



AWARENESS OF CONSUMER RIGHTS AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The present research investigates the level of knowledge regarding consumer rights and consumer buying behaviour among higher secondary school students. It seeks to gauge students' knowledge on fundamental consumer rights inclusive of safety, information, choice, redressal and education and analyse how this knowledge affects their consumers' choice. This paper adopts descriptive and analytical approach, questionnaires were administered on 100 students from Govt. Model B.H.S.S. Thycaud. The results show that students' knowledge of consumer rights is moderate with a mean of 13.2 and SD of 2.712. Such breakdown reveals that majority of the students have average awareness and a portion of students being below average, proving lack of knowledge is present. This research also features differences in students' buying behaviour with regards to factors like brands, price sensitivity and impulse buying. There is a massive gap between being aware of one's rights and exercising those rights especially in terms of seeking remedy. The author argue for the need for specific educational initiatives to enhance consumer rights knowledge and knowledge application in school curriculum, and policy reforms to support enhanced consumer education. In this case, increasing the education of consumer rights, the students are protected from being ill-prepared and exploited consumer in the marketplaces.

1. Introduction

In the present-day environment of a rapidly growing consumer market, knowledge of consumer rights and reasonable consumer behaviour is crucial to consumer education. As consumers consume a large number of products and services, it is merely conceivable for them to assert their rights and make wise decisions while shopping. This awareness is particularly significant because higher secondary school students are in a stage of shopping habit formation.

Consumer buying behaviour can be defined as all the activities undertaken by a consumer or potential consumer either offline or online before making a decision to buy a particular product or engaging a particular service. This includes actions such as searching through the internet, using social sites, and assessing an option. Knowledge of

this kind of behaviour assists companies in targeting consumers in order to change behaviours concerning purchase decisions.

Consumer rights include moral and legal standards that protect buyers whenever they engage in the purchase of goods and services. Anticipated rights consist of the right to safety, freedom from dangerous products; the right to information, accurate information and labelling; the right to choice, protection against coercion; the right to be heard, protection in airing grievances; The right to seek redress for unwanted products; and the right to consumer education; being informed on their rights and duties.

Purchasing behaviour refers to the manner in which consumers select and decide on the products to purchase and the services to acquire with the influence of personal and interpersonal factors, cultural, psychological, and those related to marketing. Thus, the principal aspects affecting buying behaviour involve the developmental stage, peer pressure, and information needed in the higher secondary portions, including exposure to involvement in digital media. Behavioural observation of students allows them to analyse their tendencies to buy brands, expenditure and ethical evaluation, importance of qualities and prices. Knowledge is very important in ensuring that the consumers in this group make responsible decisions that will ensure sustainability.

2. Objectives

The study aims to investigate three key aspects related to higher secondary school students: firstly, it wants to test the level of their awareness on consumer rights; secondly, it wants to evaluate buying patterns; thirdly, it wants to establish the relationship between their awareness of consumer rights and their buying behaviour pattern. Reflecting on these dimensions, this research will go ahead and offer an understanding on how informed these students are about their rights as consumers, and the extent to which this information influences their buying behaviour.

3. Methodology

The present study's method was descriptive and analytical by nature to identify the level of awareness regarding consumer rights and their buying behaviour among higher secondary school students. It entails coming up with a research hypothesis concerning the changes in awareness and behaviour, and the link between the two. The demographic and specific questions were classified based on the main dimensions, such as consumer rights awareness, buying behaviour, education, barriers to awareness, and an evaluation of consumer protection laws. The sampling techniques adopted in the present study are convenience sampling; respondents totalling to 100 questionnaires were filled by the students of Govt. Model B.H.S.S. Thycaud. A questionnaire was used to assess the levels of awareness of consumer rights and a rating scale was used in assessing buying behaviour. Data coding was done using Microsoft Excel. Standard Deviation and percentage analysis are the statistical techniques used for the analysis. This study was done when the researcher was in teaching practice from June to July of the academic year 2024.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Analysis of Awareness on Consumer Rights Among Higher Secondary School Students

Table 4.1: The mean and standard deviation of awareness of consumer rights

	Awareness on consumer rights
Mean	13.2
Standard deviation	2.712

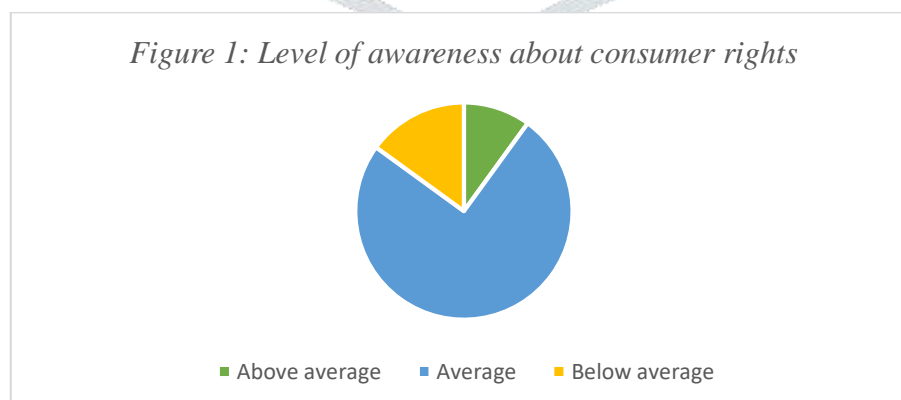
From the analysis, it is clear that majority of the high school students have an average level of awareness about consumer rights.

- The mean awareness score of 13.2 indicates an average level of consumer rights awareness.
- An SD of 2.712 means that most students' awareness scores deviate by approximately ± 2.71 from the mean.
- A relatively low SD of 2.712 suggests that the awareness scores are not widely spread out but cluster around the mean. Most students have awareness levels close to the average.
- Since the SD is moderate, it shows that while most students have a similar level of awareness, there are some who significantly differ from the average. This spread highlights the need for targeted educational interventions, particularly for those with below-average awareness.

Table 4.2: Level of awareness about consumer rights

Level of awareness	Number of students	Percentage
Above average (mean + σ)	10	10%
Average (between (mean + σ) and (mean - σ))	75	75%
Below average (mean - σ)	15	15%

Figure 4.2: Level of awareness about consumer rights



- **Majority with Average Awareness:** As 75% of the students fall into the "average awareness" category, it can be concluded that consumer rights awareness is fairly consistent among students. However, with only 10% having above-average awareness, there is still a need to improve understanding in key areas of consumer rights.

- **Potential Gaps in Awareness:** The 15% of students with below-average awareness may not fully understand their consumer rights, which could hinder their ability to make informed decisions and protect themselves as consumers.
- **Educational Implications:** The fact that only 10% of students have above-average awareness suggests that further consumer education programs might be necessary to raise the general level of awareness. Programs should particularly target students with below-average awareness to ensure a more equitable understanding across the population.

This study reveals that the level of consumer rights awareness among higher secondary school students was moderate to extreme depending on the type of consumer rights. Thus, 76.66% of students recognize their rights to be protected from dangerous goods and the need to read cautionary labels or instructions before using the products. Nonetheless, a small portion has remained unconscious or had no response and is a region that requires further attention. There is fairly good information being acquired from labels as 76.66% of the students said that they read labels before making any purchase but only 60% said that they have ever omitted to purchase a product due to lack of information thus making it possible to estimate the importance of full information. Each of the aspects demonstrated a positive attitude in the students: 83.33% acknowledged that it is necessary to have many options available, and 73.33% said they had sought to compare brands. This shows that there is balance and adequate sensitivity to the requirement of choice in the market.

Their knowledge of when to file a complaint is somewhat lower; 66.66% of the participants know their rights if they are dissatisfied with a particular product. Additionally, a total of 36.66% have ever filed a complaint and could either lack confidence in the system or have no knowledge of its role. Students' awareness of rights: 63.33% of the students currently buying faulty products know their right to a refund/replacement as opposed to 60% of the students who have actually demanded a refund/replacement.

The awareness of consumer rights among higher secondary students is moderate with an appreciable number of high scores in a few rights such as safety, information and choice. Nonetheless, the increased level of awareness and the practice in areas such as redress and education on consumer rights manifest possible deficiencies in curriculum or available information. The results presented here imply the requirement for improved educational approaches in regard to consumer rights knowledge and application among the students.

4.2. Analysis on Consumer Buying Behaviour

The consumer buying behaviour patterns established demonstrate the varying characteristics of the respondents. The readers themselves can see that the plans concerning purchases vary: 37% of consumers are quite disciplined and think through their buys in advance, while the rest of the percentage promotes impulsive buying. Brand loyalty has also been revealed with a considerable number of the respondents preferring to buy from branded stores rather than from obscure ones hence relying on brand name to ascertain quality. This research confirms that price is a key consideration while purchasing for the majority, though some have other attributes other than price such as brand loyalty or product quality. Furthermore, some consumers are indeed restricted by price consciousness while others are willing for a premium amount for the products of their choice, need or usefulness to them.

These results reveal that consumer behaviour is not a simple process and the claimed influence of such factors as planning, brand choice, price sensitivity, and impulse are not equal in their effects. These findings emphasize the importance of segment-specific management, noting which factors have the greatest impact on the highlighted segments.

4.3. Tenability of Hypothesis

H1: The awareness of consumer rights among higher secondary school students varies.

Findings indicate that awareness levels differ across various consumer rights:

- Right to Safety: 76.66% of students are aware of the right to be protected against hazardous products.
- Right to Information: 76.66% check product labels before purchasing, but only 60% refrain from buying due to a lack of information.
- Right to Choose: 83.33% believe in having a variety of products to choose from.
- Right to Be Heard: 66.66% are aware of their rights to file complaints, but only 36.66% have done so.
- Right to Seek Redressal: 63.33% are aware of their right to refunds or replacements, yet only 60% have claimed these.
- Right to Consumer Education: 70% believe in the importance of knowing consumer rights, and 66.66% have received formal education on the topic.

H2: The buying behaviour among higher secondary school students varies.

Findings reveal significant variation in purchasing habits:

- Planning Purchases: 43.32% plan their purchases, while 36.66% either disagree or strongly disagree with planning.
- Impulse Purchases: 30% remain neutral, and 33.33% disagree with impulse buying.
- Brand Preference: 69.99% prefer well-known brands.
- Price Sensitivity: 66.66% consider price the most critical factor, while 33.33% disagree.
- Influence of Advertisements: 30% agree that advertisements influence their purchases, but 43.33% disagree or strongly disagree.
- Environmental Awareness: 43.32% prefer environmentally friendly products, while 40% disagree or strongly disagree.

H3: From the results presented, it can be confidently stated that there is a degree of relationship between awareness of consumer rights and buying behaviour among higher secondary school students. This confirms that although the students illustrated that they possessed adequate knowledge of their rights, their demonstration of such in practice is wanting. A look at the consumers' behaviour study indicates that there is a link between consumer rights awareness and buying behaviour among students.

5. Conclusion and suggestions

The study focusing on the perceptions of higher secondary school students regarding consumer rights also provided a wealth of information about their knowledge and practice on consumer rights. Specifically, the research sought to determine the extent of knowledge of these primary consumer rights and their implications for the purchasing behaviour of students; and to establish the areas of consumer education that require enhancement with a view to making the student better informed consumers.

The study results found that the consumer rights awareness of the higher secondary students demonstrated a mean of 13.2 with a standard deviation of 2.712. This suggests that although the general student population has an average level of awareness, there is variation in social causes. Here again, 75% of students best fit the average, this suggesting moderate awareness; 10% of learners have above-average awareness while the rest, 15% have below-average awareness. The obtained standard deviation value indicates that the dispersion of the awareness is moderate, but some of the students are rather far from the average value. This explains why there is a need to provide special educational awareness to people with low mean intelligence. Standard deviation is preferred in the analysis so that one can clearly understand the dispersion of the awareness on consumer rights so that there can be an improved approach to the achievement of better knowledge of consumer rights among the students.

The study also reveals that consumer behaviour by students depends on certain factors including brand loyalty, sensitivity to price and promotions. According to the survey, 69.99% of the students have expressed their desire to buy products from branded companies.

Notably, the study also demonstrates a rather ambiguous approach to environmental responsibility among consumers' decisions. 33% of students care about using environmentally friendly products, 30% of them are neutral or have a negative attitude about protecting the environment with their purchases. This is one of the areas that, therefore, needs its consumers to have more education so that they can embrace the responsible and sustainable use of such products.

Educational Implications

1. Ways to Improve Awareness

In general, to increase students' awareness of consumer rights, several methods can be used. Teaching and learning tools like mock consumer court debates and role play can be effective in creating interest among the students through the use of a number of activities that depict the real-life situation of the consumer courts. Consumer rights activists should conduct workshops and seminars to offer real-life experience and improve the knowledge that the students have about Consumer Protection Legislation. Also, videos, infographics, and quizzes as a part of digital media tools from the school platform can help to make careful consumers more interesting.

2. Role of Teachers

There is a critical linkage between the teaching fraternity and consumer rights education on the one hand, and consumer protection for students on the other. They require nurturing of critical assessment skills to enable the students to consider information about the products, safety measures and ethical aspects that go with a purchase. Teachers should also support students in learning processes related to down-to-earth aspects of the use of consumer laws, including how to file consumer complaints and seek redress when the need arises. Besides, through incorporating the various consumer rights into other topics such as business studies and economics, the teachers can make sure that what they are teaching the students is relevant in their everyday world.

3. Classroom Environment

An active and participative learning classroom environment is crucial, for creating awareness of consumers. The activity of students' discussions can result in students' stories of purchasing and discussion of their rights, for instance, the right to information and the right to safety. In group work, students can study consumer protection laws or cases or identify certain consumer campaigns, which also develops teamwork and knowledge. This

Persuasive speech can be made more engaging by including gadgets like digital boards showing or linking students to 'today's news' in the consumer world, product alerts, and complaints.

4. Curriculum Modification

To enhance the consumers' rights awareness, the curriculum should be modified and the information concerning this issue should be presented in detail. It may include the offering of special topics in concepts such as consumer rights and protection laws as part of social studies or economics. Examples of assignments where students are going through specific consumer policies of different brands and then assessing them would be beneficial in the sense that it would help the student get a firsthand taste of what it is to practice what they learnt. Further, the assessment should not only be in terms of conceptual knowledge but practical knowledge as well to determine whether the students can make practical correct decisions regarding a certain matter.

5. Role of Policy Makers

Consumer education is a relevant task of policy makers using national and regional programs. They should also make sure that the lesson teaching consumer rights is included in the high school learning syllabus in the country to provide our future consumers with basic knowledge. Owing to the emergence of new laws from time to time on consumer protection and enhanced consumer digital rights it would be advisable that policy makers update textbooks and other learning materials in future. They should also supply schools with resource materials – guides, as well as give schools access to the government channels; They should also allocate funds for putting on workshops and programs to increase students' awareness of the consumers.

6. Changes in Policy Approach

Such changes in the policy approaches can add even more efficiency to education of the consumer rights. On the social side, the policy makers should pay much attention to developing links between the schools and the community/ consumers through active cooperation with consumer rights organizations and local enterprises. Moreover, there should be some mechanisms established to assess the effectiveness of consumer rights education in schools. Through a collection of data and evaluation of the performance of these programs, it will be easier for the policy makers to come up with better policies to be implemented in the enhancement of consumer rights education.

By working collectively with teachers, schools, and policymakers, students can be provided with the necessary information and behavioural skills to act responsibly and protect themselves as users/consumers in a postmodern world.

Therefore, it is proposed that the means of disseminating information about consumer rights should entail more than simply transferring information about them; it must involve practice as well. All students need to learn how to solve actual consumer situations like filing a complaint, asking for a refund, and making comparative choices in products that go beyond price and packaging.

By narrowing the gap between the level of awareness and the level of action, the study highlights the need to complement the existing levels of consumer education with experience and reasoning. This approach will not only ensure that students are offered the ability to defend their rights but also equip them with the task of making sound decisions in the marketplace.

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