	31	25.8	25.8
	SSLC / HSE	33	27.5	53.3
	Degree	41	34.2	87.5
	Post graduate	15	12.5	100
Marital status	Married	82	68.3	68.3
	Unmarried	38	31.7	100
Occupation	Agriculture	20	16.7	16.7
	Self employed	17	14.2	30.8
	Govt employee	9	7.5	38.3
	Private employee	53	44.2	82.5
	Student	21	17.5	100
Monthly income (self)	Up to 10000	16	13.3	13.3
	10001 – 20000	47	39.2	52.5
	20001 – 30000	40	33.3	85.8
	Above 30000	17	14.2	100
Monthly expenditure (Rs)	Up to 10000	24	20.0	20.0
	10001 – 15000	61	50.8	70.8
	15001 – 20000	26	21.7	92.5
	Above 20000	9	7.5	100

Source: Primary Data

As per the analysis, many of the respondents (30.8 per cent) belong to the age group of 36 to 45, followed by 28.3 per cent and 23.3 per cent belonging to 26 to 35 and up to 25 categories. Gender wise classification shows that out of the 120 selected consumers; female constitute 58.3 per cent and males 41.7 per cent. 40 consumers are selected from each ward category. It is observed that 55 per cent of the respondents belong to a nuclear family. Education-wise classification reveals that 34.2 per cent have a degree qualification, 27.5 per cent are SSLC/HSE qualified, and 12.5 per cent are respectively. A majority of the respondents are married (68.3 per cent). While going through the occupation status of respondents, it is clear that 44.2 per cent belong to private employees and only 7.5 per cent belong to Govt employees. The monthly income status of the respondents reveals that 39.2 per cent have an income range of 10001 to 20000, followed by 33.3 per cent belongs to the 20001 to 30000 categories. The classification of the sample based on the monthly expenditure shows that 50.8 per cent of respondents spend 10001 to 15000, followed by 21.7 per cent and 20 per cent belonging to the 15000 to 20000 and 20000 categories. Only 7.5 per cent spend more than 20000 monthly.

5.2. Awareness of consumer protection initiatives

There are different means of consumer protection initiated by the Government for the benefit of consumers. These include Consumer protection mechanisms, product standards, and legislations etc. It is very important to identify the level of awareness of consumers towards these initiatives. The illustration given below shows whether there is any significant difference between respondents' awareness towards consumer protection initiatives based on gender, education, and occupation. MANOVA is used to test the level of awareness of the consumer towards the means of consumer protection based on gender, education, and occupation.



H0: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of a set of variables describing the level of awareness on consumer protection initiatives based on different demographic factors under study.

H1: There is a significant difference in the mean scores of a set of variables describing the level of awareness of consumer protection initiatives based on different demographic factors under study.

Table 5.2.1. MANOVA General linear model on Awareness of means of consumer protection

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	
Gender	Pillai's Trace	1.075	42.648	6.000	220.000	<0.01***
	Wilks' Lambda	.012	297.676 ^b	6.000	218.000	<0.01***
	Hotelling's Trace	76.137	1370.462	6.000	216.000	<0.01***
	Roy's Largest Root	76.040	2788.127 ^c	3.000	110.000	<0.01***
Education	Pillai's Trace	.172	2.252	9.000	333.000	.019**
	Wilks' Lambda	.831	2.330	9.000	265.428	.015**
	Hotelling's Trace	.199	2.386	9.000	323.000	.013**
	Roy's Largest Root	.178	6.604 ^c	3.000	111.000	<0.01***
Occupation	Pillai's Trace	.297	3.050	12.000	333.000	<0.01***
	Wilks' Lambda	.719	3.196	12.000	288.678	<0.01***
	Hotelling's Trace	.369	3.311	12.000	323.000	<0.01***
	Roy's Largest Root	.300	8.337 ^c	4.000	111.000	<0.01***

Source: Primary data

Significant at 5 percent significance

Table 5.2.2. Estimated Marginal Means of Grand Mean on Awareness of means of consumer protection

Dependent Variable	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Consumer Protection Mechanism	2.510	.076	2.359	2.661
Product standards	3.201	.045	3.113	3.290
Legislations	2.059	.081	1.899	2.219

Source: Primary data

Table 5.2.3. Test of Between-Subjects Effects on Awareness of means of consumer protection

Source	Dependent Variable	Type I Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Consumer Protection Mechanism	720.415	2	360.207	839.908	<0.01***
	Product standards	1212.199	2	606.099	4088.587	<0.01***
	Legislations	502.644	2	251.322	520.171	<0.01***
Education	Consumer Protection Mechanism	2.233	3	.744	1.736	.164
	Product standards	1.154	3	.385	2.596	.056
	Legislations	9.087	3	3.029	6.269	.001***
Occupation	Consumer Protection Mechanism	7.316	4	1.829	4.265	.003***
	Product standards	2.582	4	.646	4.355	.003***
	Legislations	14.499	4	3.625	7.502	<0.01***

Source: Primary data *Significant at the 5 per cent level of significance

Table 5.2.4. Gender wise Estimated Marginal Means

Dependent Variable	Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Consumer protection Mechanism	Male	2.420	.105	2.211	2.629
	Female	2.601	.091	2.421	2.781
Product standards	Male	3.185	.062	3.062	3.308
	Female	3.218	.053	3.112	3.323
Legislations	Male	1.923	.112	1.701	2.144
	Female	2.195	.096	2.004	2.385

Source: Primary data



Table 5.2.5. Education-wise Estimated Marginal Means

Dependent Variable	Education	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Consumer Protection Mechanism	Up to Primary	2.494	.126	2.245	2.743
	SSLC/HSC	2.482	.121	2.243	2.722
	Degree	2.423	.116	2.194	2.653
	PG	2.642	.191	2.263	3.021
Product standards	Up to Primary	3.137	.074	2.990	3.283
	SSLC/HSE	3.237	.071	3.096	3.377
	Degree	3.171	.068	3.036	3.306
	PG	3.262	.112	3.039	3.484
Legislations	Up to Primary	1.928	.133	1.664	2.193
	SSLC/HSC	1.978	.128	1.724	2.231
	Degree	1.966	.123	1.722	2.209
	PG	2.364	.203	1.961	2.766

Source: Primary data

Table 5.2.6. Estimated Marginal Means of Occupation

Dependent Variable	Occupation	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Consumer Protection Mechanism	Agriculture	2.381	.163	2.058	2.704
	Self employed	2.603	.164	2.278	2.929
	Govt employee	2.344	.224	1.900	2.789
	Private employee	2.257	.097	2.065	2.450
	Student	2.966	.151	2.668	3.265
Product standards	Agriculture	3.036	.096	2.846	3.226
	Self employed	3.142	.097	2.950	3.333
	Govt employee	3.182	.132	2.921	3.443
	Private employee	3.122	.057	3.008	3.235
	Student	3.526	.089	3.350	3.701
Legislations	Agriculture	1.869	.173	1.526	2.212
	Self employed	2.007	.174	1.662	2.353
	Govt employee	1.640	.238	1.169	2.112
	Private employee	1.908	.103	1.704	2.112
	Student	2.868	.160	2.552	3.185

Source: Primary data

The estimated marginal means of the MANOVA table indicate that the mean score variations on three variables of awareness on Consumer Protection taken together vary over the various demographic factors such as gender, education, and occupation. The estimated marginal mean scores of three variables taken together vary over the male and female, and the level of awareness as to three variables among females is higher than that of male respondents, as the mean values are **2.601, 3.128, and 2.195**. The statistical significance of the variation of the means confirms this. Moreover, the MANOVA characterized by a powerful Pillai's Trace test is significant at a 5 percent level of significance (**value of F 2.252 with P=0.000 <0.05**). Similarly, in the education-wise analysis on awareness of legislations found to be higher in PG-qualified respondents, with a mean value of **2.364**. In the case of consumer protection and product standards, all respondents, regardless of occupational level, show approximately equal awareness.

5.3. Problems faced in the purchase of goods and the availing of services

Consumers are facing numerous problems while purchasing or shopping, which include high price, Low Quality, False Weight, misleading advertisement, non-availability, Non Availability, Duplicate Brand, Defective Goods, Adulteration and Poor After sales Service, etc. One-way ANOVA is used to analyse whether there is any difference in the problems faced by the consumers based on their respective wards among the selected consumers.

H0: There is no variation in the mean scores obtained for the variables related to problems faced by consumers based on their ward category

H1: There is variation in the mean scores obtained for the variables related to problems faced by consumers based on their ward category



Table 5.3.1. Descriptive Statistics on Problems faced in the purchase of goods and the availing of services

Problems	Ward no 4 (N=40)		Ward no 7 (N=40)		Ward no 14 (N=40)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
High price	4.78	.480	4.73	.452	4.68	.474
Low Quality	4.68	.572	4.48	.640	4.60	.591
False weight	4.08	.656	3.70	.516	3.95	.749
Old stock	3.53	.599	3.43	.675	3.45	.677
Misleading ads	3.83	.903	3.38	.667	3.75	.870
Non availability	2.85	.662	3.05	.450	2.88	.648
Duplicated brand	3.53	.554	3.55	.639	3.45	.815
Defective goods	3.60	.744	3.40	.778	3.33	.829
Adulteration	4.30	.608	3.80	.464	4.10	.672
Poor after-sales services	3.08	.572	2.83	.549	3.25	.670

Source: Primary data

Table 5.3.2. ANOVA on Problems faced in the purchase of goods and the availing of services

Problems		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
High price	Between Groups	.200	2	.100	.455	.636
	Within Groups	25.725	117	.220		
	Total	25.925	119			
Low quality	Between Groups	.817	2	.408	1.128	.327
	Within Groups	42.350	117	.362		
	Total	43.167	119			
False weight	Between Groups	2.917	2	1.458	3.477	.034
	Within Groups	49.075	117	.419		
	Total	51.992	119			
Old stock	Between Groups	.217	2	.108	.255	.775
	Within Groups	49.650	117	.424		
	Total	49.867	119			
Misleading ads	Between Groups	4.650	2	2.325	3.459	.035
	Within Groups	78.650	117	.672		
	Total	83.300	119			
Non availability	Between Groups	.950	2	.475	1.343	.265
	Within Groups	41.375	117	.354		
	Total	42.325	119			
Duplicate brand	Between Groups	.217	2	.108	.236	.790
	Within Groups	53.775	117	.460		
	Total	53.992	119			
Defective goods	Between Groups	1.617	2	.808	1.314	.273
	Within Groups	71.975	117	.615		
	Total	73.592	119			
Adulteration	Between Groups	5.067	2	2.533	7.337	.001
	Within Groups	40.400	117	.345		
	Total	45.467	119			
Poor after-sales	Between Groups	3.650	2	1.825	5.078	.008
	Within Groups	42.050	117	.359		
	Total	45.700	119			

Source: Primary data

*Significant at the 5 per cent level of significance

The result of One-way ANOVA for the variables — false weights, misleading ads, adulteration, and poor after-sales services across the 3 ward categories of Kodumba panchayath gives **F values 3.477, 3.459, 7.337, and 5.078, which are found to be significant at a 5 percent level (p < 0.05)**. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean scores obtained for false weights, misleading ads, adulteration, and poor



after-sales services among the 3 ward categories. In the case of high price, low quality, old stock, non-availability, duplicate brand, defective goods are found to be not significant at a 5 percent level ($p > 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean scores obtained for these variables. To conclude, while the problems faced while purchasing by consumers differ significantly as to false weights, misleading ads, adulteration, and poor after-sales services across the 3 ward categories, their perception is found to be similar in the case of variables like high price, low quality, old stock, non-availability, duplicate brand, and defective goods. About false weight, misleading ads, and adulteration, the selected consumers belonging to ward number 4 have high mean scores of **4.08, 3.83, and 4.30** respectively, which shows that they are facing those problems severely apart from other ward categories. The selected consumers belonging to ward number 14 face the problem of poor after-sales (**mean score 3.25**) services more heavily than others.

5.4. Measures taken to solve problems

Consumers face numerous problems in daily life while purchasing goods or services. In order to solve those problems, they may take different measures such as changing shops, informing friends or relatives, lodging a complaint, asking for compensation, and asking for a refund, etc. The analysis with Kruskal Wallis Test is done over 5 categories of occupation, i.e., Agriculture, Self-employed, Government employee, Private employee, and Student, as to different measures to solve the problems.

The hypothesis can be stated thus:

H₀: There is no difference in the median responses for measures taken to solve problems among occupation groups.

H₁: There is a difference in the median responses for measures taken to solve problems among occupation groups.

Table 5.4.1. Mean Ranks on Measures Taken to Solve Problems

Measures taken	Agriculture	Self employed	Govt employee	Private employee	Student
Changing shop	63.20	79.97	69.11	57.72	45.50
Reject the product	60.50	68.44	60.61	55.57	66.48
Inform friends and relatives	60.83	55.41	69.83	57.75	67.26
Lodging complaint	49.83	49.18	40.00	66.75	72.86
Ask for compensation	58.13	46.09	51.72	65.94	64.45
Ask for a refund	75.75	52.09	57.83	61.59	51.17

Source: Primary data

Table 5.4.2. Kruskal-Wallis Test on Measures Taken to Solve Problems

	Changing shop	Reject the product	Inform relatives	Lodging complaint	Ask for compensation	Ask for a refund
Chi- Square	10.639	2.691	2.223	11.555	5.353	6.861
df	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.031**	.611	.695	.021**	.253	.143

Source: Primary data

**Significant at the 5 per cent level of significance*

The Table of descriptive statistics shows that in order to solve the problems, while purchasing the consumers are rejecting the products or services. The lower the rank scores indicates that higher the preference. The hypothesis for rejecting the product or service, inform friends and relatives, ask for compensation, and ask for a refund are not rejected as their p-values are **0.611, 0.695, 0.253, and 0.143** respectively (**p in all cases > 0.05**), while the hypothesis for changing the shop and lodging complaint are rejected as their p values are **0.031 and 0.021** (**p < 0.05**). It means that there is a significant difference among the occupation groups as to the measures taken to solve the problems faced while purchasing with regard to —changing shop and lodging complaint. The student category may change the shop to solve the problems, and the Government employees may lodge a complaint for the problems faced while purchasing.

6. CONCLUSION :

The Consumer Protection Act of 1986 has provided Indian consumers with a great opportunity to realize and protect their rights as consumers. It provided necessary protection to them against various unfair trade practices in order to safeguard the interests and rights of the consumers. It also consisted of a redressal mechanism and clauses for compensation to the aggrieved consumers. However, such legislation has to be backed by a well-informed and responsive citizenry, and strong consumer protection groups should take up issues fearlessly of opposition.

This study has brought out the fact that people are still not taking sufficient care in verifying the MRP of the products they purchase, the expiry date, the genuineness of the products, and their degree of awareness in demanding replacement for defective products is also low. Moreover, most of them do not ask for the sales receipt from the shopkeeper or seller of the goods. This highlights the extent of ignorance that prevails among consumers. Also, there is still a lack of



knowledge about the existence and various measures that are available under the Act. By analyzing the problems faced by consumers while purchasing products or services, it is observed that, after taking all problems as a bundle, false weights, old stock, and adulteration are found to be the main problems in ward 4, while poor after-sales service is the main problem in ward 7. Similarly, high price, low quality, old stock, non-availability, duplicate brand, and defective goods are the main problems faced by all the selected consumers, irrespective of their ward category.

Regarding the solutions to the problems while purchasing, it can be seen that the student category may change the shop, and the government employees may lodge a complaint for the problems faced while purchasing. Respondents also opine that it takes undue time to get a complaint heard by the Commission and for the award of compensation. Moreover, the arrival of corporate houses into retailing, globalisation, and information technology has changed the nature of trade in the country. This calls for thorough changes in the existing consumer protection measures so as to include these new forms of business. If need be, the Government can also consider bringing a new Consumer Protection bill in order to strengthen consumer rights and protection. The study provides an outline of the level of awareness of consumers on consumer protection awareness initiatives. In-depth studies can be undertaken on the effectiveness of consumer protection initiatives in the future.

7. LIMITATIONS:

The primary data for the study is collected through an interview schedule, and the result of the study may suffer from the inherent drawback of such an instrument. The tools used for the data analysis are based on some assumptions. Therefore, the inferences drawn based on the same may be subject to such assumptions. The study focuses on the consumer's level of awareness of consumer protection initiatives, excluding their effectiveness.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

This study, it helps to evaluate the awareness level of consumers about the consumer protection initiatives. It is found that there are various problems faced by consumers, and they are not using the consumer protection mechanism because of their unawareness of the initiatives. To reduce the problems and increase the level of awareness of consumer protection mechanisms. Education and occupation reveal that female consumers have a high level of knowledge about the various initiatives. With respect to education, the respondents who are below SSLC / HSE qualified have little knowledge. Therefore, special awareness programmes are to be conducted mainly focusing on male and below SSLC/HSE qualified consumers in order to improve their level of awareness on consumer protection initiatives.

Consumers face multiple problems while purchasing, which include false weight, old stock, and adulteration, etc. The proper measures are to be taken by the Local Authority to address and discourage the unfair trade practices. Along with this, special classes and seminars are to be provided to consumers regarding the various measures for consumer protection among the consumers. So that a good faith in the system can be developed. In order to promote the compliance of consumer protection measures, the procedure of consumer laws needs to be simplified, and proper awareness programmes or seminars should be conducted in rural areas. So that more consumers will come forward to comply with the consumer protection measures. Efforts can also be made to include consumer awareness in the school curriculum, which will help even the youngsters to understand the importance of consumer protection and consumer rights.

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