

CONSUMER OBSERVATION FOR CHANGES IN SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

Consumers play a vital role in the economic system of a nation because in the absence of effective demand that emanates from them, the economy virtually collapses. Mahatma Gandhi said, "A consumer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us, we are on him. He is not an interruption to our work; he is the purpose of it, we are not doing a favour to a consumer by giving him an opportunity. He is doing us a favour by giving us opportunity to serve him. But, of late, unfortunately cheating by way of overcharging, black marketing, misleading advertisements, etc has become the common practice of greedy sellers and manufacturers to make unreasonable profits.

INTRODUCTION

This session reveals the role of NGOs, consumer activist and social media in consumer activism in India and around the world. It studies 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. It focused on assigning positive meanings of awakening to the collective identity of activists. Notable consumer activists include Carol Foreman, Marc Kasky, Richard M. Kessel, Virginia H. Knauer, Eileen Hoats, Ralph Nader, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan, V.V. Giri and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Notable consumer organizations include Public Citizen, Consumers Union, and Consumer Federation of America, Department of Consumer Affairs of India. Social media has delivered an unprecedented influence to consumers on the reputation and decision-making of even the biggest American companies.

In the present human has made his life more and more relaxed creating more pressure on the modes of production. Earlier it was natural based but now it is demand based. Population increase has created more pressure on the production. As a result the whole system has been affected with the over flow of money and consumerism. Whether it is a need or greed these production scatter life are continuing the demands of the society. It has been become essential to put a check on the movement of all the commodities to check consumerism and make consumer protection laws. The role of Government and non Government organizations (NGOs) to execute these laws is mandatory. The media and non Government organizations have an important role to play in the civil society. The reach of mass media extends the vast heterogeneous masses of the population of the country at the

same time. With the help of mass Medias messages can be sent and received in any part of the world may be rural or urban. Role of media as well as electronic media can be viewed as awareness of people. The media are the among the most important allies to the NGO's include writing articles Telecast-Broadcast Programs that : Create an environment of political pressure, convey general information, serving as a public education, counter popular misconception, comment on an issue providing an alternative view point. Against this backdrop the present paper is an attempt to examine the role of NGO's protecting and executing laws. In this paper more emphasis is given on how media can promote awareness about NGO's activities and also how NGO's need media to convey their message to society and government and also to form public opinion about various policies and lastly media and NGOs can work for betterment of society continuously.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Hilton (2007)** said that the history of consumerism can be divided into three periods. In the first period, labour and consumer activism in the Western nations fought for better wages and work conditions by organizing strikes. During the second period attempts were made to mobilize women towards consumption and to stress their expertise in household affairs. In the third period, After WOII, mass consumption was promoted in order to enhance political and economic development. This model was successfully exported from the United States to Europe. However, consumers themselves also began to criticize aspects of the consumption society. This resulted in the consumer movement, which began in 1929 in the U.S. when the non-profit organization Consumers' Research started testing products for consumers. In 1936 a strike by Consumers 'Research resulted in the financially successful Consumer Union, which inspired other consumer movements around the globe. After WWII consumers were fascinated by the increasingly complex and technological marketplace, but they were also confused by it. This resulted in consumers' associations arising all over Europe, started in France in 1951, followed by Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Belgium in 1957. Meanwhile, the industrialized states in Asia were also developing a consumer movement, as early as 1956 in India. Please note that these movements existed in a wide range of nations and therefore had different agendas and reasons for existence, due to the various needs and the social, political and economical state of the different nations.
2. **Burns (2007)** said that since 1995, the internet has a significant role in promoting the rise of anti-corporate sentiment. With the use of internet, activists can put greater pressure on harmful companies to change their business into a more socially and environmentally responsible one. At the same time, the anti-corporate campaign on the internet can have an effect on the public opinion.

3. **Mr. Mahesh (2007)** overcame his anger against banking sector by stating “New Generation Private Sector Banks that specialize in looting with the latest techno-social weapons. A large private sector bank with extremely cold blooded employees works tirelessly to make your bank balance vanish into thin air. We should be grateful that they don’t charge interest on our deposits. That is their level of honesty. Bank executives chase poor people with home and vehicle loans. Once you are trapped, the overworked executives take a break and hand the baton over to gundas who are looking to diversify their careers.”
4. **Biswajit Chatterjee (2007)** came out with suggestions for the womb to the tomb we are influenced by business world where each of its participants promises to give or deliver something or promises to sell or rendered quality service, but fails in reality. Self-regulation as well as social responsibility is the need of the hour.
5. **Praveen Dalal (2007)** pointed out that the protection of consumers is not only a responsibility of the state but also a mandate against commercial and business entities. A satisfied consumer base is essential for the successful existence of commercial enterprises. At the same time consumer matters must be taken care of by the use of Information and Communication Technology in India.
6. **Mr. Aastha Khurana (2007)** specified that regarding in consumer awareness as “There are no legal formalities for filling the complaints. Suppose, you find yourself cheated by trader or a manufacturer and wish to make a complaint to consumer court, you can write the details on a plain paper. Attach the supporting documents, that is, guarantee or warrantee card and cash memo with the complaint and submit it in the district consumer court. You do not have to go to any lawyer or professional for legal assistance. You yourself can plead the case in the consumer court. Since, the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act and even before that, newspapers and magazines have been responding to the needs of consumers. Apart from publishing articles, columns etc newspapers have also tried to come to the rescue of harassed consumers fear that there will be lot of formalities and that is the reason people are hesitating to approach when they are deceived.

7. **Mr. Payal Jain (2007)** stressed that every consumer in own interest has to realize the role and importance in the right perspective. In a competitive economic environment, the consumer has to exercise the choice either in favour of or against the goods and services.

8. **Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, (2006)** said about the anti-brand communities, told that well researched form of consumer activism on the internet are the anti-branded communities. These communities launch web sites that create negative publicity for the targeted brand. The internet is a useful place for these communities to facilitate collective action against the 22 brands. Forums can be used to give members a way to share information, to organize boycotts or even to organize lawsuits. These websites can also be used to facilitate interaction between the consumers and the corporation. In these internet-communities consumers can take on the activist role and try to instigate a social movement. Examples of anti-brand communities are wakeupwallmart.com and ihatestarbuck.com. On these websites you can find the latest news regarding the corporations, related subjects or protests. There is also room for discussion facilitated by tools such as blogs and forums. Any anti-corporate movement can badly hurt companies' operations and revenues and so eventually put significant pressure on the company to change their behavior. Damaging news can be spread globally via internet and companies are often able to respond quick enough or at all. Klein (2000) documented cases where large well-known companies were required to take action because of anti-communities on the internet. The websites campaigned for boycotts and created bad publicity in such a way that the companies had to change their behavior. These actions were mostly large well-known companies, such as Nike and Nestle.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the exploitation of consumers and the cause for the existence of Consumer Activism.
2. To know the activities and role of NGOs and consumer activists performed for consumer benefits.

RESEARCH QUESTION/HYPOTHESIS

As the focus of this study is on activism with a clear general social component as well as on the means of the social web that the consumer activists use to influence corporations' CSR practices, the following research questions have been formulated.

1. How does collective action occur on social media websites with the aim to make corporate adhere to the corporate CSR principles?
2. What is the content that is discussed on the social media websites with the aim to make corporate adhere to the CSR principles?

FUTURE RESEARCH

Consumerism can be also studied from the angle of children because they also play the role of consumers these days.

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