Introduction and Design of the Study
INTRODUCTION AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism is an outcome of the problems of consumers in a marketing situation. It is the manifestation of the response to the age-long sufferings of the consumers in the clutches of unscrupulous businessmen. It is a social force within the environment, designed to aid and protect the consumers, by exerting legal, moral and economic pressure on business\(^1\). It is a form of advocacy that seeks to protect and broaden the rights and powers of the consumers. It is a demand that marketeers should give greater attention to the consumers’ wants and desires. It is a protest against abuse and malpractices in the marketing system\(^2\). Consumerism, a universal phenomenon, is a child of necessity. It is a product that comes out of business malpractices and multi-cornered exploitation of the consumers. It refers to the widening range of activities of the government, business and independent organisations that are designed to protect individuals from practices infringing upon their rights as consumers. Thus, consumerism is an organised movement for the assertion of the rights of the individual consumers.

In the modern economic and social scenario, the consumer is accorded sovereign status and the business activities revolve around him. The consumer is not only the heart of marketing but also the controller of marketing function.

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However, in to-day's marketing system, consumer sovereignty is a myth on account of the variety of problems in the process of distribution. The importance of consumers to the business, though recognized in theory, is not fully recognized in practice. Under the developed living conditions, unfulfilled promises in the products and services have led to the generation of consumer discontent. Persistent violation of consumer rights awakens the consumers to get united and to fight against injustice.

It was in the mid sixties the consumer movement gained momentum in India. The government has contributed significantly to the consumer movement by enacting various consumer protection legislations. Among them “The Consumer Protection Act 1986,” provided fresh impetus to the consumer movement in the country. A large number of voluntary consumer organisations are working at present for the welfare of the consumers all over India. The role of these consumer organisations is not only to educate and guide the consumers with respect to redressal of complaints, but also to make the consumer movement a reality through the coordinated efforts from all angles.

With the development of standardizations and the consumer protection efforts of the government, the consumer organisations are in a better position to play an important role in protecting and educating the consumers. However in spite of the wide range of laws and mushroom growth of the consumer organisations, consumers in India are confronted with large number of problems. They are practically denied most of their rights. They are highly unorganised, uninformed and they do not perhaps know that manufacturers and traders are deceiving them in a number of ways. The diversified nature of the problems encountered by the Indian consumers are as follows:

Rampant adulteration

Adulteration of food is a common problem in India. It is understood that in January 1988, more than 150 school children in Mumbai were hospitalized after eating adulterated biscuits. According to a report of the Indian Technological Research Institute, 25 percent of the food Indians eat is adulterated.

It is reported in a Tamil Daily that in India the adulteration rate is four percent at the national level and six percent in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is pointed out that out of seventy shops raided by the Coimbatore corporation sanitary officers, forty shops were selling adulterated consumer goods of various kinds. Some of the items are Dhal, Ghee, Pickles, Milk, Pepper, etc. According to the health department the level of food adulteration is 54 percent in Coimbatore and it is the highest in the country. It is therefore no surprise to state that a whole generation of Indians have grown up not knowing the taste of unadulterated food.

Substandard Quality of Products

A product of modern days is not a single product, but a combination of many products assembled to perform special functions. Many of the component parts are not visible to the consumers who therefore cannot inspect them. Even if it can be inspected the consumers do not have the technical knowledge or competence to judge them. So, poor quality products like toys, bicycles and

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cooking ranges are marketed as first quality and thereby the consumers are cheated. The INSIGHT, the consumer magazine has reported that electrical plugs namely Anchor, Comet, Cub, Gourav, Harisons, Jainex, Jani, Lisha, North-West, Panama, Pointer, Pretty, Pritam, Reshma, Rider, Rocky, Skylark, Sleek, Vinay and Wimpy failed the tests conducted by Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad. It is also worth mentioning here that the pharmaceutical giant Glaxo India was caught recycling its rejected Betnesol and other drugs in the open market.

The laboratory run by the consumer organisation in Ahmedabad tested eight brands of drinking water and five of mineral water including many reputed brands. The laboratory comparative testing, evaluation, rating and ranking revealed that only three brands confirmed to the standard out of 13 brands tested.

**Short Weights and Measures**

Under weights has become a common phenomenon when goods are sold in retail outlets. Even fair price shops have become a place for such unfair trade practices. Consumers are also cheated by over stating of weights or units. It has been reported by Gulshan that many manufacturers are selling certain products like coffee, cocoa and other cereal products in jars containing quantities not permitted by the standards of weights [packaged commodities] rules. He is also of the opinion that many manufacturers are marketing packets of noodles containing 80 grams instead of 100 grams.

The Consumer Education Research Centre Ahemadabad has tested eight brands of Vanaspathi such as Dalda, Godrej, Madhuram, Ranjit, Rasadaa, Rath,

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Sarthi and Sunflower and reports that most of these brands are found to be underweight as against the labelled weight. It is also pointed in that report that one brand does not even confirm to the tolerance limit prescribed by the Standards Weights and Measures Act\textsuperscript{10}.

**Short supply of Goods**

Short supply of goods and services especially of essential items is a very serious problem affecting the Indian consumers. This demand-supply imbalance has produced all the associated evils of profiteering, hoarding, black marketing, corruption, irresponsiveness and arrogance towards consumers.

**Exorbitant Pricing**

It is expected that prices to be charged by the business should be fair and reasonable. Prices should be so fixed as to allow recovery of cost with average efficiency, and also enable management to earn reasonable rate of return on capital employed. But prices and quality bear no relation to the cost and the consumers have no information regarding their relationships. Deceptive pricing is found more in the sale of services and in the automobile spare parts. In the case of auto spare parts the consumers do not know either the right price for the item or the right quality.

An allegation of higher maximum retail price is commonly found against manufacturers of electrical parts, automobiles, paints, hardwares and drugs and pharmaceuticals\textsuperscript{11}.

**Deceptive Advertising**

Still another ground on which the business is criticised is the unethical standards of advertising. Advertising has come to be accepted as a powerful tool in the business world and business is convinced that it pays to advertise.

\textsuperscript{11} Desikan, R. (2001): A Different Ball Game, Business Line (12 February)
But there is also wider problem of misuse of this weapon. Producers use advertising as a tool for creating demand for undesirable products which are not actually required by the consumers. Sale of spurious medicines and spurious food with the help of advertisements is common. It is obvious that low advertising ethics make the consumers suffer in terms of money, quality, health and dangers to his morale as well. Most of the advertisements contain exaggerated and unprovable claims. Gulshan has reported that a well known manufacturer of sunflower oil inserted a full page colour advertisement in national dailies claiming that it was full of vitamins, minerals and proteins. On testing the oil, the tall claim is proved to be false. He has also pointed out that commonly seen advertisements of some tooth paste, cosmetics, tonics, body building, figure improving and height increasing instruments make claims for products without explaining how the claimed qualities of the products produce the benefits suggested\(^\text{12}\).

**False Warranty**

Most of the durable goods are sold under false a warranty misguiding the buyers. The advertisements as well as the dealers emphasize only the warranty period, reluctant to state whether the warranty is for the operational defect or for the manufacturing defect and whether the warranty is full or limited. Even at the request of the buyers, the dealers misled them by stating that it is full warranty. But the expression in warranty card is only ‘limited’ [to a particular part of the product]. Moreover, warranty card is supplied only after the sale has been completed. Even if the warranty is full, while making complaint and asking for redressal, the consumers are charged extra cost for getting the defect rectified or as a fee for loading and unloading or dispatching the product to/from the manufacturers.

\(^{12}\) Gulshan, S.S. op.cit; p. 4.
Deceptive Packaging

Creating false impression through over emphasizing the qualitative features of the contents deceives the consumers. There are several cases like this and in one case a manufacturer sold artificially flavoured and coloured mango drink with a picture of a ripe mango on the package. The picture of the ripe mango on the package gave the impression that it was a fruit based drink but actually it was not so.

Deceptive Labelling

The consumers are also deceived by the superlatives and false information given in the label. Some products are affixed with labels containing only the names of the products, lacking information about the address, date of manufacturing and the methods of usage. It has been pointed out in the report of the workshop on ‘Trade and Ethical Concerns’ held at Durban, South Africa, that the informations given on the food product labels are generally vague and when a manufacturer declares the names of the ingredients on the label, there is no way a consumer can know about the accuracy of information. It is also stated in the report that government testings are inadequate and it is too late by the time consumers find out that the information is wrong.

Cheating Through Promotional Contests

For the purpose of promoting the sales, contests like lottery or games are conducted by the traders where the participants are directly or indirectly asked to buy the product for eligibility and in the meantime the traders reserve the right of the mode of conducting the contests and judgments. In some cases winners are charged for the prizes instead of giving the same freely for their efficiency in the contest. It is reported by Gulshan that a manufacturer of cooking oil offered to all contestants a ‘beautiful surprise gift worth Rs.24’, which was nothing but 12
coupons of Rs.2 each, entitling the coupon holder to a rebate of Rs.2 on every pack of the cooking oil purchased during a specified period\textsuperscript{13}.

In addition to the above, consumers are also exploited by printing false manufacturing date so as to avoid loss of sale due to the expiry of the life period of product. Moreover consumers are also cheated by producing and selling goods under the name or brand resembling some reputed brands. Misuse of colours, abuse of monopoly position, sale of unsafe products, poor after sales service are some of the other means through which consumers are disappointed.

**Exploitations of Consumers in the Service Sector Organisations**

Apart from the above mentioned problems, an average Indian consumer is also experiencing problems while availing services from service sector organisations such as transport, electricity, telecommunication, insurance, posts, telegraphs, non-banking financial institutions, entertainment centres especially at cinema theatres. Educational institutions and hospitals are no exception from this rule. Some of the problems experienced by the consumers in the above said departments are mentioned in the pages to come.

In state government transport undertakings buses are classified as ‘super deluxe’ attracting heavier charge for the travel and ‘Ordinary’ for which charges are less. Generally, prior reservations of seats are done on payment of extra reservation charges. In the place of ‘super deluxe’ buses ‘ordinary buses’ are run under the plea that the former is sick but charging higher rate for the latter. It has become a common feature in most of the trains in railways that the coaches are without drinking water and also without electricity. In addition to this, the holder of a proper reservation-cum-journey ticket is asked to travel in an unreserved compartment standing all the while due to negligence and mistakes committed by

\textsuperscript{13} Gulshan, S.S. op.cit ; p. 13.
the booking clerks in the reservation counter who have issued two reservation tickets for the same seat. Heavy wrong unlawful electric and telephone bills, disconnection of electricity supply without proper notice, delay in providing connections are some of the problems which the Indian consumers are experiencing while utilizing the services of the electricity and telecommunication departments. Other services like health and sanitation, insurance, posts, telegraphs, public distributions are almost on the same footing. Unnecessary delay in releasing installments of the sanctioned loan by banks, negligence in settling claims by insurance companies, unnecessary delay in delivering letters, parcels, telegrams etc are some of the problems experienced by the consumers in India.

While explaining the workings of the public sector organisations, Bharath Jayaraj has pointed out that the public sector service providers, which provide almost all basic public utilities, including telecommunication, water supply and electricity have by and large a very poor track records of customer service. They function within strong bureaucratic processes and are normally opaque and unfriendly. They rarely respond to individual complaints and occasionally respond when consumer groups or other pressure groups complain.14

In the last decade public has suffered to a larger extent due to the mismanagement of funds in the non-banking financial institutions. Desikan has pointed out that several thousand crores have been lost by ordinary people who deposited most of their life savings in non-banking finance companies, chit companies, teak companies, stock markets and most recently, Unit Trust of India15.

Though provision of education is said to be the birthright of children under constitution, in reality, some of the educational institutions are not providing even the basic amenities to the children. A survey conducted by the Catalyst Trust and Public Affairs Center, Bangalore points out in its report that drinking water was not available in 40 percent of schools and functioning of school was poorly monitored.

As far as hospitals are concerned the increase in private hospitals and nursing homes have converted medical care a commodity, which can be purchased. The medical profession is increasingly being guided by profit motive rather than service to humanity. Such a situation gives rise to unethical practices and there have been number of cases of misdiagnosis, faulty surgeries and unnecessary testing in the different parts of the country.

**Consumer Exploitation**

Moreover consumer exploitation is worst in Indian cinema theatres. Holders of lower class tickets are not at all considered as human beings. For upper class consumers, the heavy charges levied under the style ‘dress circle’ does not commensurate with the facilities extended to them. In most of the air conditioned theatres, the air condition plant will not be made to work and in ordinary theatres, the electric fans will not be switched on under the plea that there is a power cut.

Thus consumers are worst exploited in the market place and in many cases they are harmed physically, mentally and financially. Cumulative frustration and violation of consumer rights makes the consumers to get united and to fight for justice. This resulted in a mass consumer movement called as “CONSUMERISM” a powerful socio economic movement to safeguard the interest of the consumers.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

More than a decade has already passed since the introduction of The Consumer Protection Act 1986, towards safeguarding the rights and interests of consumers in India. The rights envisaged in The Consumer Protection Act 1986 viz., the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, the right to be heard, the right to seek redressal and the right to consumer education are comprehensive and exhaustive so far as the consumer protection is concerned. As on day, the market environment in India has undergone radical changes as compared to the situation that prevailed at the time of enactment of The Consumer Protection Act 1986. The changes in the market environment include increasing availability of hi-tech brands, invasion by global brands, changing influence in the purchase decision and adoption process, greater market information exposure, changes in retailing pattern, changes in consumer spending pattern, web based marketing activities, increasing intensity of competition, changes in the policy of the government in relation to licensing, privatisation and globalisation etc. With the expansion of new business and trade, a variety of consumer goods are being assembled in the market. Various types of services like communication, banking, insurance, transportation etc are also being made available to the potential users. But at the same time consumers are exploited by various types of unfair trade practices such as adulteration, substandard quality of goods, high pricing, misleading advertisements etc. They are also put into trouble due to the deficiencies in the services of the service sector organisations.

To protect the interests of the consumers, the Government of India has brought out various legal enactments and tried to enforce them through the regulatory agencies. Among such enactments, The Consumer Protection Act 1986 is a unique piece of legislation intended to protect and promote the interest of consumers in a unified and effective manner. It authorizes the voluntary consumer organisations to represent consumer problems before the appropriate Consumer
Dispute Redressal Agency on behalf of the individual consumer. After the enactment of The Consumer Protection Act 1986, many consumer organisations have come into existence to protect the rights of the consumers.

The mere existence of consumer organisations and legislations alone will not help to solve the problems of the consumers. The effective functioning of the consumer organisations and awareness regarding legal process are very much required to protect the interest of the consumers. The consumer protection legislations, however good, will not bring the desired results, unless and otherwise they are properly understood and utilized by the consumers. The present study has been undertaken by the researcher in order to understand the role played by the consumer organisations in protecting the consumers and to identify how far the legal aspects of The Consumer Protection Act 1986 are understood and utilized by the consumers to protect their interest.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this research is to study the level of awareness of the public about their rights as consumers and to suggest ways and means for improving their awareness. Consumer protection can be achieved only when the consumers are fully conscious of their rights and exert influence over the producers and the sellers. Keeping this as the broad objective the following specific objectives were framed.

1. To trace the origin and development of consumer movement.
2. To examine the role of the voluntary consumer organisations in protecting the rights of the consumers
3. To study and analyse the level of awareness of the members and non-members about The Consumer Protection Act 1986.
4. To assess the level of involvement of the members and the non-members in protecting their rights.
SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In this age of consumerism, the need to mobilize consumers and to motivate them to fight for their rights has become urgent now, more than at any other time. Consumers and consumer organisations in the liberalized environment can play a prominent role by acting as watchdogs to see that, not only suitable legislations are enacted, but also those legislations are implemented effectively. The success of any such measure can be determined only by the knowledge and awareness of the group for whose interests such measures are being introduced. Under these circumstances the present study tries to examine the role played by the consumer organisations in promoting consumers' interest. It also aims to understand the level of awareness of the members of the consumer organisations and non-members who are the public about the legal aspects. This study may help the policy makers to have an idea about how far those measures are being properly understood and utilized by them. In this study, a thrust is given to analyse the awareness about the legal aspects of The Consumer Protection Act 1986 because this Act is more comprehensive and it covers a wide area. It applies to all types of goods and services. The Act applies to all sectors whether private or public or cooperative. Unlike other laws, the provisions of this Act are compensatory in nature and consumer protection under this Act is less expensive. Awareness about consumers' right and legal process of this Act will definitely provide much scope for quick redressal of consumer problems.

The voluntary consumer organisations can contribute more to the society only if the members of those organisations are fully aware of the above-mentioned legal aspects. At the same time, the common public who are not members of the consumer organisations also need to be knowledgeable in order to protect their rights. Awareness alone may not help to overcome the problems. Involvement and commitment are very much required for both members and non-members. Hence, the present study aims to analyse the awareness and the involvement of members
of the voluntary consumer organisations and non-members. It may throw light on their level of awareness and responsibility in protecting their own rights.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Necessary hypotheses have been formulated and tested for the purpose of the study.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS

1. *Adulterated* refers to the definition of the term 'adulterated' under section 2(1) of The Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954.

2. *Defect* means any default, imperfection, or short-coming in the quality, quantity, potency, purity or standard which is required to be maintained by or under any law for the time being in force or under any contract expressed or implied or as is claimed by the trader in any manner whatsoever in relation to any goods.

3. *Deficiency* means any fault, imperfection, shortcoming or inadequacy in the quality, nature and the manner of performance which is required to be maintained by or under any law for the time being in force or has been undertaken to be performed by a person in pursuance of a contract or otherwise in relation to any service.


5. *State Commission* means Consumer Dispute Redressal Agency established under The Consumer Protection Act 1986 functioning at the State Level.


7. *Redressel* means setting right or rectifying a wrong thing either by making compensation, or by any other mode such as repair, replacement etc.

8. *Relief* means remedy or help sought from the consumer court.

10. *Voluntary Consumer Organisation* means an association formed by the consumers to protect their rights. It also redresses the consumers' grievances.

11. *Member* means a person who has registered his name in the voluntary consumer organisation.

12. *Non-member* means a person who has not registered his name in the voluntary consumer organisation.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study is an empirical one by nature and is based on the survey method. It is a blend of both the descriptive and the analytical method of study.

**Area of the Study**

The study has been conducted in Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu State. The District covers an area of 7496 sq km and a population of 42,24,107. The District is located on the north-western part of Tamil Nadu State. Nilgris District on the north, Erode and Dindugal Districts on the east and Kerala State on the west are the boundaries of Coimbatore District. The District occupies a pivotal position in the industrial map of the country by virtue of its multifarious industrial products such as textiles, engineering products, automobile spares and components and foundry products.

The industrial growth of the District has been propelled by the untiring efforts of the entrepreneurs, which naturally have created plenty of employment opportunities. It is known for the manufacture and export of high quality hosiery products. Coimbatore is also known as the Manchester of South India. Coimbatore District is well connected by road, rail and air. It is the storehouse for merchandise brought from various parts of the state for transportation to western ports for shipping. It has a trade fair complex near the airport and it is the second biggest trade fair ground in India next to Pragathi Maidhan in New Delhi.
also blessed with a good number of educational institutions imparting world-class education. Health care is given great importance. There are two medical colleges and a number of multispeciality hospitals functioning here.

Sampling Design

At the first stage, the registered voluntary consumer organisations functioning in Coimbatore District were identified with the help of the documents available at the Office of the District Collector, Coimbatore. The official records show that there are totally thirty such consumer organisations and the taluk wise distribution of those consumer organisations is presented in the table 1.1 and exhibit 2

TABLE -1.1
TALUK WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE VOLUNTARY CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Taluks</th>
<th>Number of Voluntary Consumer Organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coimbatore North</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Coimbatore South</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mettupalayam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Avinashi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tirupur</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Palladam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pollachi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Valparai</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Udumalpet</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXHIBIT - 1
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA
EXHIBIT 2
AREA-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTARY CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT
It was proposed to cover all the thirty registered voluntary consumer organisations for the purpose of the study. In the second stage, a list of members of these voluntary consumer organisations was prepared and the respondents were selected at random at the rate of five members per organisation. Care was taken to exclude the office bearers from this list. At the third stage the non-members from among the public were selected with the help of the voters list. Wards at which the voluntary consumer organisations functioning were identified. Respondents were selected at random at the rate of five from each ward from the voters list. Members of the voluntary consumer organisations were excluded from this sample frame. Thus a total of 300 respondents were selected i.e. 150 from the voluntary consumer organisations and the other 150 non-members from public for the purpose of the study.

**Construction of Tools and Pre-Test**

Interview schedule was the instrument used for collecting primary data from the respondents. Two different schedules, one for the office bearers and the other for the members of the voluntary consumer organisations and non members were prepared. The first schedule, which was meant for the office-bearers of the organisations contained questions regarding the profile, functioning and the problems of the organisations. The second interview schedule contained questions regarding the personal data such as sex, age, educational qualification, occupational status, income, marital status, community and location. ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ type questions and ‘multiple choice’ questions were given to assess the level of awareness about the consumer problems, rights, redressal mechanisms, complaining procedure, remedial measures and allied consumer protection legislations. The following eighteen factors were identified as the factors explaining the involvement.
1. Taking efforts to gather required information about the product or service they are going to buy.
2. Examining the products
3. Verifying the weights and measures
4. Verifying the price mentioned on the package and the actual price paid
5. Verifying the expiry date
6. Demanding the bill for the price paid
7. Comparing the advertisements with product features
8. Taking steps to correct the misleading advertisements.
9. Demanding the guarantee card and after sales service
10. Asking for repairs or replacements
11. Asking for compensation in case of loss or injury.
12. Pointing out sellers' mistake and asking them not to repeat
13. Reporting for adulteration and improper measurements.
14. Reporting for deficiencies in the services of the service sectors.
15. Attending grievance day organised by the service sector organisations.
16. Preserving necessary documents as evidence
17. Organising people to take steps to correct mistakes
18. Taking the complaints to the Consumer Dispute Redressal Agency.

A five point scaling technique has been adopted to assess the involvement aspects of the respondents. The two sets of structured interview schedules were pre-tested and necessary modifications in the schedules were made to ensure clarity in meaning and contents. An improved version of the schedules were used for the field study.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted by the researcher in six organisations. Thirty members and thirty non-members were selected and the schedules were
administered to them. After the collection of data, the details were tabulated and they were checked for accuracy. All the tests were carried out for the purpose of analysis and interpretation. Through this pilot study, it was ensured that the data was amenable to statistical testing. The technique followed including the content and the design of the questions that were put to test and the test proved that the schedules would serve the purpose.

Fieldwork and Collection of Data

Both primary and secondary data have been used for the study. Legal reports, records maintained in the consumer courts, journals, magazines and newspapers formed the basis of the secondary data. Apart from these sources the researcher has collected information from various voluntary consumer organisations like The Federation of Consumer Organisations of TamilNadu [FEDCOT] Chennai, Consumer and Civil Action Group [CAG] Chennai, Consumer Education Research Centre (CERC) Ahamedabad, Consumer Voice New Delhi and Citizens Voice Club (CVC) Coimbatore.

The Presidents or the Secretaries of the voluntary consumer organisations were interviewed for the purpose of collection of primary data. The members of the organisations were interviewed with the help of the office-bearers of the organisations. They were interviewed either at the office or at home. Non-members were interviewed at their residences for collecting data. The fieldwork was carried out from May 2001 to December 2001.

Framework of Analysis

Collected data were analysed with reference to each of the specific objectives of the study. Conventional tools like descriptive tables and percentages were used for the purpose of analysis. Further, the following specific tools were also used.
1. Five point scaling technique similar to Likert type-scaling technique was used to convert the qualitative information into a quantitative one. Two-way frequency tables have been constructed to categorize the different levels of awareness as low [less than 40%], medium [40% and above but less than 60%] and high [60% and above]. Percentage analysis has been used to make a comparative assessment of the level of awareness and involvement.

2. Mean scores have also been used to determine the level of awareness and involvement of the respondents over various issues.

3. Chi-square test was carried out to find out which personal characteristic of the respondent has significant influence over awareness and involvement.

4. 't' test has been applied to test whether there is any significant difference in the scores of various factors between members and non-members.

5. The Correlation analysis has been used to find out the inter relationship between the variables considered in the study. Further, the significance of correlation was tested by using t test at 5% level of significance.

6. The technique of analysis of variance has been used to test the equality of average level of awareness and involvement between various categories of respondents for the members and non-members separately.
Limitations of the Study

1. Only registered voluntary consumer organisations were considered for the purpose of the study. The unregistered voluntary consumer organisations and the members of such consumer organisations were not considered.

2. Though there are various consumer protection legislations, awareness regarding the legal aspects of The Consumer Protection Act 1986 alone was considered for the purpose of the study.

3. The data were collected from the members of the consumer organisations and the non-members of a particular District. The results and conclusion drawn may not be applicable to a different area having different socio-economic conditions.

Chapter Scheme

The study has been organised and presented in five chapters. Introduction, Statement of the Problem, Objectives of the Study, Significance and Scope of the Study, Operational Definition of Concepts, Geographical Coverage, Methodology, Framework of Analysis, Limitations and Chapter Scheme are presented in the first chapter.

The review of literature pertaining to consumers’ awareness about the consumer protection laws, the functioning of the voluntary consumer organisations and the grievance redressal agencies have been carried out in the second chapter.

The third chapter throws light on the growth of consumer movement in India and abroad. It gives a detailed account of the consumer movement in India. It also traces the history of the movement and the consumer protection legislations
in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Sweden and Japan. In addition to this, salient features of the various Indian consumer protection legislations and The Consumer Protection Act 1986 are presented in this chapter.

The fourth chapter deals with the results of analysis and interpretation of the data analysed. This chapter is divided into two sections. Section One deals with the role played by the voluntary consumer organisations in protecting the rights of the consumers. Section Two deals with the level of awareness and involvement of the members and non-members.

The summary of the findings, suggestions for incorporation in the policy perspectives of the government and conclusion are presented in the fifth chapter.