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INTRODUCTION

CONSUMER PROTECTION ensures that the desires of producers, traders and consumers are consistent and are at an equilibrium. It refers to the organised efforts by the consumers or their associations seeking redress, restitution and remedy for their dissatisfaction caused by products or services.

Consumerism or Consumer Protection as a concept finds its roots in the basic dissatisfaction of the common man with market place mechanisms. As a class, consumers are passive, accepting without demur what they are given, often critical, yet not knowing how to criticise, incoherent, disorganised and as a result virtually powerless.

The characteristics of Indian consumers are typical in comparison to their counterparts of other developed countries. The Indian consumers are less educated, poorly informed, unorganised and gullible. On the other hand, the business community is organised and is able to exploit the consumers. All these have paved way for Consumerism.

Marketing and consumerism are not the warring elements. Knowledge of consumerism helps the businessman in being consumer-oriented. Thus marketing enjoys greater challenge and greater opportunity than ever before in the history.

STUDY AREA:

The study confines to the Belgaum City. Belgaum is a border district of Karnataka, which is surrounded by Goa and Maharashtra in the West, Dharwad and North Kanara districts of Karnataka in the South, Bijapur District in the East and part of Kolhapur District of Maharashtra in the North. It is located at the equi-distance between Pune and Bangalore on the National Highway number four. Since Belgaum has close links with Goa and Maharashtra, people have a mixed culture. Belgaum city enjoys the status of Divisional Head quarter, which is connected to Bombay by Air. It is connected to Maharashtra and Goa by other modes of transport. It has a military base. People speaking Kannada, Marathi and other languages and having varied culture stay in Belgaum. All these factors have made Belgaum Agglomeration a cosmopolitan market. The total population of Belgaum is nearing four lakhs. [It is 2,74,430 - 1,43,451 Males and 1,30,979 females as per 1981 census].

SELECTION OF THE PROBLEM:

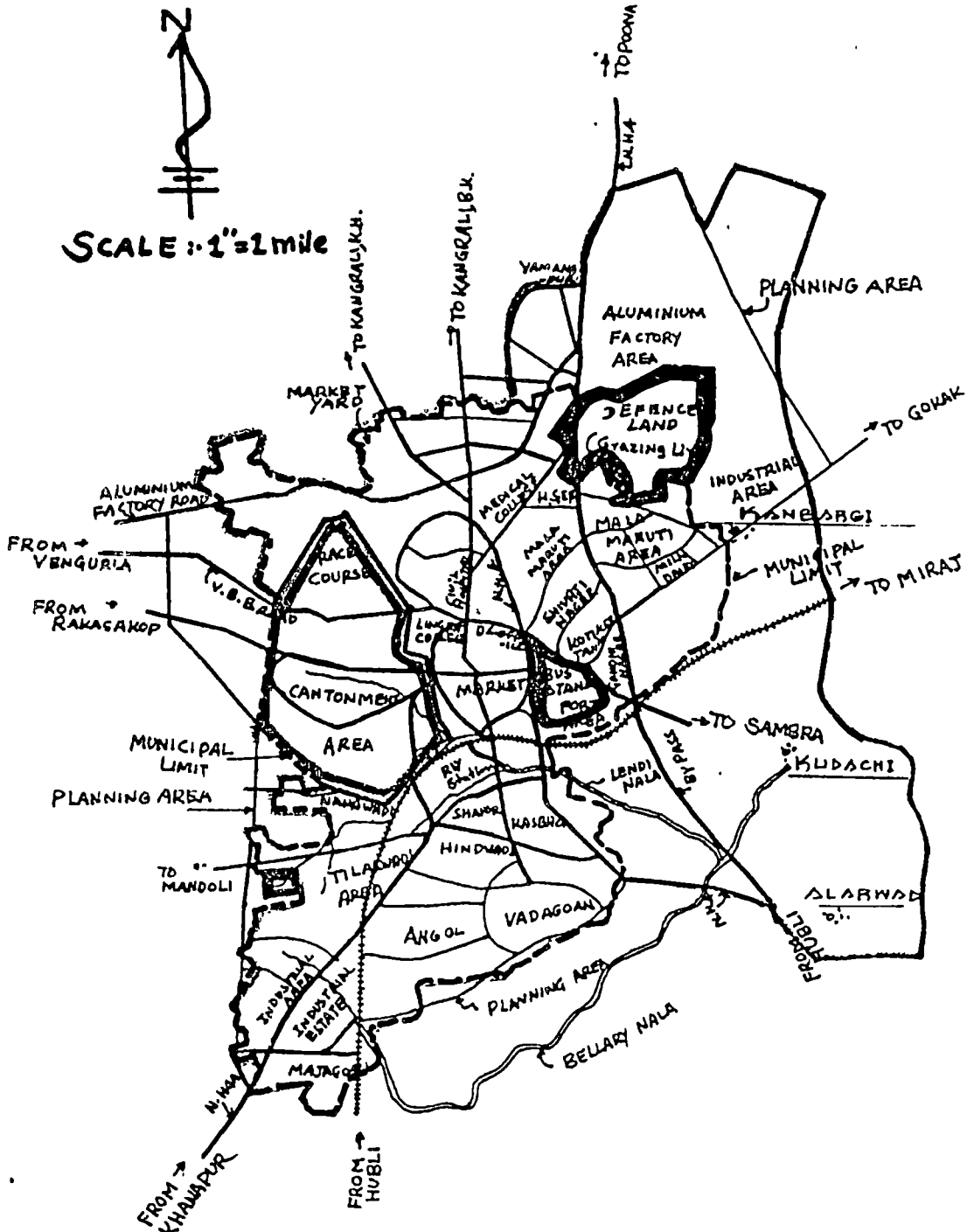
The topic "Consumer Protection and Attitude - A study of some selected consumer goods in Belgaum City" was selected by the researcher for the following reasons:





1. Consumer Protection is gaining acceptance and popularity specially after the passing of Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
2. No research so far has been made on this topic. The literature on consumerism is inadequate and is not readily available.
3. This type of study can be of social utility when further developed.

INDEX MAP OF BELGAUM-CITY

(INCLUDING CANTONMENT AREA)

M-3



-  CORPORATION LIMIT.
-  PLANNING AREA LIMIT
-  CANTONMENT & DEFENCE AREA.
-  NALLAS.

SELECTION OF GOODS FOR STUDYING THE IMPACT OF CONSUMERISM

It was decided to concentrate most of the questions on groceries for the following reasons:

1. Groceries or 'Kirana' are purchased by every one. Many difficulties are experienced in the process of buying these day to day requirements.
2. The selection of sample of respondents is not difficult when most of the questions are directed towards day to day goods.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the awareness and attitude of consumers towards pricing, taxes, adulteration, underweights and their rights in this regard.
2. To study the information relating to rights of consumers, adulteration, weights and measures, filing of complaints etc.
3. To assess the role of consumer association, voluntary organisations and the concerned departments of the Government in this connection.
4. To suggest measures for improving consumer protection.

METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based mainly on primary data collected by conducting a survey of 200 respondents from Belgaum City. The Survey was conducted by referring to the map of Belgaum city to ensure that no area was left uncovered. An attempt has been made to get

representation of all demographical features like sex, education, income, affiliations to social clubs, employment, etc. The help of Mahila Mandals was taken for eliciting response from female respondents. To get the representation of illeterates the help of supervisors in building construction was solicited.

A profuse use of Dichotomous, Multiple Choice and Directed Response questions was made for objectivity, economy of time and ease in tabulation and interpretation. Open end questions were planted in the schedule wherever necessary.

Inspite of all these precautions, the rate of non-response was high for the usual problems experienced in the surveys.

Apart from survey, information was collected from the following sources also.

1. Workshop for Consumer Activists conducted by Consumer Education and Research Foundation Hubli, which the researcher attended in October 1938.
2. Information collected by personal visit to Consumer Protection Unit, Government of India, New Delhi.
3. Information collected from Consumer Associations of Ahemadabad, Udupi, Mangalore, Hubli and from Shri M. R. Pai.
4. Discussions with the heads of Consumer Protection & Legal Metrology, Health Section of City Corporation, etc.
5. Interaction with retailers to know the state of Consumerism.

6. Observation method was also used to supplement the responses of consumers.

Library books, consumer magazines, journals and other publications have been extensively used in the preparation of this research report.

Chi Square Tests have been applied as statistical measure.

LIMITATIONS:

1. The study is restricted to Belgaum City.
2. There was a high rate of non-response due to resistance to answer and also due to the long questionnaire.
3. Consumer exploitation by misleading advertisements has not been covered by the present study.

CHAPTER SCHEME:

The present study has been divided into some convenient chapters to deal with the scope and methodology, consumerism - a conceptual frame work, consumer's rights, prevention of adulteration, weights and measures, Acts applicable for consumer protection, handling of complaints and consumer education.

Analysis, interpretation and conclusions have been shown in separate topics. Tables, cartoons, questionnaire, etc. have been shown at their appropriate places.