Strategy for Strengthening the Consumerism in Retailing Practices

1.1 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 (Greyser and Diamond 1974; Greyser 1977; Andreasen 1977; Westbrook, Newman and Taylor, 1978; Day 1981; Day 1983; Warland, Xerrmann and Moore, 1984; 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 covered consumer attitudes towards retailing practices, consumerism and government regulations (Arndt, Crane and Tall Haug, 1977; Barks Dale and Darden, 1972; Barker 1987). Various types of consumer organisations actively involved in consumer movement have taken up several measures for protecting consumer interest and their rights (Bloom and Greyser 1981). A lot of books and journals have given due attention to consumerism in Western countries but less attention and focus has been observed towards India.

Consumerism is still in its infancy in India. There has been an occasionally mass consumer demonstration against market imperfection, mainly shortages and exorbitant prices. T. Thomas, former Chairman, Hindustan Lever observes consumerism in India not developing as a social reaction against overselling by Industry as happened in the West. In fact Consumerism is also seen as the shame of the total marketing concept (Drucker 1969). 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). Ancient economist like 'Kautila' and 'Brihar Path' laid down rules to safeguard the interest of buyers and sellers alike. In prior times Swami Vivekanda declared the 'consumer as king' and Mahatma Gandhi described it as greatest as consumer associations by Ralph Nader. 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. However before 1986, there was no effective machinery of the enforcement of these legislative measures (Singh 1994). Consumers did not enjoy the statutory rights to seek redressal of their grievances arising out of the violation of legal provisions. They lacked awareness about the remedies available under the scattered pieces of existing legislations, intended to curb certain unscrupulous and exploitative business practices rampant in the market (Poduval 1990). 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. The Consumer Protection Act provides a glimmer hope for the consumers. The Consumer Protection Act provides for better protection of the interest of consumers and also provides specific relief and awards suitable compensation, besides other appropriate relief to the aggrieved customers through the speedy and inexpensive redressal of the consumer grievances by three tier machinery at the District and State as well as at the National levels.

To provide inexpensive, speedy and summary redressal of consumer disputes, quasi-judicial bodies have been set up in each district, state and at the national levels, called the district forums, the state consumer dispute redressal commissions and the national consumer dispute redressal commission respectively. At present, there are 605 district forums and 34 state commissions with the national consumer dispute redressal commissions (NCDRC) as the apex body at New Delhi. Each district forum is headed by a person who is or has been or is eligible to be appointed as a district judge and each state commission is headed by a person who is or has been a judge of high court. The national commission was constituted in the year 1988. It is headed by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court of India.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE
In this modern era of societal marketing concept business ethics and social responsibility is becoming one of the central issues of all the marketing practices. Now the business enterprises cannot consider themselves as sovereign in the marketplace. The modern waves of consumerism have made the consumers vocal in expressing their rights and privileges in the marketplace. The growing concern for ethical issues or consumerist issues among consumers has
been well documented in marketing literature. Numerous studies have been conducted in the United States and other countries to determine consumer attitudes towards marketing, consumerism and government regulations. Most of the studies indicate consumers having negative opinions towards marketing. There are only a few studies those report slightly favorable sentiments towards marketing. A review of the past studies assessing consumers’ overall attitudes towards marketing and business operations is as follows.

In recent years, business ethics has drawn increased interest from business and marketing practitioners as well as from academicians. However, much of the research that has been done on business ethics has focused on marketing activities (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Ferrell, Gresham and Fraedrich 1989; and Hunt and Vitell; 1986, 1992). (Uusitalo and Oksanen 2004) also argued that though business ethics and corporate social responsibility have gained more attention in recent years, the empirical research of consumers’ perspective on consumerism is still minimal. There was a slight degree of skepticism among consumers about quality of products in the market, there is obvious mistrust of the communications manufacturers use to attract buyers to those products (French, Barksdale and Perreault 1982). (Barksdale and Darden 1972) found that majority of the respondents agreed that from the consumers' standpoint, manufacturers' procedures for handling complaints and settling grievances were not satisfactory.(French et.al. 1982 and Lisa, 2004) found that majority of the respondents believe that price charged by the companies is excessive and unfair. (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000; and Carrigan and Attalla 2001) argued that the consumers are concerned regarding the ethical purchasing but the other purchase criteria such as price, value, quality and brand are often important choice criteria than ethics. (Memery, Megicks and Williams 2005) notified that the consumer's skepticism about the fairness of advertising often discouraged them to buy products according to the ethical consideration.

Although most consumers felt 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 issues such as no improvement in product quality to have been made over a period of time, products wear out quickly and product improvements are intentionally held back by manufacturers (Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Barksdale et al., 1982; French et al., 1982; Barker, 1987; Vardarajan and Thirunarayana, 1990). (Barksdale and Perreault 1980) also reported that consumers are distrustful about the product quality. (Orel and Zeren 2011) reported in their study
that respondents felt quality of most products has improved over time and as per the customer
needs manufacturers are making the products. Consumers also felt that manufacturers provide
guarantees in respect of products prepared by them (Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Barksdale et
al., 1982; Barker, 1987; Vardarajan and Thirunarayana, 1990). Thus, overall consumers had
positive attitudes toward the product quality offered by manufacturers.

Most of the studies have also focused on pricing policies had been blamed by consumers
(Barksdale et al. 1982; Barker 1987; Wee and Chan 1989 and Chan, Yau and Chan 1990). Most
of the consumers held middlemen like wholesalers and retailers responsible for the key problem
of high prices (French et al., 1982; Barker, 1987; Vardarajan and Thirunarayana, 1990). (Orel
and Zeren 2011) found that consumers in Bangladesh, India, Poland and Turkey respectively had
negative sentiment towards price. (French et al., 1982) argued that prices of consumer goods in
Bangladesh and India are high compared to the wage rates and income levels prevailing in these
countries.

Most of the studies have also focused that respondents blamed themselves for their carelessness,
incompetence, indifference or lack of knowledge while buying (Barksdale and Darden, 1972;
Most of the consumers denied that they are getting unjustified benefits from manufacturers and
dealers (Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Barksdale et al., 1982; French et al., 1982). In general,
consumers did understand their responsibilities towards environment and they admitted the
wrong doing on their part by making unwarranted claims on the manufacturers and dealers. Not
much work has been done in the past to examine the influence of demographic variables on
consumer attitudes toward their own responsibilities.

(Greyser and Diamond 1974) blamed government in their study for the increase in consumer
dissatisfaction. (Barksdale and Perreault, 1980) held that government is not protecting
consumers’ interest and is responsible for the rise of consumer disgruntlement. Most of the
consumers prefer self-regulation by business, but they are demanding government regulations
because firms fail to exercise self-regulation (Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Barksdale et al.,
1982; French et al., 1982; Barker, 1987; Vardarajan and Thirunarayana, 1990; Bhuian 1997).
(Barker 1987) also reported that businesses have to face additional government regulations;
unless and until they improve their marketing practices and gives attention to consumerism
issues.
1.3 RESEARCH GAP

Today, there has been an increasing public concern over the consumerism issues all over the world. Though consumerism has touched all walks of life yet in retailing it has been identified with the widespread concern for the quality of products and services (Mayer 1998). Majority of the studies determine consumer attitudes towards marketing, consumerism and government regulations. Most of these studies are virtually conceptual in nature and that too based on secondary information. Very few studies determine the role of retailers, customers, wholesalers and regulatory bodies for enhancing the awareness level of consumerism in retailing practices. Thus the nature and extent of consumer movement at retail levels remained untouched in the existing literature. Some of the studies have used questionnaires for data collection and a few of them have used Liker-Scale technique, surveys, and personal interviews. Convenience sampling method figured frequently used in these studies for data collection and very less applied factor analysis for data reduction and purification and other statistical tools for reliability and validity of the results. Thus the aforesaid gap in the literature necessitates the present work to assess various strategies adopted by aforesaid different key players in enhancing the awareness level of consumerism in retailing practices. The research work will prove to be an asset to both retailers and customers.

1.4. HYPOTHESES & OBJECTIVES

HI: There is a significant and positive association between product quality and customers satisfaction towards consumer movement at retail level.

Techniques Applied: - SEM (Result: - Accepted)

H2: Price sensitivity influences customer satisfaction.

Techniques Applied: - SEM (Result: - Accepted)

H3: Effective communication in retail sector positively affects customer satisfaction.

Techniques Applied: - SEM (Result: - Accepted)

H4: There is a significant and positive association between responsibility and customer satisfaction.

Techniques Applied: - SEM (Result: - Accepted)

H5: Government Regulation in retail sector positively affects customer satisfaction.

Techniques Applied: - SEM (Result: - Accepted)
H6: There is a direct association between customer satisfaction and fair trade practices in retail sector.

Techniques Applied: - SEM (Result: - Accepted)

H7: All the independent variables of consumerism contribute towards fair trade practices.

Techniques Applied: - SEM (Result: - Accepted)

The objectives of the study are as follows:-

- To examine the impact of each and every dimension of consumerism on customer satisfaction
- To evaluate the impact of customer satisfaction on fair trade practices.
- To measure the contribution of all independent variables of consumerism towards fair trade practices.
- To measure the role of various key players viz., retailers, customers, wholesalers and regulatory bodies for enhancing the awareness level of consumerism in retailing practices.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The various aspects of methodology followed in the empirical study under reference are summarised as under:-

1.5.1 Data Collection

The data for the present study were obtained from both the sources viz. secondary and primary sources. The secondary data were obtained from journals, internet, books etc. The primary data were collected from Customers (n = 535); Retailers (n = 354); Wholesalers (n = 185) and Regulatory Bodies (n = 40) through four specifically developed schedules. The schedules were developed after reviewing the literature related to the subject under study (Gouillart and Sturdivant 1994; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Hui and Bateson 1991; Barksdale and Darden, 1972; Barksdale et al., 1982; French et al., 1982; Barker, 1987; Vardarajan and Thirunarayana, 1990) and discussions with the experts. The schedules comprised of general information such as age, qualification, religion, occupation, etc. and other items representing ethical values in retailing practices, based on five point Likert scale ranging from 5 to 1, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree (5<…..>1).
1.5.2 Sample Design and Selection Of Respondents

The required information pertaining to consumerism in retailing practices was gathered from retailers, customers, wholesalers and regulatory bodies residing in Jammu city through specifically developed schedules (Annexure 1, 2, 3 & 4). The Jammu city divided into four parts according to geographical divisions viz Gol Market of Gandhi Nagar, Gurrah Morh of Bakshi Nagar, Kabir Basti of Nagrota and Malhotra Maholla of Old City. In order to finalise the schedules and to determine the final sample size of the retailers and customers, a pilot survey was conducted on 40 retailers and customers each. The final sample size came to be 354 (retailers) from total population of 895 belonging to four different localities and 535 (customers) from total population of 2195 belonging to four different localities. The sample size was determined by applying the following formula.

\[ N = \frac{S^2 Z^2}{E^2} \]  

(Burns and Ronald 2007)

In order to select number of respondents to each of the localities, proportionate technique was used. Finally the respondents from aforesaid localities were selected on the basis of systematic random sampling technique.

Census method was used to collect responses from the selected wholesalers and regulatory bodies. The respondents were selected from the list obtained from the office of Chamber of Trade & Commerce, Jammu. In all 185 wholesalers situated in different localities of Jammu city were contacted, out of whom 149 responded properly. Finally, the respondents were selected from the list of 4 different regulatory bodies namely Taxation Department, Food and Supply Department, Labour and Employment Department and Retailers Association in Jammu city. In all, 10 officials of each of these regulatory bodies who visit the retail stores and observe their dealings with ultimate customers were contacted. The final sample size came to be 40.

1.5.3 Data Analysis and Statistical Tools Applied

The data has been analysed with the help of two softwares (SPSS and AMOS). For analysing the data and testing the hypotheses, various statistical tools and tests such as Mean, Median, Percentage, Standard Deviation, Range, Correlation, ANOVA, One Sample t – test, Independent t – test and SEM were applied. Before data analysis, it was duly purified with the help of Exploratory Factor Analysis (Malhotra, 2008) and validated through Confirmatory Factor
Analysis (CFA) (Hair et al, 2009). The detailed result of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis is as under:

**1.5.4 Reliability and Validity**

- **Split Half**
- **Cronbach’s Alpha (> .7)**
- **Content Validity**
  - Review of Literature and discussions with experts of related subject
- **Convergent**
  - Factor Loadings > .5
  - Average Variance Extracted
    - \( \text{AVE} = \frac{\text{Sum of squared Standardised Factor Loadings}}{\text{No of items}} (> .5) \)
- **Discriminant**
  - Correlations between factors < .5  (Hair et al, 2009)

**1.6 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL (SEM)**

**1.6.1 Impact of each and every independent variable/dimension of Consumerism on Customer Satisfaction and further affect on Fair Trade Practices: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**

Three latent construct were used to assess the impact of each independent variable of consumerism on customer satisfaction and further affect on fair trade practices. In the present study, initially a recursive model was proposed with seven constructs viz. Product quality, Price Sensitivity, Effective Communication, Responsibility, Government Regulation, Customer Satisfaction and Fair Trade Practices. It was proposed that each dimension of Consumerism viz., product quality, price sensitivity, and communication/information, responsibility and government regulation has a direct effect on customer satisfaction and further customer satisfaction affects fair trade practices. Thus on the whole, fair trade practice is not only predicted through customer satisfaction but also through all dimensions of consumerism as customer satisfaction plays a mediator role between consumerism and fair trade practices (Fig 1).

The results revealed consumerism is a strong predictor of customer satisfaction (SRW= 0.86, sig<0.001, see Fig 1) and further customer satisfaction affects on fair trade practices (SRW= 0.93, sig<0.001, see Fig 1). Hence H6 i.e. customer satisfaction has direct and positive impact on
fair trade practices is accepted. The goodness of fit indices have also yielded excellent results (GFI=0.927, AGFI=0.943, NFI=0.883 and CFI=0.915, RMR=0.022 and RMSEA=0.0639).

**Fig 1:** Model shows Impact of Consumerism on Customer Satisfaction and further Customer Satisfaction affecting Fair Trade Practices.

P.Q, P.S, E.C, RES, G.R, C.S and F.T.P are measured variables of consumerism

P.Q→ Product Quality, P.S→ Price Sensitivity, E.C→ Effective Communication,

e1, e2, e3, e4, e5 ------------------------e26 are error variances.

### 1.6.2 Discussion

The present research pertains to strategy for strengthening the consumer movement at retail level. The present study evaluates the impact of each and every independent variable/dimension of Consumerism on Customer Satisfaction and further affect on Fair Trade Practices. The present study finds that various dimensions of consumerism viz., product quality (PQ), price sensitivity (PS), effective communication (EC), responsibility (RES) and government regulation (GR) positively affects customer satisfaction and fair trade practices. But the impact of PQ RES, PS
and GR is much high as compared to remaining constructs. The level of effective communication in generating customer satisfaction is less and thus needs to be enhanced. Further, it also found that positive impact of customer satisfaction on fair trade practices.

1.7 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY: - The major findings of the study are summarised in terms of perceptions of key players’ viz., retailers, customers, wholesalers and regulatory bodies which are as follow:

1.7.1 From the perspective of Retailers

- Male respondents (MS= 4.21, SD= .21) reported higher level of satisfaction with the present status of consumer movement at retail level than that of their female counterpart (MS= 4.12, SD= .19)
- About 73% male respondents observe the wholesalers applying actual rate of VAT (3.65).
- About 85% of respondents having experience above 20 years in retail business are more ethical and responsible in their dealing.
- Respondents of 15-25 years of age, above 55 years and 35-45 years of age reported significantly higher level of effectiveness in their efforts in strengthening and maintaining the present status of consumerism at retail level.
- Respondents having secondary and higher secondary levels of education are more satisfied with all the factors which promote consumerism at retail level as compared to other qualification groups of respondents.
- The study also reveals that respondents having retail stores in Gandhi Nagar area of Jammu city are more helpful to ultimate consumers in buying decision process (MS=4.43) and respondents belonging to Nagrota Town are providing door to door service creating thereby customer satisfaction and providing convenience to the ultimate consumers.
- Majority of the respondents having retail stores in Malhotra Mohalla of Jammu city maintain better customer relations, fair window display and display of rate list for the sake of customer convenience.

1.7.2 From the Perspective of Customers

- Female (MS= 3.49, SD= .33) customers reported above average level of satisfaction in their role effectiveness in the present status of consumer movement.
- Both male and female respondents exhibited generally negative attitudes towards advertising and they observe that these are considered as undependable source of information, providing
casual and in-genuine and meaningless pictures of products. But at the same time a few respondents (13%) were found having more faith in the advertised products in comparison to unadvertised ones.

- The study shows that all the respondents of different age backgrounds are moderately satisfied of their efforts for strengthening the consumer movement.
- All the age group respondents 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 products.
- The result of the study indicates that one-third of the total respondents of different qualification background observed retailers not making sincere efforts to handle consumer complaints fairly and also not co-operating with the customers for replacing the defective products with new ones as and when asked for.
- 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.
- Respondents belonging to house wives, students and retired personnel felt that the retailers do not provide better quality products and services to them; create thereby dissatisfaction about the cause of consumer movement.
- The study reveals that respondents of Gandhi Nagar area are more aware regarding the rights of the consumer (MS = 3.78).
- Majority of the respondents of Malhotra Mohalla observed retailers trying to maintain better customer relations, fair window display and also display of rate list for the sake of customer convenience and they also behave responsibly with ultimate customers while making choice for quality products.
- About 68% respondents of the study did not pay the actual rate of VAT due to lack of information and also blame the government machinery for such type of lapses.

1.7.3 From the Perspective of Wholesalers

- Male respondents (MS = 3.79, SD = .51) reported higher level of satisfaction with the present status of consumer movement at retail level.
- Both male and female respondents observe good quality products being made available by the manufacturers (MS = 3.68 & 3.57).
Respondents of 35-45 years of age and above 55 years reported significantly higher level of effectiveness for strengthening the consumer movement at retail level.

The results of the study indicate that wholesalers having different levels of education have not similar perception with the present status of consumer movement.

Both married and unmarried wholesalers are more active for promoting the fair trade practices in retailing practices.

About 84% of respondents opined that the manufacturers make necessary changes and improvement in product quality from time to time.

About two-third respondents of the study opined that the manufacturers are not planned and organized for meeting heavy and dynamic demand of quality products in the market.

1.7.4 From the Perspective of Regulatory Bodies

- Majority of the respondents find the various regulatory bodies playing effective role for regulating the overall marketing practices by providing necessary consumer information through print and electronic media.
- Majority of the respondents perform their duties honestly and transparently and thus customers get benefits at large.
- Officials of the food and supply department put much more effective efforts during festival seasons.
- Officials of the taxation department implement their strategies effectively for ensuring proper maintenance of books of accounts and proper payment of taxes by the retailers.
- Young officials have been playing an important role for applying the laws, rules and regulations against the fraudulent marketers.
- About 80% respondents keep on holding seminars and conferences (MS = 4.44) and also provide consumer information through print and electronic media from time to time (MS=4.11) so that the consumers are aware of their rights and not easily cheated by the retailers.
- About two-third respondents have shown interest in the improvement of retailing practices (MS= 4.28) and handle consumer complaints quickly and without delay (MS=3.98).
- Three-fourth of respondents handle consumer complaints on time (MS=3.98) and protest against the violation of consumer rights (MS=4.06).
About 95% respondents have rendered valuable services to the consumers with the support of the Consumer Protection Law.

Officials of the labour and employment department protect the minor children from being employed by retailers in their stores (MS = 3.94) and about 68% respondents charge fine from shopkeepers who open shop even on Sundays.

1.8 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN:-

Some corrective measures and valuable strategic action plans as given below have to be taken up that will contribute strongly towards strengthening the consumer movement at retail level :-

- **Supply of Better Quality Products:** In retailing sector, supply of better quality products is a source to achieve higher rate of customer satisfaction and loyalty. The present study found customers moderately satisfied (MS = 3.35) with the quality of the products available in the market. The above findings suggest that the retailers should focus on product quality as the present customer is not much price conscious but quality conscious.

- **Providing necessary information to the Concerned:** Retailers need to have numerous products and services which have different features to suit the requirements of different groups of the society (Damant 2002 and Pattnaik 2001). They provide goods and various services for the benefit of the customers. The findings of the present study have revealed that 65% of customers knew about the complete information regarding latest services which are provided by the retailers. The above findings suggest that the retailers need to create more awareness regarding their different services amongst the customers because without their needed knowledge, its full utilisation by the customers is not possible.

- **Development of Trust in Customers:** It is found that the customers (MS = 2.62) do not rely on advertisement as source of information regarding the quality and performance of the product issued by the manufacturers. So, marketing stakeholders must try to gain customer trust by incorporating effective technology tools and motivational messages that reflect full guarantee to protect the interest of the consumers.

- **Development of a sense of responsibility:** The moderate mean score of 3.67 indicates retailers not making sincere efforts to handle consumer complaints fairly and also not cooperating with the customers for replacing the defective products with new ones as and when asked for. However, only one third of customers observe that their problems are more serious now than in the past. But they are neither having taken any action individually nor seeking
help from consumer associations. Every consumer must be alert as self help is the best help. He should educate himself and thus know his rights as a consumer. He should not allow unscrupulous businessmen to cheat him. Moreover, consumers should form voluntary associations. These associations can educate and awaken consumers. They can take organised action and put pressure on retailers to adopt fair trade practices and thus act responsibly.

- **Awareness among the consumers about the VAT:** The study also indicates that about 68% respondents did not pay the actual rate of VAT due to lack of information and they blame the government machinery for such type of lapses. Thus, concerned agencies are required to make consumer aware of VAT and the consequences if the provisions of same are violated with the help of print and electronic media and by organizing awareness camps from time to time, especially in rural areas. Consumer organizations should also play their role significantly by giving the valuable information about the benefits and drawbacks of VAT to the general public at large and protecting the interest of the consumers.

- **Sound and Healthy Government Machinery:** About 44% respondents do find Government effectively examining all competing brands of products in terms of safety, quality and minimum customer information required to be printed. Moreover, more than half of the respondents observe government agencies not supporting the promotion of the consumer movement at retail level. In fact, majority of the respondents find the government regulating agencies playing ineffective role for regulating the overall marketing practices which create frustration and dissatisfaction among the customers and thus these agencies are indifferent towards the cause of consumerism. For all these, the state government should take corrective measures by adopting strict rules and regulations for constant and effective vigilance over the unfair trade practices. Those responsible for the violation of same should be punished and fined as per the law. Further, the state Government should set up Laboratories for examining the products from safety and quality perspectives. Participation of government as well as redressal agencies in strengthening consumerism needs to be geared up, re-engineered, monitored and adequately updated on time.

- **Consumer confidence:** The study reveals majority of the respondents (MS = 3.11) finding marketing inspection activity of the government purposeless and they also find no role of mobile courts in this regard. In fact, the people lack confidence in the government machinery
in protecting their rights and interest. Consumers blame retailers and government machinery for showing cold shoulders to their voice. Customers find legal procedure for their protection to be cumbersome and very much tardy, leading to wastage of time and resources. It is the need of the hour to boost consumer confidence to resort to immediate action against unscrupulous practices in retailing sector and government machinery. They can organise themselves for taking collective action, boycotting the purchase of defective products, believing in legal action against injustice and participating in awareness programmes.

**Strong Business Associations:** Customers observe that retailers do operate on the philosophy ‘Let the buyer beware’ and they do indulge in price discrimination. Majority of the retailer respondents (67%) have not joined any trade association and thus that do not find any meaningful regulating advice for their proper trade practices. Thus, there is an urgent need of a sound association of retailers which can systematise their trade practices. The Business community itself can help in building and maintaining consumer protection through self discipline. Business people can regulate their own behaviour and actions by adopting higher ethical standards in business. It is in this context trade association and chambers of commerce can check unfair trade practices by some businessmen.

### 1.9 LIMITATIONS

All the possible efforts have been made to maintain objectivity, validity and reliability of the study, yet certain limitations have emerged which could not be ignored and thus, are required to be kept in mind whenever its findings are considered for implementation. These are as follows:-

1. The data collected pertain only to four selected area as per geographical divisions in Jammu city.
2. The study has measured perceptions of retailers, customers, wholesalers and regulatory bodies about strategy for strengthening the consumerism in retailing practices which might have been guided by their likes and dislikes.
3. Due to privacy involved in retail and wholesale business, retailers and wholesalers might have hesitated to share correct information about their business operation. This has also led to the element of subjectivity in their responses.
4. Due to larger number of variables involved in measuring the impact of consumerism on customer satisfaction and further customer satisfaction affecting fair trade practices, some
variables have been missed out such as illiteracy, unemployment, ignorance etc as a whole.

1.10 FUTURE RESEARCH
Although this research reveals certain aspects of customer satisfaction and fair trade practices in context of consumerism, there is still room for future research in order to ascertain and enrich consumer movement in India:

- Instead of focusing on retailing sector, the broader concept of consumerism should be taken into account such as online shopping, online ticketing, banking sector, hospitality sector, etc.
- Future research ought to be applying more comprehensive approach by making a comparative analysis of two or more states, thereby taking into consideration the same aspects of study.
- Moreover, in future, perception of employees of retail and wholesale store should also be taken into consideration to make study more meaningful and interesting.

1.11 CHAPTERISATION

1. Introduction: The first chapter represents an overview of consumerism, global perspective of consumerism, consumerism in Asian perspective, consumerism in India.

2. Review of Literature: This chapter depicts the review of existing literature, various issues and reasons of consumerism in general and in retailing practices. The review of literature on various dimensions is discussed to identify research gap and to develop research hypotheses and objectives.

3. Research Design and Methodology: This chapter summarises research design and methodology adopted in the study. This chapter includes detailed discussion on the need and objectives of the study. This chapter includes detailed discussion on the need and objectives of the study, formulation of the hypotheses, generation of scale items, selection of respondents, statistical tools applied.

4. Strategy for Strengthening Consumerism in Retailing Practices: Perceptions of Retailers: This chapter portrays retailers’ perceptions about the strategies for strengthening the consumerism in retailing practices and its effect on customer satisfaction. It further explores the customer satisfaction affecting fair trade practices. Before data analysis, scale purification has been carried out for each construct, which has
been later on validated with CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis). The validity and reliability has also been checked. Further, hypothesis testing has also been discussed.

5. **Strategy for Strengthening Consumerism in Retailing Practices: Perceptions of Customers’**: This chapter portrays impact of various dimensions of consumerism on customer satisfaction and further customer satisfaction affecting fair trade practices. The validity, reliability and hypothesis testing have also been checked.

6. **Strategy for Strengthening Consumerism in Retailing Practices: Perceptions of Wholesalers’**: This chapter purports to determine the various strategies for strengthening consumerism through the efforts of wholesalers by analyzing and assessing the efforts being made by wholesalers in the form of purchase and sale related activities for strengthening the consumer movement. To make the study transparent, the chapter begins with details of sample design and demographic profile, followed by explanatory factor analysis used for data purification and reducing the items of research domain into meaningful ones. The ANOVA, t-test and Regression have been applied to test the hypotheses. Similarly to check the reliability of the study, the Cronbach’s alpha, KMO Bartlet test, and other important tests have also been performed.

7. **Strategy for Strengthening Consumerism in Retailing Practices: Perceptions of Regulatory Bodies’**: This chapter studies the efforts being made by these regulatory bodies for strengthening the consumer movement and suggests appropriate strategies for enhancing consumerism further in retailing practices through these regulatory bodies. To make the study transparent, the chapter begins with details of sample design and demographic profile of respondents, followed by an explanatory factor analysis used for data purification and reducing the items of research domain into meaningful ones. Data from 40 respondents was collected from the prominent regulatory bodies of Jammu city. The ANOVA, t-test and Regression have been applied to test the hypotheses. Similarly to check the reliability of the study, the Cronbach’s alpha, KMO Bartlet test, and other important tests have also been performed.

8. **Strategy for Strengthening Consumerism in Retailing Practices**: This chapter outlays major findings of the study and concludes with relevant strategic action plan.
1.12 REFERENCES


Hair, J F; William C Black; Barry J Babin; Ralph E Anderson and Ronald L Tatham (2009), ‘Multivariate Data Analysis’, Sixth Ed. Pearson Prentice Publishers, New Delhi, p.735


