Media can both ‘mirror’ and ‘mould’ society. The media in its various forms – print, electronic, folk and unconventional – can be effectively used to mould the public opinion. It can be used as a potent tool for consumer education, protection and empowerment. This is the age of information. In highlighting the importance of information to consumers, Hans Thorelli has this to say: ‘Informed consumers are protected consumers – more than that, they are liberated consumers’. Today the problem is further complicated by information “overload”. Provision of too much of information can impair decision-making. Many well-meaning consumer activists mistakenly assume that “more is better” and wind up hindering rather than helping the consumer. Sometimes consumers have to be given information on information for better decision-making.

VCOs, consumer activists, other NGOs and all concerned with consumer movement, have great responsibility in giving ‘sufficient’ information to consumers. In addition to this, consumers are to be educated. The responsibility is more towards rural and illiterate consumers. In this direction media has a great role to play.

The media like any other industry or business has to survive and grow. In this situation VCOs cannot expect media to act as a social institution. VCOs have to generate their own resource to ‘mould’ and ‘manage’ the media.
News-letters by VCOs, consumer magazines, books, newspapers, television, radio, folk and other unconventional media can be used to protect the interest of consumers. Businessmen use most of these media to advertise their products. To counter the 'menace' of advertising, counter-advertising can be launched through the very same media.

**NEWS-LETTERS BY VCOs:**

The news-letters published by VCOs exclusively deal with matters of consumer interest. Six VCOs regularly publish their news-letters in Karnataka in Kannada language. None of these news-letters carry any commercial advertisement. [But, the news-letter 'Balakedarara Shikshana' published by Consumers Forum, Basrur carries the name and address of the sponsorer of each issue (where approximately 5 x 2 1/2 cms space is used). A majority of sponsorers are businessmen and business organisations. In the same way 'Grahaka Pathrike' by Mysore Grahakara Parishath compliments those who meet publication expenditure.]

Even though the VCOs claim circulation of almost 1000 copies per news-letter, per issue, the actual renewal of subscription is very poor. If the renewal is taken into account the circulation would be less than 250 per news-letter per issue. But many of these VCOs circulate the news-letter irrespective of the renewal of subscription. News-letter gives strength to the VCO and acts as a 'mouthpiece' of the VCO. Hence many VCOs like consumer forum, Shiralkoppa, and the CREAT in Bangalore which are not publishing news-letters, have plans to start their own news-letters.
**Analysis of News-letters:**

**List of News-letters Published by VCOs in Karnataka:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Title of the News</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Periodicity</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>No. of Pages</th>
<th>Subscription Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Balakedarara Vedike (Consumer’s Forum)</td>
<td>Consumer Education and Protection Trust, Udupi.</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>24.5 x 36cm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Balakedarara Shikshana (Consumer’s Education)</td>
<td>Consumers Forum, Basrur.</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>20 x 27cm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jagrath Nagarika (Awakened Consumer)</td>
<td>Citizens Forum, Hubli.</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>25 x 37cm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grahaka Pathrike (Consumer News Paper)</td>
<td>Mysore Grahakara Parishath, Mysore.</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>28 x 43.5cm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Balake Thiluvalike (Consumption Awareness)</td>
<td>Consumer Education and Protection Trust, Sagar.</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>20 x 28cm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Shimoga Balakedara (Shimoga Consumer)</td>
<td>Consumer’s forum, Shimoga</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>20 x 28cm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: All in Kannada Language. NA : Not available.

**Balakedarara Vedike**: This news-letter is published by Consumer Education and Protection Trust, Udupi. This forum is the first among all VCOs to publish a news-letter in Karnataka. The news-letter is continuously published for the last 19 years. This has become a model for many other VCOs in Karnataka. Now, the news-letter is edited by K.Damodar Aithal, who is also the convenor of the forum. This four-page fortnightly news-letter is priced at Rs.2 per issue or Rs.50 for annual subscription or Rs.500 as subscription for life.
Each issue carries an editorial on the first page. The editorial deals with important consumer issues. Generally only one issue is highlighted per fortnight. A.P. Kodancha and T.Krishna also write regularly in the newsletter (who also involve actively in the Forum's activities). Kodancha writes on 'suggestions to consumer problems'. Consumers can write to the forum to get suggestions. This column is intended to educate consumers who may have similar types of problems. Krishna gives legal suggestions to consumer grievances. In addition to these three regular columns, the newsletter contains articles on different consumer issues. (For example, this researcher's article entitled 'Karnatakadalli Grahaka Andolana' was published in four issues dated 1st March, 15th March, 1st April and 15th April 2000). The newsletter also deals with problems faced by consumers. The complaints of consumers are also published to highlight the issues and create public opinion for the complaint of consumers.

Aithal says that 'a majority complaints of consumers are redressed at the very instance of publishing the problem in the newsletter'. This is a clear indication of the effectiveness, popularity and public image about the newsletter in that region.

Balakedarara Shikshana: This newsletter of consumer's forum, Basrur is edited by B.Krishna Balegar. The newsletter is priced at Rs.25 as annual subscription or Rs.1.20 as price per issue. The newsletter has been continuously published for the last 13 years. This newsletter is influential in coastal Karnataka, particularly in Kandapur and Udupi taluks of Udupi district it is widely known among consumers. Each issue of the paper mainly deals with one important aspect pertaining to consumer protection. The newsletter deals with issues pertaining to consumers/citizens including judgements of consumer courts. Most of the issues highlighted in newsletter are pertaining
to consumers/citizens grievances against government department, public utilities like KPTCL, telephone, forest department, revenue department, universities, housing board, private financial institutions etc. The news-letter publishes the work and important cases handled by other VCOs, particularly of consumer’s forum Shiralkoppa in Shimoga district.

**Jagrath Nagarika:** Jagrath Nagarika, is the mouthpiece of Citizens Forum, Hubli and CPRF, Hubli. Ananth Huilgol with whom the above two VCOs are identified is the editor of the news-letter. This is priced at Rs.40 for 12 issues. This news-letter is circulated mainly in Hubli and Dharwad cities.

The news-letter carries consumer protection activities taken place at National, State and at the above two fora level. The special emphasis is given to the work and functions organised and participated in by Huilgol. The paper specially emphasizes swarajya (self governance).

Huilgol regularly writes in the news-letter in addition to his editorials. Each month the news-letter carries articles on one or two main issues. In addition to this, the letters from the readers, consumer court judgements, decisions of the government which have impact on consumers and sometimes tips to consumers as how to buy and use a particular product is also given in the news-letter.

**Grahak Pathrike:** This news-letter of Mysore Grahakara Parishath is edited by S.A.Prasad. The news-letter is being continuously published for the last eight years. The news-letter carries articles on the work of the parishath, survey reports etc. it also carries letters from readers, where they air their grievances, problems regarding the working of business organizations and government departments. The news-letter carries special articles on a wide range of issues from the impact of MNCs on Indian consumers to the
importance of natural farming, working of public utilities, government departments, supply of goods and services, adulteration, environmental issues and working of local self government institutions. News-letter also carries tips to consumers on various legislations including CPA. There is no editorial column in the news-letter.

Balake Thiluvalike: This news-letter is published by Consumer Education and Protection Trust, Sagar. It is edited by K.N.Venkatagiri Rao. The news-letter is in its 9th year of publication, without any break. It is priced at Rs.2 per issue or Rs.20 as annual subscription.

The news-letter contains both news and views. The editor writes editorials under the caption 'Nimmondige' (with you). Every year a 'special issue' with a good number of special articles on consumer issues is also published. The news-letter being a mouth piece of the consumer organisation, highlights VCO’s view on working, programmes and policies of various government departments and public utilities like KPTCL, government hospitals etc. It stresses more on Agricultural-Consumer as Sagar is more an agriculture dominated taluk. The decisions of consumer courts are also highlighted to educate and inform consumers.

Shimoga Balakedara: This quarterly news-letter is published by consumer’s forum, Shimoga. The man behind the consumer forum, K.M.S. Chandrashekariah is also the editor of the news-letter. It is in its 9th year of publication. First page of the news-letter deals with editorial entitled ‘Nimmodane Ondu Kshana’ (A moment with you). Editorial mainly concentrates on the burning topics of consumer interest. In some issues, the work of the forum is also highlighted. The news-letter is priced at Rs.2 per issue or Rs.12 as annual subscription. It also carries important and interesting
consumer court judgements. Important news items of consumer interest appearing in other ‘media’ are also published for the reader’s attention.

In addition to the above six news-letters published by six VCOs, Consumer Forum, Kodi Knnayana (in Udupi district) publishes a monthly news-letter in Kannada. In recent time this has not been regularly published. CREAT, Bangalore publishes a news-letter entitled ‘Consumer Update’ in English. This is a quarterly bulletin only for private circulation among members. This has not been regularly published. Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore Publishes Quarterly News-letter ‘Public Eye’ in English. ‘Public Eye’ contains research reports, Information to citizens, campaign for particular cause and theme essays on topics of National Interest.

On the publication front on the international level the success of ‘Consumer Reports’ in the United States, and of ‘which’ in the United Kingdom has demonstrated the underlying significance of such publications for an average consumer. Even in India at the national level, publications like ‘Insight’ by CERC, Ahmedabad, ‘Keemat’ by CGSI, Mumbai and ‘Grahak’ by MGP, Mumbai are popular in their ‘jurisdiction’. No ‘news-letter’ by any VCO in Karnataka has made an impact at the national level or even at the state level. All news-letters published right now in Karnataka are mainly limited to one or two taluks where they are published. No news-letter of any VCO is transformed into a ‘Consumer Magazine’. Not even one VCO in Bangalore (even being in capital city) has taken the trouble of publishing a news-letter to reach consumers. It is only the VCOs in towns like Udupi, Shimoga, Mysore and Hubli and in taluk places like Sagar and in villages like Basrur that have tried and succeeded in a limited way.
Suggestions for making News-letters more effective:

There is vast scope for tapping news-letters and consumer magazines in educating and informing consumers. In order to make news-letters more effective, the following suggestions are recommended:

- Now most of VCOs depend on their office-bearers to write for their news-letters. In order to improve the standard, VCOs have to invite experts in different fields to write in their news-letters.

- News-letters have to give useful, interesting, attractive and a variety of material to the readers.

- To reach a large number of consumers the news-letters should be made available in schools, colleges and public libraries. But for consumer forum, Udupi, no other VCO has made any effort in this direction.

- To make news-letters economically viable the subscription has to be marketed.

- By offering advertising space news-letters can be used to generate resource. Here self regulation has to be exercised by taking advertisement only on topics like environment protection, co-operation, family planning, and health etc.

Consumer Magazine: There is only one consumer magazine – 'Grahaka Vani' – (Voice of consumers) published from Karnataka. It is published in Kannada language, from Tumkur. The magazine publishes the judgements of district fora, provisions of different consumer-oriented acts, and other consumer related informations. The magazine does not carry research articles. Nearly 50% of the space is used for commercial advertisement (quite contrary to the very spirit of consumer movement). Advertisements are not even regulated. All types of ads are included. Poor quality printing and news print
is used in the magazine. Hence the magazine failed to make any big impact. Consumer magazines like ‘Insight’ published from Ahmedabad have very limited circulation only among English reading consumer activists and those interested in the consumer movement. [Out of 5030 subscribers (members) of *Insight* 3912 are in just eight cities. In this 375 are in Bangalore].

**BOOKS:**

At the International level books contributed greatly to the consumer movement. *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair’s novel about the stockyards published in 1906, brought demand for regulation of Food and Meat Processing in the USA. The book revealed shocking conditions in the country’s meat packing plants and Chicago Stockyards. This resulted in the passage of the pure food administration Act. The writers who criticized some business practices during this period was given a name as ‘Mucktakers”. The ideological background of the growth of consumer movement was provided by a series of writings beginning with R.H.Tawney’s, *Acquisitive Society* followed by Thorstein Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* and especially, the joint work of Stuart Chase and F.J.Flinch’s *Your Money’s Worth* crystallized wide spread consumer discontent in 1930’s in the U.S.A. Again during 1960’s in U.S.A., reinforcing and interacting with consumer unrest there were a number of books. Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society*, Jessica Mitford’s *American way of Death* and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* brought out the topics with regard to environmental pollution and use of chemicals in food items. This gave a new dimension to the consumer movement in U.S.A. The writings of social critics like Vance Parkard’s *The Waste Makers*, Earnest Ditecher’s *The Strategy of Desires*, enlightened the realisation of consumers gullibility, particularly of the ignorant, semi-ignorant public against organised efforts of systematic hard-shell and large scale
intruding advertising. On the other hand, books like *Joyless Economy* by Tibor Scitovsky created public consciousness about conspicuous consumption, leisure and our economic practices. *Accident at any Speed* by Ralph Nadar created history in the ‘influence of a book’ on consumer movement.

It is clear that at the International level books played a remarkable role in energizing consumer movement. There are a few books which were exclusively written for strengthening the consumer movement in the Karnataka state.

**List of Books/Monographs Written in Kannada language on topics related to consumer protection.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Title of Book</th>
<th>Name of Author</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Publisher/organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nvau Jagarukaragona (Let us be aware)</td>
<td>N.K. Sathyapalan</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>National Book Trust - India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Grahak (Consumer)</td>
<td>Prabha Murthy</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Karnataka Forum for Promotion of Consumer Action (R) Bangalore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ealu Eddelu O Balakedara (Arise awake O consumer)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Balakedarara Balaga, Kadi Kannyana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Balakedarara Swayamseva Samusthegalu Mathu Chatuvaltegale (Consumers Voluntary Organisations establishment and their activities)</td>
<td>Y.G. Muralidhar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Consumer Education and Protection Trust, Sagar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Parisarada Bomb Spotagondideye (Has the environmental Bomb Exploded)</td>
<td>Bhamy V. Shenoy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Mysore Grahakara Parishath, Mysore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Aahara Kalaberake (Food Adulteration)</td>
<td>C.V. Nagaraj</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Mysore Grahakara Parishath, Mysore.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Odeyaralla Sevakaru:**

This book is written by K.P.S. Kamath. Kamath came back to India after staying for almost one decade in U.S.A. He could see the total 'breakdown' in the system where consumers are the total sufferers. Kamath's odyssey in Udupi, starts with his temporary license from the R.T.O, to ride a motor cycle. He found that government officials never used to respect the dignity of citizens/consumers. They never considered themselves as servants of the people. They used to behave as if they were 'masters'. The whole effort of Kamath and his team was to make them realise that, they were the servants of people and to tell consumers that, they were 'masters'. Kamath narrates his...
experience in his book 'Odeyaralla Sevakaru' (Servants, not Masters). The book is informative and a good guide to all those who are interested in consumer movement and inspires one who goes through it. The book mainly traces the background of starting consumer forum in Udupi, and its work and philosophy. In May 1980 few like-minded people (mainly K.P.S. Kamath, P.Narayana Rao and Ravindranath Shanbhag) joined hands and started the consumers forum in Udupi. Mahathma Gandhiji's ideals of truth and non-violence were the moving spirit behind the forum. The forum became so popular that many such VCOs came into existence in other parts of Karnataka. Kamath's team strongly believed in two philosophies, which they had learnt from Gandhiji. One, each individual is powerful by the grace of god, due to our cultivated weakness we make it ineffective. If we can overcome our weakness or if we can control our weakness through a code of conduct, our real strength will emerge. Secondly, unless one desires, there is no necessity for any one to lead a life without dignity.

The first complaint received by the consumer's forum, Udupi was that of one Jayaram Shetty. Shetty wanted to sell a part of his land (which he got for serving in defence) to a co-operative society. For this he wanted a 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC). In spite of many visits to the taluk office, he did not get his NOC. Shetty was misguided, harassed, and scolded by the taluk office officials. All this is because, Shetty was not ready to bribe them. Shetty had even written letters to the Revenue Minister. It was no use. Now, the consumer forum acted. They called a press meet. In that press meet they announced that Mr. Shetty would go on hunger strike in front of the taluk office. This was published in the newspapers. This had the desired effect. Shetty got NOC. The need for him to sit on hunger strike did not arise. Now,
Kamath's team found the necessity of a newsletter. Because, they had realised the effect of media on the officials.

In the appendix to the book, Dr. P. Narayana Rao, (another co-founder of the Udupi Consumers Forum) writes in his article 'An Alternative to Indian Politics' that, Udupi Consumer Forum is a self-claimed 'Ombudsman' and 'Ralph Nadar' to some extent. In its capacity as 'ombudsman' consumers forum looks to the complaints against government departments. As a Ralph Nadar it tries to regulate the services of public utilities and keeping a watch on the quality of the services. Narayan Rao opines that, 'the biggest threat to consumer is his own 'passiveness'. Hence, the forum decided not to go in search of any problems. Consumers have to come out with their problems. They must be ready to fight. Consumer Forum stands behind the consumer. On the other hand, if the Consumer Forum does everything, then, it commits another mistake of making consumers more passive'. Narayana Rao concludes that the "situation where consumer is the king has not arisen. If many organizations like Udupi forum creep up in all parts of the country and all fight against the present political system, and if they nourish the discontentment of the consumers, a day will come when we can find an alternative to Indian politics". The book is only one of its kind in Kannada. To a great extent the book has helped to mould public opinion for consumer movement in the state.

Bharathada Balakedara:

Jajie Mandanna has authored this book Bharathada Balakedara. The book is oriented to empower and facilitate the consumer in understanding the market. In the book in the chapter on consumer education, the importance of education, market information, various intricacies involved in buying goods, importance of consumer protection and knowledge, have been explained.
the next chapter - food; calories required, how to take balanced food, and how to test adulterated food have been explained with various simple methods of testing the food products. Common methods used by businessmen to adulterate food products have also been illustrated in this chapter. Under the heading “Clothing”, different materials used for manufacturing dress materials and their comparative advantages and disadvantages have been discussed. Many tips have been given in the book on how to buy cloth. Next, the importance of housing and the role of government and others in housing sector have been analysed. Civic facilities and the problems of slums and methods to build good housing colonies are also analysed in detail.

The scope of consumerism is expanding. The environmental pollution is a great concern of this century. The author cautions us about how we are polluting water sources, problem of waste, air pollution, importance of trees in towns and forest in general, noise pollution and methods to overcome these problems have been discussed in the chapter, “Environment”. In the next charter on Drugs and Cosmetics, the author suggests care and precautions to be taken while buying drugs in the market. How druggists and chemists charge higher rate and sell drugs after expiry date have been analysed for the benefit of readers.

Under the caption “Advertising and Publicity” the author has analysed how the advertisements have become persuasive. She has analysed various media used for advertisements like radio, newspapers, television and their impact on consumers. She underlines the importance of analyzing advertisements and not just going through the advertisements. She cautions the consumers to be always careful about the advertisements. The book deals in detail about the importance about the knowledge of weight and measurements, different laws to protect the consumers and about the quality
control and standardization. In the chapter on Co-operation, the importance of co-operation and its advantages to the Indian consumer is discussed. The author suggests that, consumers can come out of the clutches of middlemen, if they form consumer’s co-operatives. The author also narrates the importance of educating consumers in buying goods and services. Due to intensive marketing strategies, consumers have to be careful in deciding their priorities. Consumers should collect reliable information from the right sources. Consumers should know as how much to spend and how much to save and where to invest. The author impresses on every consumer to remember and to be cautious on important aspects like provision of guarantee and warrantee in the contract, other terms of contract, free gifts, instalments where there is a lot of scope for businessmen to mislead the vulnerable consumers.

The author concludes by stressing the necessity of educating consumers in consumption and related aspects. The author stresses on teaching these aspects in schools and colleges. She also gives a blueprint as how and what topics the children are to be taught in schools on consumer protection. The author writes, to begin with students are to be taught on as how to buy and use fruits, toothpaste, medicines, cold-drinks and concepts like tour, playgrounds, text books, television programmes, advertisements, films, street lights, holidays and so on.

This is the only book on consumer movement which had been effectively marketed in 1970's and early 1980's.

Balakedarane Rajanagali:

A.V. Huligol has authored this book. The book is the revised version of his two books written earlier (Grahaka Kaivari and Balakedarne Bhimanagali). In the very beginning of the book, he opines that, there is no
scope for 'consumerist' attitude in 'Indian culture'. The present day consumerist attitude among Indians is the result of imitation and influence of western culture. According to the author the root cause of all these consumer problems is – hedonism. He notes that present day environmental pollution, ecological imbalance and lack of sustainability in development are the result of uncontrolled consumption. In the book he reminds us that consumer is all powerful. He is the centre of all economic activities. But he has been neglected. He is being exploited. But the wish of Huligol is that the consumer should become king of the whole system, wherever consumers are involved. Hence, the title of the book is 'Balakedarane Rajanagali' (Let the consumer become the king). He notes that for the lapses of the government, for its inefficiency, for the loss in public sector units, the ultimate sufferers are consumers-citizens. Under the chapter 'Balakedarere Joke' (consumers be careful), he cautions consumers to be very careful about the quality, quantity, price, expiry date, local taxes, ISI mark and the like where most of the time businessmen take consumers for a ride. Under the chapter 'Grahaka Kaivari', (Guide to consumer) the author explains how to get the complaints redressed, by making use of nearly 30 consumer-oriented legislations. Huligol believes in the concept of 'Be Indian and Buy Indian' (the author is against opening the Indian market to foreign companies!).

In order to instill confidence among consumers, the author gives a number of cases where consumers have won against the injustice caused to them. The examples range from cases against Indian railways to KEB, from banks to telephone department and from textile merchants to courier service. Huligol cautions the consumers not to fall victims to various schemes like money multiplying, goods for 10-20% of value by giving the money in advance and the like. Huligol concludes his book by noting that, the ultimate
aim of consumer movement is to establish 'Lok Swarajya' – society based on truth, justice and morality.

**Balakedarare Yechettukolli:**

Narendra Nayak has written this book based on the experience he got while working as the convenor of the Consumer Trust, Mangalore. To start with the author explains the various rights of consumers:

i) Right to Choose, ii) Right to safety, iii) Right to information, iv) Right to get unpolluted and clean environment, air and water, v) Right to complain, vi) Right to redress, and vii) Right to get education.

The author explains as how the government employees are our servants and not masters. He notes the following rights to consumers in government offices:

i) Right to get service with courtesy.

ii) Right to go to government offices for rightful work.

iii) Right to get acknowledgement for any letter or document given to offices.

iv) Right to get answers to the letters written, from the concerned departments.

v) Right to personally meet the head of the office.

**Heated LPG:** The author explains the way in which the cooking gas distributors 'injustice' to the consumers were dealt with. Cooking gas suppliers in Mangalore use to compel those who get new cooking gas connection, to buy stoves compulsorily. The supply of cylinders was erratic. There used to be lot of bribe in getting new connections and favoritism in supply of cylinders. Nayak's team, organised a meeting of the cooking gas consumers and suppliers and thereby improved the system by framing a code of conduct.
The author narrates a number of other cases fought by them against the city corporation, bad roads, problems of town hall (purabhavana), water supply, public distribution system, etc. Of all these the most interesting and novel is the competition organised to find the biggest pot hole in Mangalore roads to make a mockery of bad road maintenance by the city Corporation. This programme (competition) was conducted four times. Here those who found the biggest pot hole were paid prizes. This has helped to create public opinion. It woke up the Mangalore City Corporation, which maintained the roads. The competitions yielded the desired result. The author recommends to other VCOs to organize programmes like this.

The author cautions the gullible consumers to be careful about acupressure slippers (which were advertised as cures for all disease) advertisements for medicine for asthma, for cold and the like. The author lists out the rights of consumers of medical services.

1. To know the educational qualification of doctors (this also helps to avoid quacks).
2. To know the details about treatment.
3. To get the prior permission of the patient (or concerned persons) before surgery.
4. To seek the opinion of experts.
5. Right to change the doctor or reject the method of treatment (at the risk of the patient).
6. To know about the probable expenditure and its details.
7. To maintain secrecy of the disease (except under some legal and public interest).

The author writes that consumer ‘boycott’ is a good weapon in the hands of consumers. Consumer ‘boycott’ is very useful when suppliers try to
make high profit or try to exploit the situation when goods are in scarcity. 
The author is puzzled as why at least consumers do not go for substitutes, 
when prices of some goods increase.

Mental blocks of the consumers : The author analyses why the citizens have 
not become masters even after 50 years of independence (at the time of 
writing book), Why is our consumer-citizen not resisting or exploding at the 
injustice done to him. The author gives the following reasons :

1. Our ‘glorious’ history : Indian citizens have developed the tendency to fear 
   the rulers. The author observes that, this we must have imbibed from our 
earlier rulers and British rule.

2. The environment in which we upbring our children (where corruption has 
become a part of life, children accept it as ‘mamulu’ (usual).

3. ‘Excuses’ like lack of time to fight for justice, fear of ‘rowdy gang’, fear of 
   system etc.

4. Hesitation : Some hesitate lest people laugh at them, if something happens 
   when they assert their rights. Some hesitate because they are afraid that 
   officials like the police may take them to the police station, and people 
   may think bad of them.

5. Inertia : It is in our blood. We do not react to anything. According to the 
   majority, “A good man is one who never reacts to issues concerned with 
   others!” People praise such men as gentlemen! But, those who fight for 
   their own rights and for others’ rights are not ‘gentlemen’: They are 
treated as ‘rogues’. (‘Tharale’).

6. Education system : The present education system does not develop 
questioning temperament, nor is the necessity of social change taught. The 
author opines that, teachers are from exploited classes and they are not a
model to students. He feels that some teachers are social evils and students taught by them imbibe those things and become social evils.

7. Inferiority complex: Some have inferiority complex that, they are not educated or they do not have social status or they think that they do not have public support. They do not realise that all are equal in democracy to fight for justice.

Nayak wants everyone to overcome these limitations and to involve themselves actively in consumer movement. He reminds that 'in the days to come, where more private and MNCs are entering Indian business, (in the name of liberalization and globalization) there will be lots of chances for corruption and threat to environment. There is more responsibility for VCOs in the days to come'. He concludes his book by quoting Edmund Burke 'All it takes for the dark forces of evil to take over this world is enough number of good people who want to do nothing'.

Bahujana hithaya bahujana sukhaya:

This book is collection of 13 articles of Ravindranath Shanbhag of Consumers Forum, Basrur. These articles were earlier published in ‘Udayavani’, a Kannada newspaper (In a weekly column). In the introduction Shanbhag gives the intention of the articles. He cites creating public opinion, analysing the problems of consumers and highlighting the successful stories of consumes/citizens who fight and win against injustice to encourage readers to 'act' as main intentions. He reminds the readers that this 'crusade' is not against any individual or organisation. The main concern is redressal of grievances and not antagonizing any one. There is no place for any violence. He writes, “Every action of this 'second independence movement' will be tested with the 'non-violent' philosophy of the father of our nation.”
The book is informative and inspires the readers. The articles are written from personal experience as a consumer activist. In his first article ‘Nachike Enisuthide Yenage’ (I am feeling ashamed), Shanbhag writes about the expression of former Prime Minister (P.M), Inder Kumar Gujral when he heard the sad story of a labourer from the state of Bihar who had been harassed by landlords. When the P.M. heard the grievances in despair he said “I am ashamed to be P.M. of this country”. Shanbhag grieves when a P.M. of a country talks in despair like this, what can an ordinary citizen say? Where can he go?.

Shanbhag lists out hidden fear (for example rich fear of becoming poor, the poor fear death), shameless life (a majority people, he says have adjusted to lead a shameless life without resisting injustice). Life has become possible only for those who have money, let it be in our police system, jails, courts and offices. Passiveness is another problem. He writes, ‘even though we have won the first war of independence to liberate ourselves from foreign rulers, there is the necessity of a second war of independence to free ourselves from the clutches of the ‘corrupt’. He says for this there is necessity of voluntary organisations like disciplined ‘Consumer Forums’ in each and every village. In another article ‘Degree beke? Degree’ (you want degree? Degree) Shanbhag writes about educational ‘shops’ which are unrecognized and sell certificates illegally. In another article he writes about the inefficiency, meaningless conditions, corruption, low quality work of the Housing Board, in Karnataka State. He narrates neatly how differently consumers are cheated. The articles in the book are varied and interesting. He writes about a weed-upatorium and methods to control in one article and in another article he writes about nuisance of noise pollution in the name of religious ceremonies. The book is printed and published effectively by the publishers. The book has also been marketed well.
The book is published by the Consumer’s Forum, Basrur. The book is very useful to consumer activists who would like to start consumer’s forum. The book has explained how to form a VCO, (for example as a society or as a trust or company) and how it should work. The book cautions activists to prove the ‘apolitical’ nature of VCO and should build ‘Trust’ in the society for The VCO through the acts and deeds of the VCO and its members. The book also deals with letter writing. The experience of the Basrur forum in writing letters have been illustrated with a copy of the letters written to the suppliers. The book says letters should be simple, language should be plain, unbiased and personal remarks should be avoided. The matters or issues which cannot be proved should not be included in the letter. Balegar, the editor of the news-letter published by Basrur forum, says, ‘Effective letter writing itself is a great asset to a VCO’.

The book is silent on the way in which finance can be raised for a VCO.

Grahaka samrakshana adiniyama, 1986 :

In India most of the Acts are published in English. Hence, they become ‘foreign’ to a vast number of citizens/consumers who do not know either to read or write English. Fortunately a few writers are translating ‘Acts’ in English to vernacular languages like Kannada. One such useful work is done by N.S. Sangolli who wrote the book ‘Grahaka Samrakshana Adiniyama, 1986’ a translation and commentary on the CPA, 1986.

The book not only deals with different sections of the CPA, 1986, but also gives explanation for each section. A note is also included wherever, the reader finds it difficult to understand. Wide reference is made to case laws to
drive home the importance of the provisions of the Act. The utility of the book in Kannada language has been increased by incorporating the important sections of the Criminal Procedure Code, which are useful for consumers to redress their grievances.

**Balakedarara hitharakshane:**

R.P. Hegde has written this book. The book deals with the present condition of consumers. The author highlights, even though in a democratic setup, the citizen is sovereign, but in reality he has become a tool for exploitation in the hands of politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen. For the benefit of the reader the author explains important sections of the CPA, 1986 and also narrates the important (educative) judgements of district fora and state commission. He identifies problems created by the suppliers, lack of knowledge among consumers, illiteracy, complicated Acts, wrong policies of the government and problems created by one consumer to another (ex. smoking in bus or train) are main issues to be addressed in consumer protection. He also explains the nature, objects and working of VCOs. The author has borrowed heavily from the working of consumer's forum, Udupi and consumer's forum, Basrur in writing this section. He traces the importance of a News-letters for consumer movement by stressing that 'message in writing will be more powerful than a verbal message', Karnataka University, Dharwad has published this book.

**Bharathadalli grahaka chaluvali samasyegalu mathu nirekshegalu :**

The book is written by M.Siddanand. The author begins his book with five judgements given by district fora and state commission in different fields, to educate the ordinary consumers about the type of problems they can take to consumer courts. The author introduces district fora, state commission and central and state consumer protection councils to readers. The author
recommends measures to strengthen the consumer movement in the country. Some of the measures he suggests are to teach ‘consumer protection’ to high school students, adult education, establish laboratories to inspect goods, strengthening VCOs and equipping redressal mechanisms under CPA. He specially emphasizes that women in particular are to be educated and trained in shopping. This book is published by Bangalore University, Bangalore.

Navu Jagarukaragona:

Originally the book was written by N.K. Sathyapalan in Malayalam. This has been translated into Kannada by Rukmini P.K. Vishwakarma. The book is written in the format of a story with illustrated pictures to facilitate the reader in understanding the different ways in which businessmen adulterate goods. The author also introduces ISI mark and other government machinery to detect and punish the businessmen who adulterate goods. The book is priced reasonably. It is published by National Book Trust.

Grahaka:

The book is written by Prabha Murthy, in very simple language to facilitate the ordinary consumer to understand his/her problems, remedies and to know about the basics of consumer movement. The book has highlighted the rights of consumers, responsibilities of middlemen and manufacturers, adulteration, methods to identify adulteration, and also introduces consumer to the CPA, 1986. The book is made available in some public libraries. Otherwise the book is not effectively marketed.

Ealu eddelu o balakedara:

This book is published by Balakedarara Balaga – a consumer forum from Kodi Knnyana in Udupi district. The book is written to inspire the readers to fight against the injustice done to them both by the businessmen
and by the government agencies and departments. The book has heavily concentrated on the successful complaints fought by consumer forums, Basrur and Udupi. Even though the book is written in simple language and priced reasonably, the marketing of book has not been done effectively to take the book to the target group.

Balakadarara rakshanegiruva kayidegalu:

This book is written by Y.G. Muralidhar. The author has discussed procedure and provisions under six consumer oriented acts for the benefit of readers/ consumers. The book deals with Drugs and Cosmetics Act, Drug Control Act, The Standards of Weights and Measures Act, Karnataka Lokayuktha Act, Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and Bureau of Indian Standards Act. The author has also given the addresses of offices where the consumers or VCOs can contact for redressal of complaints under these acts.

Balakadarara swayam seva samusthegalu sthapane mathu chatuvatikegalu:

This book is also written by Y.G. Muralidhar. In this book the author explains the formalities and methods of registration of VCO, benefits of registering a VCO, Programmes that can be launched under a VCO, fund raising and other aspects of management of a VCO. The book is useful to budding consumer activists to start a VCO.

In addition to the above books, Bhamy V. Shenoy's 'Parisarada bomb spotagondideye' has highlighted the danger to the environment and its causes and consequences. C.V. Nagaraj has written a book on food adulteration and simple methods to detect adulteration. The Consumer Education and Protection Trust, Sagar has also published books on Dooravani (Telephone bills), Viduth Billugalu (Electricity bills), Marukatteyalli Balakedara
Suggestions to make books to reach readers:

Even though books have not made the desired impact on the consumer movement in Karnataka, they are very potential in making consumer movement strong.

The following suggestions are made to take books on consumerism to the readers:

1. The books written on consumer protection issues are not properly marketed (but for Ravindranath Shanbhag’s Bahujana Hithaya Bahujana Sukhaya). It seems now a majority of consumer activists are allergic to marketing! Books are to be marketed to reach different segments of consumers.

2. No VCO has roped in big publishers for publishing books on consumerism. (But for consumer’s forum, Basrur publishing Bahujana Hithaya Bahujana Sukhaya). To reach a vast number of readers, big publishing houses are to be roped in.

3. All books now available on consumer protection are written by consumer activists. No popular writer in the state has written books on consumer issues. VCOs have to motivate those writers to write books on consumer issues by making available required material to them.

4. Karnataka and Bangalore universities have published books on consumer issues. These books are to be marketed by making use of their large (more than 200 each) number of affiliated colleges.
These books are to be made available in public libraries, schools and colleges and these are to be particularly made available to neo-literates, rural students, and other rural consumers through unconventional methods of selling books. The books have to be made available in fairs and local markets.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers can play an important role in moulding consumer movement in the country. Newspapers have changed from the pioneering industry for national service to a commercial industry in modern times. On the one hand newspapers have to give what readers want to increase circulation. On the other hand due to pressure from different quarters (Industrial houses, Political Parties, Religion, Government etc) newspapers may give importance to what is not good to the consumers/readers (persuasive advertisement, unethical advertisement etc.) or may not publish (or may not give noticeable importance) what is good to readers / consumers. For example, Industrial houses can put pressure on editors by denying advertisements. ‘With globalisation the distinction between editorial and advertisement has disappeared in newspapers, so much so that advertisement department controls the content in some elite newspaper’.\(^2\) Since circulation revenue alone cannot sustain a newspaper, denial of advertisements can pose a severe financial problem. Hence, VCOs, consumer activists and all concerned with consumerism should equip themselves to get ‘qualitative treatment’ for consumer protection in newspapers. The qualitative treatment depends both on what is published in consumer interest and what is stalled from publication in consumer interest.
In this information era, the interest of newspaper readers are diversified. It is absolutely necessary to take special measures to keep the interest of editors (publishers) and readers active in ‘Consumer Protection’ issues. In this neo-information age, newspapers get information on information to see its ‘space deserving capacity’ or ‘space denying advantage’ in their limited space.

Newspapers content can be broadly classified into two types: news and views. In the interest of consumers, in their news columns newspapers can publish judgements of various consumer courts, about legislation, market news, uses of goods, and such other aspects. Views in a newspaper appear mainly in the form of special articles, editorials and letters to editors.

Some newspapers have an exclusive consumer column. The VCOs and consumer activists can make use of this to write articles in this column. If a regular writer writes in this column, information and material available can be supplied to them to make the column popular, effective and useful.

It is in the letters to the editor that the consumer (citizen) gets an opportunity to give his/her view. Consumers can make use of this column to air their grievances to create public opinion against erring suppliers. Consumer activists in addition to writing letters to the editors, have to train consumers to write effective letters to the editors.

Consumers and Newspapers:

In analysing the role of newspapers in consumer protection, it is important to know the habit of reading newspapers among consumers. Of 675 consumers interviewed, only 76 read them regularly. Among these newspaper readers many read only a few pages or columns of their interest (Sports, Film, Local news etc).
Table No.5.1

Newspaper Readership Among Consumers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumers</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not read newspapers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>88.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regularly</td>
<td>Kannada 67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read newspapers regularly</td>
<td>English 08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Languages 01</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>11.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>675</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey.

Among 76 consumers who read newspapers regularly, 67 read (88.15 per cent) Kannada newspapers, 08 read (10.53 per cent) English newspaper and 1 consumer reads other language newspaper. (02 consumers read more than one Kannada news paper regularly and 3 read one English and one Kannada news paper).

Among 67 consumers who read Kannada newspapers 58 read either Prajavani, Samyuktha Karnataka, Kannada Prabha, Vijaya Karnataka or Udayavani. These five (daily) newspapers among 279 dailies (Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation, July-Dec.1998) in Karnataka are analysed to know the impact of Newspapers in consumer protection.

Analysis of Kannada Newspapers:

The following five newspapers namely Prajavani, Samyuktha Karnataka, Kannada Prabha, Vijaya Karnataka and Udayavani are analysed based on the respondents' readership habits. Among 67 consumers who read Kannada newspapers (Table no.5.1), 19 read Prajavani, 14 read Samyuktha Karnataka, 10 read Kannada Prabha, 9 read Vijaya Karnataka and 6 read Udayavani. (This total comes to 58) remaining 09 consumers read other 6 local based newspapers. To know the role of newspapers in informing, educating and helping consumers, the above mentioned five newspapers of one week have been analysed (19-12-2000 to 25-12-2000). Particularly editorials, letters to editors, news (with special emphasis on judgements of consumer courts), special articles on consumer issues and advertisement policy.

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## Analysis of Kannada Daily Newspapers of a week (19th Dec. to 25th Dec, 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Price (per day)</th>
<th>Price (per month)</th>
<th>Total Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prajvani (Hubli-Dharwad Edition)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>18.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Samyuktha Karnataka (Hubli Edition)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>18.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kannada Prabha (Belgaum Edition)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>18.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Vijaya Karnataka (Hubli Edition)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Udayavani (Manipal Edition)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>18.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prajavani:

Prajavani is published from four centres, namely Bangalore, Hubli-Dharwad, Hyderabad and Mangalore. This has the highest circulation among Kannada daily newspapers. Now, this is the only newspaper which has its noticeable presence in all parts of Karnataka. The Printers (Mysore) Ltd., Bangalore Publishes this newspaper.

Editorial: Except on Sundays, this newspaper carries editorial column on all days of the week. Three different issues are covered every day in editorial. Among 18 editorials in a week only one editorial on 21-12-2000 was directly related to consumer protection. In this editorial, the decision of electricity supplier to hike electricity chargers by 17% has been called 'unwanted'. The editorial emphasizes other options available. The editorial lists collecting huge bills due from industrialists and rich farmers and reducing transmission and distribution losses as alternate remedies. (Transmission loss in the state is 35%, one of the highest in the country).

Letters to the Editors: Except on Mondays on all other days the newspaper carries letters-to-the-editor column – 'Vachakara Vani'. Everyday 4-6 letters from readers are published in this column. In one week there were four letters written on consumer issues. One is written on necessity of creating a permanent fund to give compensation to cooking gas cylinder consumers in accidents. The letter is written by K. Somanath Mallya from Bangalore. Another letter by Ravi Hegde from Dharwad emphasizes environment protection (with particular reference to the death of endangered birds in Mysore tanks). Another letter by S.B. Anniayappa from Bangalore is against the electricity suppliers’ decision to hike the rate by 17 per cent. He suggests to limit the hike to 6 - 8% range. B.S. Narayanaswamy in his letter terms intended electricity hike as ‘hot gift’ to consumers for coming ‘new year’ and
Christmas. All these letters are general in nature. The column does not
carry particular complaints of individual consumers against suppliers.

News: The newspaper has covered both the supplier's argument for hike and
opposition to the proposed hike (particularly from opposition parties in
government). No VCOs opposition or opinion is covered in the newspaper.
To project the inefficiency of electricity supplier, the paper highlighted a bill
given to a poor consumer for Rs.1.63 lakhs as monthly electricity bill (against
his regular monthly bill of Rs.20, where there is only one point in his house).

On every Wednesday the newspaper brings out a supplement on
Commerce – Agriculture. In this supplement a special column on consumer
protection – 'Grahakara Sukha Dukka' is published, in which mainly
decisions of district fora and state commission are highlighted. In this week's
column (20-12-2000) a decision in favour of a complainant against Life
Insurance Corporation of India by Bidar District Forum is illustrated.

Special Articles: This newspaper does not have regular special weekly
articles on consumer issues. (Unlike its sister publication English news paper,
Deccan Herald, where Shakunthala Narasimhan and Daksha Hathi writes
regularly on Sundays). Occasionally the paper publishes articles on
consumer. In this week on 20-12-2000 Shaileschandra writes on the
comparative advantage of nationalized and scheduled banks over high tech
costly private banks. He suggests nationalized and other scheduled banks to
develop 'Consumer orientation' in their work.

Advertisement: No newspaper can survive in today's competitive market
without publishing advertisements. But there has to be some control on the
'type' of advertisement and control to the space used for advertisements. It is
good that this newspaper has shown self-regulation to a certain extent. For
example, some newspapers (like Udayavani and Vijaya Karnataka) are using prime front page for advertising on all days of the week. But Prajavani in one week has used the front page (with an exception of small 7x3.3cm, 2 advertisements on top corners on all days) only on two days the right side bottom space (of 13.5 x 19.5cm size).

Samyuktha Karnataka:

Samyuktha Karnataka is published from three centres – Hubli, Gulbarga and Bangalore. This paper has large circulation in northern Karnataka. Lokashiskhana Trust publishes this newspaper.

Editorial: On all days of the week, except on Mondays, paper carries editorial column. Generally the paper carries an editorial on two issues every day. A majority of editorials are on policy matters and the working of central and state governments. Out of 11 editorials only one editorial is on consumer issue. This editorial issue is on electricity suppliers decision to hike the rate. The editorial termed the hike in the rate as ‘transfering the inefficiency of the supplier to consumers’.

Letters to Editor: This letters-to-editor column – ‘Janamana’ – is published on all days of the week, except on Mondays. This column carries 2 to 4 letters everyday. Individual consumers’ specific complaint against suppliers/manufacturers are not published in this column. Consumer protection oriented letters published in this column are very general in nature. There are two letters on passengers’ inconvenience due to government-owned buses stopping at unscheduled places and bad condition of roads. Kallesh Kumbar from Harogeri and Ashok Kullalikar from Jamakhandi wrote these letters.
News: In this section, consumer-oriented main news covered extensively by the paper is electricity supplier’s decision to hike the rate. Not even one decision of the district forum or of the state commission is covered in the whole of one week's publication. The news covered is mainly political and local in nature.

Special Articles: There is no special consumer column in this newspaper. Here and there, occasionally the paper publishes articles on consumer protection issues. In this week, on 20-12-2000, the paper published an article by Ashok Swamy from Gangavathi. The article cautions consumers against low quality, high price and misuse of medicines. The writer squarely blames the defective drug policy of the government. The article also stresses on responsibilities of pharmacists.

The newspaper publishes special supplements on Agriculture – Business (Wednesdays), films (Fridays), Sports (Saturdays) and a general weekly supplement – Sapthahika Saurabha (on Sundays). In any of these supplements there is no regular column on ‘consumer issues’.

Advertisement: The newspaper is not controlling advertisements in the best interest of consumers. For example, it has used its front page right side bottom space on 4 days in a week for advertisement. That too on one day (on 23-12-2000) it has used it for advertising a brand of Gutkha (A tobacco product).

Kannada Prabha

This newspaper is published from three centres – Bangalore, Belgaum and Shimoga. The publisher of this newspaper is Express Publications (Madurai) Ltd. of Indian Express fame.
Editorial: The newspaper carries editorial on six days of the week (on Sundays there is no editorial column). On all days except Monday, the editorial is written on three different issues. Generally on Mondays the editorial deals with only one issue.

Among all Kannada newspapers (analysed here), this newspaper has given special emphasis on consumer issues in its editorial. For example, among sixteen editorials in a week, at least six have an element of consumer issues in them. Consumer related issues covered in the editorial are postal strike, accountability in development works, procurement of food grains by government, their quality and impact on consumer, electricity rate hike, politics in procurement of food grains and deteriorating food grain stock in warehouses, and on opposition parties' hue and cry on electricity rate hike.

The editorial on procurement of low quality wheat and rice from Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh (on 20-12-2000) criticizes central government policy as politically motivated and anti-consumer. The editorial questions the quality of these food-grains and the cost involved in that. Again on 21-12-2000 the editorial highlights the inefficient procurement and distribution of food grains. The editorial suggests to distribute the extra, low quality, deteriorating food grain to poor consumers at concessional rate.

Quite contrary to the stand taken by all (editorial writing) other newspapers, the electricity rate hike is justified by this newspaper through its two powerful editorials. It calls the hike as inevitable in one editorial (on 22-12-2000) and calls the opposition to hike, by opposition parties as 'bad politics'. The editorial warns political parties not to do this type of politics. Instead it calls them to tell real fact to the people. Otherwise, the editorial opines, it becomes difficult for any party to govern in the future.
**Letters to Editor**: Except on Sundays on all the six days of the week the paper carries letters to editor column. This column carries 5-6 letters every day. Most of the letters are on political, government’s performance, religion etc. Very few letters are on consumer issues. That too they are general in nature. For example, on 21-12-2000, Botany Raghavandra Rao writes from Shimoga, ‘Why so much of hue and cry when the price of agricultural commodities like arecanut and coffee falls’. He questions it on two grounds. One, the retail price has not come down considerably. He blames middlemen for this. Secondly, he writes, ‘when the coffee price was (Rs.180-200 per kg) high in early 1990s, the growers were not bothered about consumers’. Indirectly he opines the fall in price is good for consumers.

Specific complaints of consumers against suppliers and suppliers response is not published from this column.

**News**: This is the only Kannada newspaper which has directly supported the government move of increasing the electricity charges. The newspaper has not carried even one decision of the district forum and state commission in its news item in its one week publication.

**Special Articles**: On Tuesdays it carries special article on consumer protection. Y.G. Muralidhar regularly writes in this column. This week he has written on ‘Model rule for selling Drugs’. He wants the WHO code of conduct to be followed in the interest of consumers. The paper publishes articles on consumer protection in this column under caption – ‘Grahaka Jagruthi’.

**Advertisement**: This is the only newspaper in Kannada to maintain the sanctity of front page. Not even on one day does it carry a single piece of advertisement in the front page. Even in other pages the advertisement has
been published with great restraint. This itself is a great consumer protection measure of the paper.

**Vijaya Karnataka:**

Vijaya Karnataka is a new addition to Kannada newspaper industry. Now, it is one year old. The paper is published from six centres – Hubli, Bangalore, Gulbarga, Mangalore, Shimoga and Mysore. The paper is published by Vijay Sankeshwar of Anand Printers and Publishers.

**Editorial:** This paper also carries editorial on six days of the week. The Sundays issue does not carry the editorial column. But this paper uses only 2/3 of (only 9 x 27cm) the space that other newspapers use for editorial. The everyday editorial is written on two issues. There are twelve editorials in a week, but the emphasis is not on consumer related issues. Only two editorials have only a touch of it. One is on hike in electricity rates. This editorial (on 21-12-2000) claims the intended hike of 17% to be unreasonable and will be an unbearable burden on consumers. Another editorial (on 20-12-2000) is on environment pollution (with particular reference to death of birds in Mysore tanks). Other editorials are on government policies, programmes and political in nature.

**Letters to Editor:** The paper carries this column on six days of the week (no letters to editor column on Sundays). The column known as – ‘Chinthana Manthana’ – carries 5-8 letters everyday. Like all other Kannada newspapers, this paper is also not carrying particular complaints of individual consumers against suppliers. There are general letters in this column which highlight the plight of ordinary consumers. For example, H.S. Suryanarayan from Kadur writes (25-12-2000) that the intended hike in electricity charges is unreasonable. Raghavendra Karanth from Bramhavar writes in his letter ‘who
is there in the queue for strike’ on 19-12-2000. He criticizes the inconvenience caused to consumers by the postal strike and bank strikes. C.V.R. Rao from Hospet (on 19-12-2000) writes on deforestation. This is with reference to government sanction to cut 70000 trees from Kaiga to Narandra for bringing power line. He warns, ‘the unplanned growth results in scanty rainfall and decrease in underground water table’ and resulting drought.

News : In the news item, paper gave coverage to inconvenience caused to consumers due to postal strike. Wide coverage was given to opposition parties (in Karnataka) criticism of the intended hike in electricity charges. The paper has not covered the decisions of district forum and state commission during this week.

Special Articles : There is no special column in the newspaper for consumer issues on any day of the week. The paper publishes special supplement on Agriculture (Wednesdays), on films(Fridays) and on Sundays – Saphahika Vijaya – a weekly special supplement. But in these supplements no special articles are included on consumer protection. The paper has also published ‘Mahilavijaya’ (on women) on 19th December, ‘Putani Vijaya’ (on children) on 23 December, and ‘Krida Vijaya’ (on Sports) on 21-December, as free gift to readers. So far no special supplement is brought on ‘Consumer Protection by the paper’.

Advertisement : On all seven days of the week the paper has used its front page right side bottom space for advertisement. (Space of 14 x 19.5cm). Even though price of the paper is uniform on all days and less than all other newspapers (analysed here) the advertisement policy of the paper is not in consumer interest. (Low price may be short term strategy of news paper to capture the market, as it is a new entrant).
Udayavani

This newspaper is published from three centres – Manipal, Bangalore and Mumbai. This paper has large circulation in the coastal districts of Karnataka. This has also a wide circulation in those places where people from the coastal districts have migrated. Hence, it has a publication from Mumbai itself. The printing quality of paper is good.

Editorial: There is no editorial column in this paper on any day of the week. Hence this is one important disadvantage for readers of this newspaper. Readers cannot know the editors view on any issue.

Letters to Editor: The paper has letters-to-editor column ‘Janathavani’. Readers can express their views only on four days in a week (excluding Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays). This column carries 5-6 letters in each issue. This paper also does not carry specific complaints of consumers. But letters on general consumer problems are published regularly. For example, on 22-December, Uday G.Pujari writes about consumer-to-consumer relation and consumer protection. In the letter, he referred to ‘Gutkha’ chewing and smoking audience in public places like public tents, cinema halls, etc. He highlights the hazards, ‘those’ consumers cause to others. Another letter on 20th December highlights benefits of using tender coconuts (instead of aerated soft drinks) to consumers as well as to farmers.

News: The newspaper covers more regional news (particularly of three coastal districts Udupi, Dakshina, Kannada and Uttara Kannada). The paper gives more importance to ‘non-controversial news’ than to ‘views’. It has also not given preference to reporting the decisions of district fora and state commission.

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Special Articles: This paper has a weekly special column on consumer issues, on every Thursdays by Ravindranath Shanbhag. The column is titled Bahujana Hithaya and Bahujana Sukhaya. In this column Shanbhag writes on consumer problems. In each article one particular problem is highlighted. The column has become popular. The first 13 articles published in this column have been brought out in book form.

Advertisement: On all days of the week the paper uses its front page space for advertisement. On some days of the week (for example on 20th and 23rd December) it used its full bottom space on the front page (37 x 12 cm one day and 37 x 13.5cm in another day). On another day it used (22nd December) 18.5 x 25cm front page right side bottom space for advertisement. Advertisements like Bon voyage, death remembrance, anniversaries are extensively published in newspaper in addition to other commercial advertisements. The paper uses more space for commercial advertisement than any other Kannada newspapers analysed here. (On the other hand the newspaper gives news print free of cost to a VCO in Udupi to publish its news-letter).

Kannada newspapers have not given prominence to news pertaining to consumer issues (compared to their English counterparts). Reporting decisions of district fora and state commission is not taken up regularly by Kannada newspapers. Even in letters to editor column the Kannada newspapers are not publishing complaints of individual or group of consumers on civic amenities or deficiency in service or other consumer problems. It is a good trend that many public utility providers and suppliers have evolved mechanism to look into specific complaints of consumers, which appear in the media (for example, Water supply board in Bangalore, electricity supply etc). Hence, Kannada newspapers have to come forward to publish the consumers
complaints and the response of suppliers in the interest of both consumer and service provider.

Commercial advertisements which are more persuasive than informative are not in the best interest of consumers. Even though no newspaper can survive without advertisement, newspapers can show ‘self-regulation’ in taking advertisement. Front page space for commercial advertisements can be avoided. Advertisements of tobacco products and liquors can be rejected, unethical and indecent advertisements have to be discouraged. In this way both by what a ‘newspaper publishes’ and by what a newspaper ‘does not’ publish it can contribute to consumer protection.

English Newspapers:

English newspapers, particularly Deccan Herald, The Hindu, The New Indian Express and Times of India are competing for a bigger market share in Karnataka. Only 8 consumers (out of 675 interviewed) read English newspapers. English newspapers are mainly limited to urban educated readers. All the 08 consumers who read English newspapers are urban consumers who have professional qualifications or post-graduation. Compared to Kannada newspapers, English newspaper cover more consumer related news. Special articles also appear regularly. The Hindu has also brought out a special folio on ‘consumer’ in October, 1999, for circulation with Sunday magazine.³

The Consumer Folio:

The Folio contains 14 articles on different aspects of consumerism. K.Srinivasan (former secretary, department of consumer affairs, government of India) in his article – A new era in consumerism-writes about the scenario of consumer protection in India. He opines, ‘We have a long way to go in
empowering consumers'. Bharath Jayaraj (of Citizen Consumer and Civil Action Group, Chennai) in his article - “A forum for Redressal”, writes how the mechanism under CPA helps consumers to redress their grievances. The third article in the folio is written by V.Y. Yegnaraman (of SMN Consumer Protection Council, Chennai). The title of the article is – “The right service at the right time”. In this article the author highlights how the public utilities in India under government ownership have failed to give the right service at the right time. The next article – “Product Safety : a Long Way to Go”-is written by R.Desikan (of FEDCOT, Tamil Nadu). He narrates a series of dangerous products in the market, including sharp toys which hurt children. He compares the safety standards in U.S.A. and India and suggests for the establishment of a consumer product safety commission in India. Pritte Shah (of CERS, Ahmedabad) in her article – “A Mode of Empowerment” highlights products tested in the in-house laboratory established by CERS, Ahmedabad and test reports published in their magazine, Insight. “Roopa Vajpeyi (Editor, Consumer Voice) writes in the article entitled – Of Informed Choices, Safe buys”, stresses the importance of comparative testing of products. The writer also narrates the efforts made by VCOs in this direction. Narendra Wagle (of CGSI, Mumbai) in the article – “The Seal of Quality”, highlights the importance of ISI, AGMARK to the consumers. Kavith. M in the article – “Fighting for a Better Life”, writes about consumerism in general and particularly in Tamil Nadu. The necessity of Citizens Charter is also analysed. Goutam Ghosh in the article – “Spending is Priority Today”, highlights consumerist attitude of consumers. Srinivas Narayanaswamy in the article – “Milestones of the Consumer Movement”, traces the important landmarks both at the national and international level. Pradeep Mehta (CUTS, Jaipur) writes about different ways through which the businessmen entice the consumer. Visa Ravindran writes about women as consumers in the
article – “It is All for Her”. The author traces the changing role of women in India, Shakunthala Narasimhan in the article – “Catching ‘em Young”, writes how Indian children are taken for a ride particularly by soft drinks companies. She also gives examples of toys, and the tragic effects of ads on children. At the end she questions – ‘If the sellers seek to catch them young, why can’t we catch them young too, arm them against practices and pressures that are not in their best interests?’ The last article in the Folio – “Unique Co-operative Experiment” is written by M.S. Panajkar (MGP, Mumbai). The article highlights the buying groups organised by the Janata Madhyavarthi Grahak Sahakari Sangh Ltd. on a co-operative basis.

The Folio is informative and deals with different aspects of consumer protection. Other newspapers also have to come out with similar supplements to empower, educate and to protect the consumers. English newspapers’ contribution to consumer movement is comparatively better than that of Kannada news papers. Recently, The New Indian Express has organised a cartoon contest on six topics. One of the topics is consumerism (other topics are politics, education, business, corruption and sports) [In Dec-2000 and Jan-2001] In Deccan Herald Sunday supplements carried special articles on consumer issues. Daksha Hathi and Shakunthala Narasimhan write in this column. In Times of India (Bangalore issue) Y.G. Muralidhar writes once in a week on consumer issues.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA:

Television, radio and internet are the three important constituents of electronic media. This media can play an effective role in consumer education and protection. Even though internet has not reached the ordinary consumers, it can be used to create awareness (particularly among students)
among particular target groups about the consumer movement. In future this media is going to be very potential.

TELEVISION:

Television is an audio-visual medium. Due to synergical effect television is not just radio with pictures. Hence, Government (Depts. like Consumer Affairs), Central Consumer Protection Council, State Consumer council, VCOs and television channels have to make use of television medium to educate and inform consumers. But right now the potential of this medium has not been fully exploited. Television has not reached poor rural consumers. Compared to developed countries television per 1000 population is very little in India. It is just 64 in India against 806 in U.S.A., 709 in Canada, 700 in Japan, 666 in Australia, 612 in UK, and 252 in China.4

Out of 675 consumers interviewed, 412 view television programmes (at least for half an hour a day) (Table 5.2). Among these 336 consumers view only Doordarshan. 76 consumers view multiple channels including Doordarshan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No.5.2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television Viewership</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Only Doordarshan</th>
<th>Multiple Channels</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On an average upto ½ hour per day</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On an average for more than ½ hour to 2 hours per day.</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On an average more than 2 hours per day.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : Field Survey.
Even though television medium is popular among consumers, (particularly Doordarshan – a government owned channel), consumer protection programmes have not made the expected impact on consumers. In (the last) one year, of 336 consumers who view only Doordarshan channel, just 08 have viewed at least one exclusive programme on consumer protection. And 11 (out of 76) consumers who watch multiple channels have viewed at least one exclusive programme on consumer protection during (the last) one year. It is clear that urban consumers with multiple channels are more exposed to programmes on consumer protection on television.

Bangalore Doordarshan on every 4th Tuesday of every month (from 5.20 pm to 5.40pm) for 20 minutes telecasts a programme on consumer protection, but the viewership rating is very poor. (Table No.5.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Viewership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1999</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1999</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1999</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2000</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Doordarshan Audience Research Television (DART).

It is clear from table No.5.3 that the programme on consumer protection on Television is not popular among viewers. The viewership is as low as 0 per cent (in Jan 1999). The highest viewership is only 8% (in March 2000).
Table No.5.4

Viewership rating for top ten programmes in Doordarshan, for March 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Viewership Percentage</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kannada Film</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rin Rangoli (Film songs)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. News (Wednesday)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Serial : Parivarthitha</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Serial : Bala Beladingalu</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Chithramangari (Film Songs)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Serial : Police Sanchike</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Serial : Sakshathkara</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Serial : Rail Jeevi</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cinema Sanchike (Film awards - Live telecast)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Doordarshan Audience Research Television (DART).

It is clear from the table no.5.4 that six of the top ten programmes are serials (In May 1999 seven of 10 programmes). With good viewership percentage and ranking, programmes like Police Sanchike (where viewers are educated as how to be careful from criminals, thieves and dacoites etc in the society. This serial uses real cases) has high viewership and ranking. At present programmes on consumer protection are arranged in the form of talks or interviews with experts. Viewers are not interested in this type of programmes. Viewers have branded present programme on consumer protection as 'talking head' programme. Hence to take consumer protection issues to consumers 'serial' forms can be used, by taking consumer related issues. Judgements of consumer courts, consumer
complaints under different acts, sufferings of consumers, businessmen who have been proved guilty and the nature of the cases can be shown in story form to viewers. Even consumer oriented programmes from national network like 'Janavani', 'Suraksha Upbhokta', 'Rajani' and 'Sooj Bhooj' (all in Hindi) have not become popular in Karnataka. Only 8 of the 675 consumers interviewed know about some of the programmes telecast in the national network in Hindi on consumer protection.

VCOs can produce serials. But producing television programmes is expensive. It needs experts like writers, cameramen, sound engineers, on-air talent, lighting engineers, graphic designers, editors etc. More than anything else finance is needed. Hence VCOs have to generate finance or rope in sponsorers. Government departments (Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs, Law departments etc), Consumer Protection Councils can also produce television programmes (serials).

RADIO:

It is an accepted situation that the radio listeners are mostly rural. So consumer activists can make use of this opportunity to take the message of consumer protection to rural areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No.5.5.</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio Listeners</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On an average upto ½ hour Per day.</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On an average for more than ½ hour upto 2hrs per day.</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On an average for more than 2 hours per day.</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey.
Out of 675 consumers interviewed, 386 listened to the radio programmes for at least ½ an hour a day. Out of 386 radio listeners, 307 listened to the radio for more than half an hour per day. Among radio listeners 71 per cent (274 out of 386) are rural consumers. Hence the radio can be used to take consumer protection movement to the rural consumers.

The Radio programmes popular among consumers are film songs (67%), news (59%), dramas (52%) and skits (46%). But only 4 radio listeners (out of 386) have heard at least one programme on consumer protection in (the last) one year. This clearly shows bad response to the programmes on consumer protection in radio. One of the reasons for poor response is, discussions, interviews and talks are organised on consumer protection from various radio stations in the state, which are not attracting listeners.

The radio can impart information on what is happening in the field of consumer protection by giving coverage to important days like consumer rights day, world environment day, anti-tobacco day etc. This can be done on different formats like features, skits, plays, even music items should be designed to suit to the taste, and awareness level of the target group. Programmes must be made interesting, informative and educative. As majority of listeners like (film) songs, dramas and skits, the consumers protection topics should also be given as far as possible in these forms.

FOLK MEDIA:

If the communication is to be truly effective, it should be based on the beliefs and values of the community it should be respectful and trustworthy. The folk media fit best the consumer movement for the rural consumers. The mass media are not able to reach the rural populations with relevant information which is needed for consumers for protecting themselves. At the
same time, folk media is not only effective in rural areas, but are also locally available, easily accessible, familiar to audience. They require less preparation, they are flexible, easily understood, and relatively inexpensive. One of the integral parts of folk media is audience participation. This facilitates personal contact, demonstration and interaction. This helps in encouraging greater attentiveness and therefore greater and better understanding of the message. In Karnataka vast folk media are available. For example, in Karnataka 'Yakshagana', 'Bayalata', 'Folksongs', 'Street plays', 'Gombeyata' are very popular ('Yakshagana has been used effectively in environment programmes). All folk forms are not suitable for any and every kind of consumer protection programme, thus careful analysis of content and character should be done in order to carry the message effectively. VCOs, schools, colleges and government can make use of this media for bringing awareness, particularly among rural consumers.

OTHER MEDIA:

Public Information Leaflet/Pamphlets/ Brochures:

Leaflets, pamphlets and brochures are easily produced materials that are invaluable for communicating with many different groups and the general public. Pamphlets are also effective in provoking discussion. CREAT, Bangalore is the only VCO which has made use of this in its limited jurisdiction. (Vijayanagar Extension in Bangalore). No other VCO or government department or institutions has made use of this media for consumer protection effectively.

Posters: VCOs, government, departments and institutions can make use of posters for promoting consumer cause. Particularly the attention of consumers can be drawn to important events and days (ex. Consumer rights day, environment day etc.). This medium has not been used by any VCO in Karnataka.
Magazine: There are a large number of magazines, English magazines like *India Today, Frontline, The Week* are popular only among English reading 'elite' consumers. (*The week* has brought out supplements with the magazine on consumer related issues. For example, on 25-8-1996 it has brought out supplement to vehicle consumers and on 27-4-1997 on consumer protection. This supplement focused on responsibilities of consumers, tips for checking adulteration, healthcare, filing complaints in a consumer court etc). There are magazines catering to particular interest groups like women (for example, *Femina, Eve's weekly* in English, *Grahashoba* in Kannada), cinema (*Filmfare, Stardust*) business (*Business India, Business Week*) etc. But there are no popular magazines for consumer interest (hence magazines like *Insight* are to be popularized by consumer activists and VCOs). Even in magazines which cater to other fields, articles have to be written and material is to be supplied by VCOs and activists to those who write regularly in those magazines. In Kannada there are magazines like *Sudha, Taranga, Karmaveera* and *Nuthana* (all weeklies). Even though *Sudha* (for example, on 25-01-1999 it published an article entitled – consumerist culture, 'Kollubaka Samskruthi' by Anirudh Bagewadi) and *Taranga* (articles by Ravindranath Shanbhag) occasionally publish articles on consumer issues, but there are no regular columns in any of these Kannada magazines on consumer protection. On the contrary all these magazines carry lot of commercial advertisements. *'Taranga'* is one step ahead in commercializing the magazine with advertonials (for example, on Horlicks). There are two other weeklies in Kannada *'Lankesh Pathrike'* and *'Hai Bangalore'*. Even though they do not publish exclusive articles on consumer protection, they have contributed to a great extent to the consumer movement indirectly by not accepting any commercial advertisement.
Overhead projection and slide tape: Many VCOs in Karnataka have organised meetings and lectures for the general public and to students in schools and colleges. But for one VCO, none has an overhead projector. Another VCO uses slide tape. Hence VCOs have to make use of overhead projector and slide tape to make their presentation effective.

COUNTER ADVERTISING:

Often we come across advertisements, which do not speak the truth, or hide facts. Today’s advertisements have become more persuasive than informative. ‘Many advertisements cause more harm than help. ‘In certain developing nations (like India) mass media through consumer oriented (aimed) advertisement campaigns have displayed a bulldozing effect on local art, language and culture. This instead of equity, has created, wider hiatus between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. Besides consumerism, (here the word consumerism used for materialistic attitude), crime rates, ethnic conflicts, sex, violence and corruption are also becoming a way of life. In the international sphere, where cultural cooperation is vouched for a “global” village concept, it is cultural conquest rather than cooperation which appear to be visible on the world scence’. Particularly the advertisement (and surrogate ads) of cigarettes, alcohol have become a menace. Even competition will not help consumers in this type of products as the products of all the manufacturers have the same negative aspect. VCOs and all concerned with the consumer welfare have a great responsibility in protecting consumers from this menace. Mere educating the public through lectures, insisting warning instructions on label, reports, articles or school lessons do not have the catchy attraction that a commercial advertisements has. The only alternative is counter advertising by VCOs, government agencies and by all other concerned institutions. To make counter advertisements effective the help of advertising agencies is to be taken. Competition to children and adults can be organised to come out
with lines exposing the unethical undertones in commercial advertising. For example, one such counter advertising came from a national contest for children held in the U.S. where often quoted advertisement line “you have come a long way, baby” coined for a tobacco company that wanted women to take up smoking. This was countered with a parody line that a contestant came up with, which said, ‘you have come the wrong way baby”. Another example (also from tobacco advertising) parodies another ad line which says, “virginia slims – it's a woman thing”. The parody has turned this tag line into “Virginia slime – it's a cancer thing”. Apparently, the message was devastatingly successful because the tobacco company (Philip Morris) has felt impelled to remove its advertisement from New York city taxi rooftops (because those who saw the advertisement line immediately also recalled the counter-advertisement line, due to the similarities in phrasing, and therefore the promotion was proving counter productive.

VCOs in addition to counter advertisements in popular media can sponsor public service advertisements including spots like once on helmet, environment protection, water conservation, savings, and on similar consumer relevant topics. VCOs have to pressurize both government owned and private media to provide the media free of cost or at concessional rate for the consumer cause. VCOs can also contact industrial houses to sponsor such programmes. (There are many industrial houses who have realised the importance of social responsibility and consumer protection. Others who have not realised the social responsibility have to be educated).

In this knowledge based society media has a great role to play. Particularly in consumer issues media can help or harm consumer interest. Hence, it is in the hands of media owners, business, government and VCOs to make ‘best’ use of media for consumer protection.
REFERENCES: