

Consumer Awareness on Quality Assurance Marks: a study of select districts in Telangana

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Abstract: Every business person performs different activities from manufacturing a product to delivering of the same to the target consumer. The basic function/responsibility of business is to identify the needs of consumer(s), to produce the product or service according to the requirement of consumers and make them satisfied. Quality assurance standards ensure the consumer about quality of the product. An ordinary consumer is unable to find the quality, durability, performance of the product through mere observation of the product. It can be concluded that the respondents of Hyderabad district were having more awareness than respondents of Mahabubnagar district about the Quality assurance mark and the awareness level among the respondents was significant.

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I. Introduction

The concept of 'consumer' begins with needs and wants. Consumer means the person who consumes goods for satisfying his/her needs. In other words, consumer denotes a person who consumes or uses an article in an economy. Producer is a person who offers the goods or services to consumers. Consumer is one who purchases goods and services for his/her use. Every one of us is a consumer. Consumers are the largest economic group in every country. Consumers play a very significant role in the economic development of a country. In fact, consumers are the pillars of the economy. Every person is a consumer in one way or the other. A person becomes a consumer as soon as he/she purchases or hires a product or service.

Some of the business persons are following unfair trade practices like overpricing, underweight, duplicate products and so on. Innocent customers are not in a position to understand these practices. Since India is a welfare state, it is the responsibility of the state to protect the health and wellbeing of its citizens. Thus, Consumer Protection is the primary duty of the state. Consumers must be aware of various features of the product/service.

Quality Assurance Standards

Quality assurance standards ensure the consumer about quality of the product. An ordinary consumer is unable to find the quality, durability, performance of the product through mere observation of the product. Quality assurance (QA) is a systematic process of determining whether a product or service meets specified requirements. Standards are necessary to ensure that the material used, product or procedure is fit for its intended purpose. Product standards prescribe optimum levels of quality, safety and performance of the product. Quality Assurance standards ensure consumer protection on various issues.

1. ISI Mark

ISI Mark is a standardization mark issued by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to certify that the products conform to the minimum quality standards. BIS main aim of certification is to provide guaranty of quality, safety and reliability of the product.

2. Hallmarking

Hallmarking is the accurate determination and official recording of the proportionate content of precious metal in precious metal articles. Hallmarks are official marks used as guarantee of purity or fineness of precious metal articles like gold, silver, platinum and in some countries palladium. In India, BIS brought gold and silver under the purview of Hallmarking.

3. AGMARK

AGMARK is a certification mark on agriculture-related products, like oils, pulses etc. The AGMARK ensures the consumer that the Agri-products conform to a set of standards approved by the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, an agency of the Government of India.

4. Wool Mark

Wool mark is a certification mark used on textile products as an assurance that the product is made of 100 percent pure new wool. Wool mark is recognized throughout the world as a symbol of quality and reliability.

5. Star Mark

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) is an agency of the Government of India, created in March 2002 under the Ministry of Power. The mission of Bureau of Energy Efficiency is to reduce energy intensity in the economy.

II. Review of Literature

Review of literature is the backbone of the every research. Research studies conducted early in the similar area will give an idea about the present research problem. Review of literature will help understand the research problem. Many Research studies were conducted on consumer awareness towards consumer rights and consumer protection laws.

S. RajaMohan, (1998)¹ Study revealed that urban consumers have better awareness than the rural consumers in the state of Tamilnadu. It was revealed that urban consumers were giving importance to quality of the product. Among the quality assurance standards, urban consumers had more awareness about ISI and Agmark, when compared with rural consumers.

Gambhir, Cheena (2000)² A study was conducted to examine the different consumer related aspects The study revealed that 54% of respondents were aware about ISI mark and 46% were unaware. Only 30% respondents out of 54% bought the products that had ISI mark.

Krishnakumar and Sakthivanthan (2012)³ conducted a study to find the awareness level about protection acts. Rural respondents' awareness about food adulteration acts is low. Awareness of legal law for misuse of weight, using hand made balance for weight, less quantity in the package is very low.

Kaur (2017)⁴ conducted a study to find the awareness level in rural and urban areas of Himachal Pradesh. Rural and urban consumers prefer to purchase quality products. Urban and rural consumers not known the importance of cash memo and warranty details. It was found in the study that majority respondents are aware of quality assurance marks. Advertisements have influenced the buying behavior of rural and urban consumers.

III. Need for the Study

Every person in this society is a consumer in one way or the other. Every consumer confronted exploitation from sellers in terms of high pricing, poor quality, underweight and so on. In order to protect the consumer interest, the government enacted acts. Consumer must be aware of the consumer protection measures framed by the government. This study will help us assess the levels of awareness among consumers towards quality assurance marks.

Significance of the Study

The present study is useful in determining consumer awareness level about quality assurance marks in select districts of Telangana state. This study provided suggestions to improve the awareness level among the consumers.

Objectives of the Study

In India, the Union Government framed various measures to protect the interests of the consumers so that unfair trade practices can be minimized and consumers' interest can be protected. Consumer protection cannot be achieved without the involvement of all stakeholders. Present study was conducted with the following objectives.

1. To know the awareness level towards quality assurance marks
2. To present the comparative picture about awareness level in urban and rural area.
3. To provide suggestions to improve awareness.

Research Methodology

To achieve the stated objectives, present study conducted by using primary data and secondary data. Primary data was collected from the two districts in Telangana. Viz Hyderabad and Mahabubnagar. Data was collected from 600 respondents from two districts. Data was analyzed with the help of some of the statistical tools like Percentages, Averages so on.

Limitations of the Study

The data collected from the individual respondents, there is a chance of personal bias while providing the information. The study is confined to two districts, viz. Mahabubnagar and Hyderabad of Telangana State.

Consumer Awareness on Quality Assurance Standards

In the present globalized world, the Indian market is being flooded with different products of the same type and features. It is very difficult task for any average consumer to identify the originality of the products. Duplicate products resemble the original products. Sometimes the duplicate products create an impression that the product is original. Packaging and design of the product is similar to that of the original product. Quality assurance standards are the marks developed by the Bureau of Indian Standards. Consumers can recognize the product's originality by verifying the quality assurance marks printed on the label. Quality assurance marks indicate quality and durability of the product. Certification mark on the product indicates that the product is safe in use and it is tested and proved safe. Consumer must verify the assurance mark during purchase.

In the present study, the data was collected from the respondents of Mahabubnagar and Hyderabad district to find the awareness level towards quality assurance marks. The findings of the study were presented in the form of table separately district wise.

Table provides the awareness level of respondents towards quality assurance marks. Based on the awareness level of respondents they classified as respondents as fully aware, partially aware and not aware.

Findings

1. In Mahabubnagar district, 57 percent of the respondents were fully aware of the ISI mark and in Hyderabad district, 62 percent of the respondents are fully aware of the ISI mark. In comparison of the respondents of two districts, it can be concluded that the respondents of Hyderabad district were having full awareness about the ISI mark

Table- 3.12
Consumer Awareness on Quality Assurance Marks
(in Nos.)

Quality Assurance Mark	Mahabubnagar District				Hyderabad District			
	Fully Aware	Partially Aware	Not Aware	Total	Fully Aware	Partially Aware	Not Aware	Total
ISI MARK	172 (57)	66(22)	62(21)	300 (100)	184 (62)	61 (20)	55 (18)	300(100)
AGMARK	165 (55)	74 (25)	61 (20)	300 (100)	184 (61)	55(18)	61 (21)	300(100)
91.6KDM	170 (57)	74 (25)	56 (18)	300 (100)	196 (66)	55 (18)	49 (16)	300(100)
HALLMARK	132 (44)	61 (20)	107 (35)	300 (100)	165 (55)	68 (23)	67 (22)	300(100)
FPO MARK	77(25)	92(31)	131(44)	300 (100)	122 (41)	68 (22)	110 (37)	300(100)
STAR MARK	97(32)	112(37)	91(31)	300 (100)	152 (51)	44 (14)	104 (35)	300(100)
WOOL MARK	71 (24)	87(29)	142 (47)	300 (100)	104 (35)	61 (20)	135 (45)	300(100)
Average	126 (42)	81 (27)	93 (31)	300(100)	158 (53)	59 (20)	83 (27)	300 (100)

Source: Primary Data

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Note: Values in parenthesis indicates percentage

2. It was observed from the table, majority respondents of two districts were fully aware of AGMARK. However, it is clear that the respondents in Hyderabad district are more aware than the respondents of Mahabubnagar district.

3. In case of 91.6 KDM , In Mahabubnagar district, 57 percent of the respondents were fully aware, In Hyderabad district, 66 percent of the respondents were fully aware of 91.6KDM. It can be concluded that the respondents of Hyderabad district were more aware than the respondents of Mahabubnagar district.

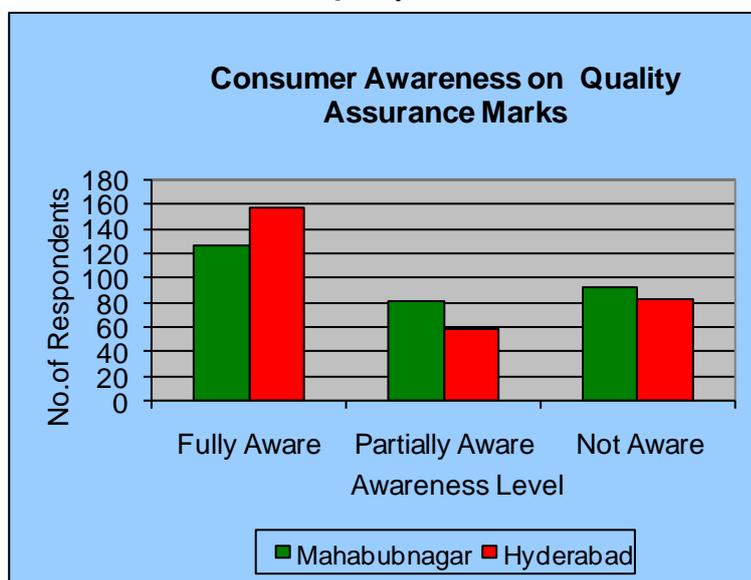
4. In Mahabubnagar district, 44 percent of the respondents were having full knowledge about Hallmark. In Hyderabad district, 55 percent of the respondents were fully aware of Hallmark, Majority respondents in two districts are aware of Hallmark. It can be concluded that awareness level among the respondents is moderate.

5. In Mahabubnagar district 25 percent of the respondents were having complete knowledge about the FPO mark, whereas in Hyderabad district 41 percent of the respondents were aware of this FPO mark. Awareness level among the respondents of two districts about this mark was moderate. However, respondents' awareness was more in Hyderabad district than that of Mahabubnagar district.

6. In Mahabubnagar district, 32 percent of the respondents were fully aware, about STAR MARK. It was observed from the analysis that majority respondents were partially aware. In Hyderabad district, 51 percent of the respondents were fully aware of STARMARK. In Hyderabad district, majority respondents were fully aware. It may be concluded that moderate level of awareness was reported but the respondents of Hyderabad were more aware than the respondents of Mahabubnagar district.

7. In Mahabubnagar district, 24 percent of the respondents are having full awareness about the Wool Mark and In Hyderabad district, 35 percent of the respondents were fully aware of the Wool Mark. It can be concluded that awareness level among the respondents of two districts was not significant.

Chart 3.5
Consumer Awareness on Quality Assurance Marks



IV Conclusion

As per the findings of the study, it may be noted that the awareness level was more in Hyderabad district than in Mahabubnagar district. However, awareness level was moderate. 42 percent of the respondents of Mahabubnagar district were fully aware of quality assurance marks and 53percent of the respondents of Hyderabad district were aware of assurance marks.

V Suggestions

1. It is the need of the hour to establish “Consumer Advisory Clubs (CACs)” at village level and these CACs should get the involvement of the young group of people from the locality into the activities related to awareness about consumer rights.
2. The young students studying at school level should be educated about the consumer rights and other awareness issues. For that it is appropriate to incorporating the consumer related aspects into the syllabus from the school level itself.
3. There should be more frequent awareness campaigning activities especially at village level to create the awareness among the rural consumers.
4. It was found from the analysis of the data collected from this study that there was more awareness among the middle age group. Hence it is desirable to involve the middle age group persons into the consumer education activities.
5. Many of the respondents are taking utmost care only when the product value is higher. It is the responsibility of the all the members of the society to habituate the individuals to take care in all respects while purchasing any product, irrespective of the product value.
6. Education programmes in the form of short films, skits, etc. should be prepared within 1-2 minutes duration and should be telecast in the TV channels, including educational channels. Social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, etc. so that the more people can be reached out as far as consumer awareness is concerned.

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