

CONSUMER ACTIVISM A STUDY TO BOYCOTT MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Consumer activism is activism undertaken on behalf of consumers, to assert consumer rights. The range of activities undertaken by consumers or NGOs to make demands or state their views about certain causes linked directly or indirectly to a company. The activists and consumer in the movement hope to provide security and healthy standards for employed consumers. The state should protest against profiteers, disease, unemployment, and market fluctuations. Consumer movements challenge social order and transform it through the propagation of ideology of consumption in hopes of dramatically changing mainstream views. The ideal goal is to push consumers to question the morality of a purchased product's origins. Consumer activist tactics can include complete boycott of a product brand, petitioning the government, media activism, and organizing interest groups. These days, consumer activism often happens both online and offline and can cross borders.

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism has received more attention in recent business literature, but it is not a recent phenomenon. Historically, we have been concerned with legislation designed to protect the consumer. The present cord of consumer unrest is not unique in history. The consumer movement occurred on three occasions in the United States.

The first consumer movement took place in the early 1900's and was fueled by factors like rising prices. The second wave of consumerism took place in the mid of 1930's and this movement were an upturn in consumer prices in the midst of the depression and another drug scandal. The third movement began in 1960's as a significant social movement and it shows every indication of growing stronger in the years ahead.

The Consumers International (CI) former International Organization of Consumer Unions (IOCU), the umbrella body, for 240 organizations in over 100 countries, expanded the charter of consumers rights contained in the US Bill to eight, which in a logical order reads:

1. Basic needs
2. Safety
3. Information
4. Choice

5. Representation
6. Redress
7. Consumer Education
8. Healthy Environment

It has been aptly observed: “Despite misgivings, mischances and disclaimers, the market economy is far superior to the controlled economy... It is not exaggeration to say that a market economy is the natural economic order of mankind. It is not ideology or a system dreamt up by intellectuals. It has grown naturally and organically over centuries and has observed a million little truths about human behavior which no single mind or even a most modern computer can capture, let alone improve upon. The engine of growth is man and people constitute a great if not the greatest resources. Economic results are not produced by economic forces. They are a human achievement”¹.

“Hermann has argued that consumer movement since the late nineteenth century have emerged always in reaction to ‘three persisting problem areas: (1) ill-conceived application of new technology with a result in dangerous or unreliable products (2) changing conception of social responsibilities of business and (3) the operations of a dishonest fringe and the occasional lapse of others in business community’ (Hermann, 1982:32) organized consumer activism is thus often a reactive social force”².

The quintessence of consumerism is to protect consumer rights and interest and promote their welfare. It is more than a social movement. “Consumerism is the public demand for refinement in marketing practices to make them more informative, more responsive, more scientific, more truthful, and efficient and also for a concern with the quality of life. Often the growing interest for the quality of life translates itself into demand for more public goods and services such as better highways, more education, better airports, better transports, crime free cities... Thus consumerism represents vital aspects of socially responsible marketing”³. It may be taken to include the sum total of all activities of the government business, voluntary consumer organizations and consumers themselves, designed to promote and protect consumer interest.

CONSUMER ACTIVISM AND CONSUMERISM IN INDIA

Consumer Activism

The range of activities undertaken by consumers or NGOs to make demands or state their views about certain causes linked directly or indirectly to a company. In extreme case, such movement could push for a complete boycott of a product or brand.

Consumerism

Consumerism refers to organized efforts by individuals, groups and government to help protect consumers from policies and practices that infringe consumer rights to fair business practices.

Consumer Movement

The consumer movement is an effort to promote consumer protection through an organized social movement which is in many places led by consumer organizations.

Non Government Organizations

A non government organization (NGO) is any non profit voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements, Their relationship with offices and agencies of the United Nations system differs depending on their goals, their venue and the mandate of a particular institution.

Consumer Court

Consumer court is the special purpose court mainly in India that deals with cases regarding consumer disputes and grievances. These are judiciary set ups by the government to protect the consumer rights. Its main function is to maintain the fair practices by the sellers towards consumers.

Consumer Forum

Consumer forum are set ups under the act, at districts, states and national level to provide simple and inexpensive quick redressal against consumer complaints.

Consumer Organization

Consumer organizations are advocacy groups that seek to protect people from corporate abuse like unsafe products, predatory lending, false advertising, astroturfing and pollution. Consumer organizations may operate via a protests, litigation, compaining, or lobbying.

Consumer Rights

Consumer rights are generally a reference to a body of law that pertains to things the producers of goods must do to protect customers from harm. These laws have come into existence through a series of legal disputes, and have been shaped by the results of those cases.

The various ways of exploitation that a consumer faces

1. The consumer is the main sufferer of inflation. He pays more earns much less in real terms.
2. He is the one to suffer most from the acute shortage of essential Commodities.

3. He is often cheated and fleeced by adulteration goods and false advertisements.
4. Short weights and measures, deceptive packaging, profiteering and countless frauds of similar types are committed on him.
5. He is often victimized by deceptive and unfair trade practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Snow et al., (2004)** contradicted to what Klandermans and Oegema (1987) stated the so-called White march in Belgium in October 1996 was organised in the absence of an effective mobilisation structure. The media acting as the driving force brought together the largest demonstration in the country's history. It was a public outcry against scandalous judicial and political manipulation to downplay failures in the criminal investigation against Marc Dutroux.
2. **Kozinets & Handelman, (2004)** said that since the beginning of its existence, the consumer movement seems to have been a global phenomenon and an unstoppable one. Because of this, the consumer movement continues to be increasingly important.
3. **Kozinets and Handelman, (2004)** argued that consumer movements have the goal to change "principles, practices, and policies of organizations, businesses, industries, and governments" This is a broad view as both corporations and the government are targeted. It targets the institutions that have the power to make changes.
4. **J.Kistwaryra et al., (2004)** concluded that the awareness of legislation and protection for males is through printed media while for females is through friends and neighbors. Out of all consumer protection Act, most of the male and female respondents know about weight measurement Act but awareness towards household appliances Act is less. More percentage of male know about consumer organization and courts and females have less awareness towards that, the main reason that can be quoted for less awareness at national level is education.
5. **V Balakrishna Eradi (2004)** expressed that Consumer Protection Jurisprudence is a title dealing with rights of the consumer and the mechanism available to safeguard consumer interest. The legitimate needs which this writing intends to meet are the promotion and protection of the socio-economic interests if consumer, availability of effective consumer redressal forums, the safety, security and well-being of consumer and consumer awareness.
6. **Couldry and Curran, (2003)** said that instead of being a means of one way mass communication, the internet is an interactive system which makes it possible for the receivers to be producers as well as transmitters (This has resulted in the internet becoming a very important player in the field of any form of activism, including that of anti-corporation activism.
7. **D.P.S. Verma (2002)** surveyed the major developments of consumer protection measures of India and has presented the result as after implementing the protection Act in India by 1986 we have to definitely accept that speedy actions are taken up for consumer complaints in recent days.

8. **S.Bandopadhyay (2002)** pointed out that many sections of the population, particularly the poorer weak sections are not aware of the measures taken by the Government for their benefit and are, therefore, unable to assert their right.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

- To achieve maximum satisfaction.
- Protection against exploitation.
- Control over consumption of harmful goods.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to limitations, the study could not be done from various angles by the researcher. Hence the further scope of the study could be done by taking some of the essential services like electricity, education, Tele-communication etc. because in this study researcher could give concentration for some products only

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