

## IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON CONSUMER MOVEMENT: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION

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**Abstract:** Consumer movement is an inevitable response to the increasingly complex and impersonal society of our times and will be a powerful influence on business in the coming years. Demographic variables play an important role for promoting consumer movement at retail level. The main purpose of this study is to identify the various demographic groups and its impact on consumer movement. The data collected from 185 retail customer belongs to Nagrota City and applied number of techniques like EFA, t-test, ANOVA, Mean, Standard Deviation, Cronbach's Alpha, KMO, Bartlett's sphericity, etc. The result of the study indicates that all demographic groups almost similar perception about the consumer movement.

**Keywords:** Consumer, Demographic, Movement.

**Introduction:** Consumerism is a social movement designed to augment the rights and the powers of buyers in relation to sellers (Kotler 1972). Various authors have addressed the issues of consumerism (Greysen and Diamond 1974); (Greysen 1977); (Andreasen 1977); (West brook, Newman and Taylor, 1978); (Day 1983); (Kaynak 1985); (Bloom and Smith, 1986) in the light of consumer satisfaction. Complaining behaviour with varying degrees of generality and orientation does reflect the necessity of consumerism. At the micro level studies have explored consumer dis-satisfaction with specific complaints about products or services. At the macro level, national and cross-national studies have studied consumer attitudes towards retailing practices, consumerism and government regulations (Arndt, Crane and Tall Haug, 1977), (Barks Dale and Darden, 1972); (Barker 1987)

The problem of exploitation of the people by the people themselves is not a new phenomenon. There is no exaggeration in stating that even in modern India, as a result of development strategy and activities since independence, to quickly realise the goal of economic justice by raising the economy status of the millions, who live life object poverty at helplessness, has largely become a breeding ground for exploitative tendencies (Bitner et. al. 1990). The plight of the consumer is worse confounded because of his ignorance (Singh 1994), illiteracy and weak economic position.

Consumerism in India like other developed countries started much earlier. India was among the first countries to enact legislation to protect consumers (Averilt and Lande 1997). In India the genesis of the consumer movement began during 1940 with few organisations in cities like Mumbai, Kolkatta, Delhi, Chennai, Surat, Vishakhapatnam and Hyderabad. Even statutory measures for consumer protection existed in India for a long time. The most significant change in the history of consumer protection in India

was the Consumer Protection Act in December 1986. It is very important legislation passed by the government of India to ensure a proper system for the protection of consumer rights and the redressal of consumer disputes. This Act applies to the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir where the state has its own legislation quite similar this act. It applies to all goods and services.

**Review of Literature:** Consumerism has emerged as a phenomenon of relatively high economic development which indicates sufficient development in terms of economic well-being for its take off (Hilger and Dahringer 1982) and continuation on sound goals. Consumerism and the increase in the quantity and sophistication of marketing efforts appear to have tracked to each other for the last three centuries. The rise in consumerism was a direct reflection of the inadequacy in the application of the marketing concept (Barksdale and Darden 1972). Various authors have addressed the issues of consumerism (Greysen and Diamond 1974; Greysen 1977; Andreasen 1977; West brook, Newman and Taylor, 1978; Day 1981; Kaynak 1985) in the light of consumer satisfaction. Complaining behaviour with varying degrees of generality and orientation does reflect the necessity of consumerism. The micro level studies have explored consumer dis-satisfaction with specific complaints about products or services (Fox and Wheatly 1978). At the macro level, consumer attitudes towards retailing practices, consumerism and government regulations (Arndt, Crane and Tall Haug, 1977; Barks Dale and Darden, 1972; Barker 1987) have been studied. Consumer movement has gained strength as its forces become more coordinated and develops great leadership and organisation (Hui and Bateson 1991). Consumerism grew and flourished to protect consumer from fraud or specified unfair practices performed by marketing bodies in order to gain an advantage over their respective competitors (Bloom 1981). Customers were

often exploited due to their ignorance and lack of unity among them (Peterson, 1986). Consumers are given certain rights so that they are in a position to ensure that sellers of goods and services are more careful in dealing with them to protect themselves from being exploited or cheated (Basrur 1974). With the passage of time, many less developed countries also became aware of the need to develop and protect consumer rights with their even limited growth (Girimaji 1999). The consumers not only have the rights but also the responsibility to protect themselves instead of leaving this function to someone else (Hashim 1996). Also consumers have several remedies available including the complaints to be filed with concerned company or the media; contacting national, state or local agencies and going to consumer courts also (Kotler and Armstrong 2001). Various types of consumer organisations actively involved in the consumer movement have taken up several measures for protecting consumer interest and their rights (Bloom 1981).

The literature reviewed indicates that the consumerism in retailing, wholesale sector and other areas which are directly or indirectly concerned with the consumerism in retailing practices has not yet been studied extensively and concurrently. To fill the gap, the present research proposal proposes to assess the impact of demographic variables on consumer movement and thereafter to work out strategy for strengthening the consumerism further. The research work will prove to be an asset to different key players and a useful addition to the existing knowledge on the topic.

**Objectives:**

1. To explore the demographic profile of the customers.
2. To find out the perception of customers about consumer movement.
3. To find out the impact of different demographic variables on consumer movement.
4. To suggest strategy for strengthening the consumer movement further.

**Hypotheses:** H<sub>1</sub> There is no significant difference between the male and female perception about the consumerism.

H<sub>2</sub> There is no significant difference between the all the age groups regarding the perception of consumer movement.

H<sub>3</sub> There is no significant difference between the all the educational groups regarding the perception of consumer movement.

H<sub>4</sub> There is no significant difference between the all the occupation groups regarding the perception of consumer movement.

**Research Methodology:**

**Sample Design:** The customer perception have been

studied on the basis of first-hand information from 185 out of 185 household situated in Nagrota City of Jammu. A census method was used to select the customers. In order to collect the data for further analysis from retail customers, one person was contacted from each household who makes most of purchase decisions and actual purchase in the family.

**Instrument:** In order to fulfill the proposed research hypotheses and objectives, this empirical research was carried out with the primary data collected through a well-designed questionnaire which has two parts. The first part contains the general information like Status of age, gender, marital status, educational qualification and occupation, and the second part contains one hundred and twenty two items compiled with seven dimension of consumerism. All these variables were measured with 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree.

**Data Analysis and Results:** Statistical tools like Factor Analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Mean and Standard Deviation are applied for analyzing the data collected. The collected data have been analyzed with SPSS 17.0 package. From the table 1, it is seen that the almost similar number of the customers are found to be Male with 52% and female with 48%. Among the 185 customers interviewed, most of the customers were found between the age limit of 25-34 years with 36%. Regarding Educational Qualification, it is seen that 43% of customers were found graduate standard. As occupation plays an important role in the savings habit of the customers, it is seen that 34% of customers are doing service. Since the perception of service quality is mainly based on the marital status of the customers concerned, out of the total customers interviewed, it is seen that 71% of the total customers are married.

**Reliability Analysis:** To check the reliability Cronbach's Alpha and split half value have been worked out. The test has been applied twice i.e. before and after factor analysis by dividing the respondents into two equal halves. The data were found as reliable before the Factor analysis as mean values of both groups (Group I=3.29 and Group II =3.34) are almost similar. Similarly, after Factor analysis, the data have proved quite satisfactory in terms of split half reliability as mean obtained from both halves of respondents are satisfactory (Group I 3.47 and Group II 3.33. Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha Value also proved reliable before and after factor analysis as it came to be 0.891 and 0.896 respectively.

**Factor Analysis :** Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to describe variability among observed and correlated variable and also to reduce data by identifying representative set of variables to replace smaller in number, by partially or completely replace

the original set of variables. In this study, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) a statistical method is applied to identify the underlying relationships between measured variables (Table 2).

**Results of the study:** In order to measure the impact of demographic background of customers on effectiveness of their efforts for strengthening consumerism, respondents were segregated under five groups on the basis of Gender, Age, Qualification, Marital Status and Occupation. The analysis has been done on the basis of Independent sample t-test and ANOVA results, which is as under.

**Gender-Wise Analysis:** Out of total respondents 52% are male and 48% are female. Independent sample t-test and the Levene's test indicate no significant difference exist between male and female respondents ( $t = -1.295$ , sig.  $>.05$ ) in terms of their mean score (Table 3). Both Male ( $MS = 3.45$ ,  $SD = .31$ ) and Female ( $MS = 3.49$ ,  $SD = 0.33$ ) customers reported above average level of satisfaction with the present status of consumer movement (Table 8). The results of the study reveal that both male and female respondents observe good quality products being made available by the retailers' ( $MS = 3.83$  &  $3.91$ ). The study reflects that two-third of the total respondents observed the retailers' supplying all varieties of products they need. Moreover, both groups of respondents reported that retailers do not bother about the consumers' welfare and they articulated that games and contests sponsored by manufacturers are aimed just to increase the product purchase only. About 32% of the total respondents observed the retailers' applying actual rate of VAT (2.23) and they also found the retailers are more interested in making profits rather than serving the customers. Finally, both the groups exhibited generally negative attitudes towards advertising and they observe that these are considered as undependable source of information, providing colossal and not genuine or phony pictures of products. But at the same time a few number of respondents (13%) was found having more faith in the advertised products in comparison to unadvertised ones.

**Age-Wise Analysis:** Respondents have been classified on the basis of their age into five groups. The first group (15-24 years) contains 18% of the sampled customers and second group (25-34 years) consists of 36% respondents. The third group (35-44 years) contains of 29%, fourth group (45-54 years) consists of 10% and lastly, 7% respondents fall in the fifth group (above 54 years). ANOVA results revealed that there does not exist any significant difference between the mean scores of the respondents under these five groups ( $F = 1.730$ , sig.  $>.05$ ) (Table 4). The respondents belonging to different age groups accorded almost same mean values ranging from 3.53

to 3.43 (Table 8). This shows that all the respondents having different age backgrounds are moderately satisfied of their efforts for strengthening the consumer movement. Most of the consumers (78%) observed that manufacturers attempt to make products as per the needs of the consumers, but at the same time they have also voiced high level of discontent with product quality. The study also reveals that three-fourth of the total respondents found the retailers are charging fair and printed price and also trying to maintain good relations with the customers ( $MS = 3.48$ ). About 18% of the total respondents observed the retailers are maintaining fair window displays and focused profit oriented services rather than customer oriented services ( $MS = 2.98$ ). Thus, overall it can be concluded that all the age groups felt that it is the duty of the government to protect their rights and they also observed that government should stipulate minimum standards for quality, carry out sovereign tests of rival brands, publicise the results, and control the advertising, sales and marketing actions of manufacturers.

**Qualification-Wise Analysis:** The relationship of qualification of respondents with effectiveness of their efforts in strengthening the consumerism has been studied under five groups viz, Secondary, Higher Secondary, Graduation, Post-Graduation and Higher-Qualification. Each group contains significant number of respondents for analysis. Majority of the respondents are graduate (43%) followed by post-graduate (23%) and having higher-secondary level of education (23%). The next group of respondents consists of 7% of sampled respondents having secondary level of qualification and the last group consists of 5% of retail customers having higher qualification. The ANOVA results indicate significant mean difference existing among the respondents belonging to these five groups ( $F = 3.455$ ,  $SIG <.05$ ) (Table 5). This shows that all the customers having different levels of education have not similar perception about the present status of consumer movement. Post-hoc analysis revealed respondents having graduate degree are more satisfied as compared to other qualification groups. Moreover, respondents having higher secondary, higher qualification and post-graduate level of education do not differ significantly ( $P = >.05$ ) in terms of their mean score. But respondents having secondary and graduate level of education differ significantly ( $P = <.05$ ) from other three groups. The result of the study indicates that one-third of the total respondents having different qualification background observed retailers to be more sensitive to handle consumer's complaints and also installed complaint box in their store. Majority of the respondents (73%) found that the inspection system of the government is not

purposeful and also role of mobile court serves no desired purpose. About two-third of the total respondents observed the retailers' supplying all varieties of products they need. The study reported that respondents have positive attitudes towards government regulation and they believe that government control is crucial for the safeguard of consumer interests. On the whole, all the respondents are satisfied with the present policies or strategies adopted by the marketing stakeholders for promoting the consumer movement to protect the consumer rights against unfair trade practices.

**Marital-status-Wise Analysis:** The role of marital status of respondents has also been examined. Majority of the respondents are married (71%). Independent sample t-test and the Leven's test revealed insignificant difference between the mean scores of the married and unmarried respondents ( $t = -0.284$ , sig.  $>.05$ ) (Table 6). Both Married ( $MS = 3.48$ ,  $SD = .21$ ) and Unmarried ( $MS = 3.47$ ,  $SD = .19$ ) respondents reported moderately satisfied with effectiveness of their efforts in strengthening the consumerism (Table 8). They found the government efforts ineffective for regulating the overall marketing practices which create frustration and dissatisfaction among the customers and also promote the cause of consumerism. Married respondents are more anxious about the environment and they are willing to pay more prices for the environmental friendly products. At the same time unmarried respondents are not prepared to pay more prices for the environmental friendly products although they do care about the environment. About one-third of the total respondents observed retailers taking the responsibility regarding the MRP of the products especially in case of Chinese products. About 29% married respondents observed the retailers' applying actual rate of VAT (2.23). Hence, it can be concluded that both married and unmarried retail customers are more active for promoting the fair trade practices in retailing practices.

**Occupation-wise Analysis:** Occupation-wise Analysis has been divided into five groups viz., service, business, students, house wives and retired personnel. Majority of the respondents (34%) are service class people followed by (27%) students and (17%) house wives. 16% and 6% respondents in the group II and V respectively. ANOVA was used to know whether significant difference exists in the mean scores of respondents belonging to these groups and it was found to be significant ( $F = 7.241$ , sig.  $<.05$ ) (Table 7). On further analysis, post-hoc test revealed statistically maximum mean difference existing between respondents of service class ( $MS = 3.52$ ) and business class ( $MS = 3.30$ ). There was no other significant difference between the other groups.

All the five groups accorded above average mean values (Table 8). Thus, it becomes evident that all the groups play an important role for promoting the consumerism at retail level. Majority of the respondents (80%) found retailers working according to the rules and regulations framed by their associations and regulatory bodies. Although most of the consumers held middlemen like wholesalers and retailers responsible for the key problem of high prices. The study reveals that only 20% of the total respondents observed retailers providing customer satisfaction by replacing defective products with new ones. About two third of the total respondents found the retailers to be more sensitive to handle consumers' complaints now as compared to the past. Hence it can be concluded that respondents of house wives, students and retired personnel felt that the retailers not providing better quality products and services to them, creating thereby dissatisfaction which promote the cause of consumer movement.

**Conclusion:** The overall perception of customers towards consumer movement was arrived at 3.69 indicates that consumer are aware the prevailing conditions of the markets and they know how to protect are rights against the unfair trade practices by promoting and strengthening the consumer movement at retail level. The result of the study indicates that positive impact of different demographic groups on consumer movement at retail level and this would create customer satisfaction at large. All the hypotheses except H<sub>4</sub> were accepted as there was no difference between different groups of demographic variables.

**Implications:**

1. The activities of consumer agencies are required to be further geared up re-engineered, monitored and maintained so that it could lead to active consumer movement.
2. The business community itself can help in achieving consumer protection and satisfaction through self-discipline.
3. Government should be proactive towards the cunning policies of MNC'S to exploit the consumer.
4. Administrative advocacy should be encouraged in order to reduce burden of consumer redressal agencies.
5. Organisations, NGO's, institutions and agencies allied to consumer movement should hearten administrative advocacy in setting consumer disputes.
6. Government should make efforts to create a consensus for 'Global consumer policy'.
7. It may be recommended that mass and educational institutions need play and effective role in consumer awakening and imparting



information regarding organisations working for the consumers' interests in their areas.

8. The state can ensure consumer protection through legislative, executive and judicial actions. The laws enacted by the government must be strictly enforced by the executive.
9. Every consumer must be alert as self-help is the best help. He should educate himself and know his rights. He should not allow unscrupulous business to cheat him.
10. Trade associations and chambers of commerce can check unfair trade practices used by some businessmen.

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**Table No: - 1 Demographic Profile of the Respond**

Variables	Demographic Classification	Frequency	%Age
<b>Gender</b>	Male	96	51.97
	Female	89	48.03
	<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age in Years</b>	15-24	34	18.4
	25-34	66	35.6
	35-44	54	29.4
	45-54	18	9.5
	Above 54	13	7.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Qualification</b>	Secondary	12	6.6
	Higher Secondary	43	23.2
	Graduation	79	42.7
	Post-Graduation	42	22.6
	Higher Qualification	9	5.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	132	71.2
	Un-Married	53	28.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	Service	132	34.4
	Business	53	16.4
	Student	132	26.9
	House Wives	53	16.6
	Retired	132	5.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2 Brief Profile of Data Purification**

Variables	No. of Rounds	% age of Variance Explained	Items of Emerged	No. of Factors Extracted	Iterations	No. of Items Deleted	KMO
<b>Product Quality</b>	1	9.927	25	5	9	5	0.653,
	2	10.876	20	5	12	2	0.674
	3	13.951	18	5	8	2	0.647
	4	11.615	16	5	6	-	0.618
<b>Pricing Issues</b>	1	13.837	15	4	5	1	0.692
	2	14.030	14	3	5	-	0.658
<b>Information/ Communication</b>	1	10.620	22	5	7	3	0.699,
	2	9.889	19	4	6	7	0.676
	3	9.668	12	3	5	-	0.683
<b>Satisfaction</b>	1	11.256	22	4	5	4	0.642
	2	10.629	18	3	5	-	0.651
<b>Responsibility</b>	1	13.393	15	3	6	5	0.676
	2	11.093	10	3	3	1	0.656
	3	9.392	9	2	3	-	0.689
<b>Government Regulation</b>	1	15.338	10	2	3	-	0.681
<b>Consumerism</b>	1	13.783	13	2	3	5	0.680
	2	11.790	8	2	3	1	0.673
	3	11.335	7	2	3	-	0.668

	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
<b>Equal variances assumed</b>	.271	.603	-1.295	184	.196	-.03734
<b>Equal variances not assumed</b>			-1.301	478.514	.194	-.03734

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	.688	1	.172	1.730	.142
<b>Within Groups</b>	47.560	184	.099		
<b>Total</b>	48.249	185			

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	1.356	1	.339	3.455	.008
<b>Within Groups</b>	46.893	184	.098		
<b>Total</b>	48.249	185			

	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
<b>Equal variances assumed</b>	.147	.702	-.284	184	.777	-.001
<b>Equal variances not assumed</b>			-.279	246.448	.781	-.001

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Between Groups</b>	2.757	1	.689	7.241	.000
<b>Within Groups</b>	45.492	184	.095		
<b>Total</b>	48.249	185			

<b>Table 8 Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables</b>			
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	3.45	96	.305
Female	3.49	89	.323
<b>Age (in years)</b>			
15-24	3.44	34	.280
25-34	3.50	66	.336
35-44	3.43	54	.298
45-54	3.53	18	.391
above 54	3.52	13	.246
<b>Qualification</b>			
Secondary	3.37	12	.332
Higher-Secondary	3.46	43	.311
Graduation	3.53	79	.321
Post –Graduation	3.41	42	.315
Higher-Qualification	3.46	9	.199
<b>Marital</b>			
Married	3.47	132	.313
Un-Married	3.48	53	.326
<b>Qualification</b>			
Service	3.52	132	.282
Business	3.30	53	.312
Student	3.48	132	.318
Housewife	3.49	53	.352
Retired	3.51	132	.267

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