

REVIEW ARTICLE

PERCEPTION OF CONSUMERS' RIGHT IN BHUTAN: A CASE OF THIMPHU CONSUMERS

Kinga Wangpo*, Lecturer, Sonam Wangmo, Tenzin Dorji

Gedu College of Business Studies, Chukha, Bhutan

*Corresponding Author Email: kingawangpo.gcbs@rub.edu.bt

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ABSTRACT

Consumer protection means safeguarding the economic interests, rights, and safety of the consumers to avoid economic harm and health hazards while consuming goods and services in the market. In other words, it refers to the measures adopted to protect the consumers from unfair and deceptive practices by the business entities and to provide appropriate redresses, remedies, or compensations to aggrieved consumers. Four major consumer rights (Right to Safety, Right to be Informed, Right to Choose, and Right to be Heard) were investigated in this study from the consumer's perspective whether marketers' practices are safeguarding these rights or not.

A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to measure consumer perception regarding the four basic consumer rights, utilizing a five-point Likert scale measure. A total of 400 samples were collected from different zones of Thimphu Thromde and researchers achieved a 100 % response rate. An almost equal number of male and female respondents have participated in this survey where the majority of them fall in the age group of 21-30 years. Interestingly, 72% of respondents are aware of the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) and 82% of respondents know that they can practice certain rights as a consumer in the market. All four hypotheses were statistically significant and the Right to safety and the Right to Choose were perceived as high favorableness ($m=3.67$ for both) whereas, the Right to be Informed and the Right to be Heard were perceived as medium favorableness ($m=3.63$ and $m=3.29$ respectively).

According to these findings, Bhutanese consumers and relevant consumer protection agencies should feel proud that marketers in Bhutan are safeguarding consumers' rights and further improvements in certain aspects which had low mean scores would definitely make the Bhutanese market free of fraudulent and unfair trade practices.

KEYWORDS

Consumer Rights, Right to Safety, Right to be Informed, Right to Choose, Right to be Heard

1. INTRODUCTION

Parliament of the Kingdom of Bhutan enacted the Consumer Protection Act of Bhutan 2012 on the 23rd Day of the 11th Month of the Iron Female Rabbit Year of the Bhutanese calendar corresponding to the 16th Day of January 2012 at its 8th Session to protect consumers from unfair trade practices, false misleading advertising, market abuses, and to provide legal rights and remedies in the consumption of the goods and services. The Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) was established in 2014 under the Ministry of Economic Affairs to enforce the act.

Deceptive practices and irregularities in the market are common issues prevalent in countries around the globe, which require government intervention to safeguard consumer interests by upholding consumer rights through various legal instruments (Ponleu, 2021). In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the United Nations calls for a focus on the protection and empowerment of individuals in the marketplace based on consumer rights, and for coordinated strategies across nations and intergovernmental bodies to build fair, safe, resilient, and sustainable economies through consumer protection (Tshering, 2020). OCP's chief program officer, Jigme Dorji, said that the businesses were penalized for unfair increases in the price of commodities, sale of expired products, underweight goods, and other violations (Dema, 2021).

During lockdown periods, complaints about unfair trade practices were reported to the appropriate agencies; otherwise, they were hard to come by. With the rise in unfair trade practices in the country and the consequent penalties for marketers, it appears that consumer protection in Bhutan is getting momentum, but it's unclear whether consumers are aware of their basic rights. Jigme Dorji (Chief, OCP), said that to ensure one is safe from unfair trade practices performed by business entities, consumers must be aware of their consumer rights and responsibilities (Dema, 2020). The OCP during the lockdown received about 100 calls from consumers complaining about the price hike, denial of sales or services, sale of expired products, inappropriate product labeling, and underweight products, among others (Dema, 2020). As there is limited research on consumer rights in Bhutan, this study aimed to assess the perception of consumer rights in Bhutan, with a focus on consumer rights principles related to company/retailer's marketing activities.

1.1 Research Questions

1.1.1 Do consumers in Bhutan believe that their rights as consumers are safeguarded by marketers in the marketplace?

H1. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their **Right to Safety**.

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H2. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their **Right to be Informed**.

H3. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their **Right to Choose**.

H4. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their **Right to be Heard**.

2. REVIEW OF KEY LITERATURE

The subject of consumer protection has received increasing attention in the marketing literature over the past 50 years, focusing on the Western perspective, though only a little attention was given to developing countries. The concept of consumerism refers to all efforts made, at different levels, to protect consumer rights in society (Alsmadi and Khizindar, 2015). President John F. Kennedy made an impassioned pitch for stronger consumer rights. "If consumers are offered inferior products, if prices are exorbitant, if drugs are unsafe or worthless if the consumer is unable to choose on an informed basis, then his dollar is wasted, his health and safety may be threatened, and the national interest suffers" (Fleming, 2019).

Bhutan also enacted its Consumer Protection Act of Bhutan in 2012 and further consumer protection rules and regulations were made and formally adopted in 2015, which protect the consumer from unfair trade practices in the market, promoting consumer welfare and providing remedies to aggrieved consumers. Recently, due to the pandemic, there were lots of cases of consumers complaining regarding various unethical practices by marketers who were upon further investigation penalized with fines. Various research conducted in the field of consumer protection outside Bhutan majorly focused on consumer awareness of basic consumer rights, comparing rural and urban consumers, college students, and so on. Not much was done concerning whether consumers' rights were taken care of by marketers or not by studying consumers' perceptions of marketers' practices related to their basic consumer rights.

The current study will refer to John F. Kennedy's bill of four consumer rights, namely, the Right to Safety, the Right to be Informed, the Right to Choose, and the Right to be Heard which are also highlighted in the Consumer Protection Act of Bhutan 2012. These rights are directly related to the marketer's practices, if the marketers provide unhealthy products or services to consumers then they are violating consumers' rights to safety and if the consumers are not provided with correct information or specifications of products or services then it is violating their rights to be informed. It is seen in the local market that marketers are practicing various unfair trade practices, especially in Thimphu as per the records of local news channels or papers. Consumers need to be aware of and practice their rights in the market so that such unfair trade practices are eliminated or reduced. It seems consumers are aware of their rights which researchers could understand from the way consumers started seeking interventions from relevant agencies like OCP in the country. But it is time to understand from the consumer's perspective whether marketers in Thimphu consider consumers' basic rights.

Right to Safety, state that the right to safety assures consumers to be protected against the marketing of goods that are injurious to health and life (Ibarra and Revilla, 2014). Consumers are assured that manufacturers of consumer products undertake extensive safety and performance testing before selling their products in the market. Products should be properly labeled with information as to the contents, use, precautions, or warning signs and how to prepare if the need arises. Bhutan's relevant agencies have initiated to protect its citizens from unhealthy food items imported from other countries by banning the import of some vegetables and food items in the interest of food safety and the health of the consumers as some of the vegetables come with a high concentration of harmful chemicals (Bajgai, 2016). A study concludes that consumers of Jordan find medium favorableness of marketer's practices towards the right to safety but on the other hand consumers in Nepal had low favorableness towards this though significant, and similarly, consumers in Cambodia also had low favorableness in towards marketers practices towards this rights where respondents shared that they don't see enough commitment from either traders or the government to guarantee the rights to the safety of consumers by (Ponleu, 2021; Alsmadi and Khizindar, 2015; Rawal, 2019). Researchers intend to find out what level of favorableness Bhutanese consumers have towards marketers' practices when it comes to rights to safety. This leads to the following first hypothesis in this study:

H1. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their **Right to Safety**.

The right to be informed is the right to be informed about the standard, quantity, potency, purity, standard, and price of products or services (Lokganathan and Adaikalam, 2020). As a consumer, we have a right to receive accurate information and we can make wise decisions only if we have the information we need. Further, to be protected against dishonest or misleading advertising or labeling and the right to be given the facts and information needed to make an informed choice (Ibarra and Revilla, 2014). One of the articles in The Bhutanese (Bhutan's local newspaper) captured that the consumers have questioned if there are ways to monitor goods that are being imported from a third country like Thailand, China, etc as the commodities don't come with a price tag whereby the business operator sells that product in the market including all the taxes, insurance and transportation/ shipping charge plus keeping a certain percentage as profit (Powrel, 2022). study states that consumers in Cambodia are not favorable toward marketers' practices on right to be informed (Ponleu's, 2021). Similarly, Nepal consumers had low favorableness on this right (Rawal, 2019). Whereas, Jordanian consumers were generally of medium favorableness about marketers' practices related to their Right to be Informed with the highest mean score for the attitude statement "Information about the products I buy includes benefits and warnings of abuse" (Alsmadi and Khizindar, 2015). Availability of Information has always played a major role in making consumers informed purchases which leads to the following second hypothesis in this study:

H2. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their Right to be Informed.

Right to choose deals with the right to choose products and services at competitive prices, with an assurance of satisfactory quality. Consumers expect a wide array of goods and services that are offered in the market with diverse brands, sizes, shapes, and colors, with differences in price, quality, and use (Ibarra and Revilla, 2014). Jordanian consumers showed high favorableness towards this right where it stated Product diversity in the market is enough to meet all tastes (Alsmadi and Khizindar, 2015). Similarly, Cambodian consumers also had the same high favorableness towards these rights as they say due to the country being free-market they see lots of international products and services in their country (Ponleu, 2021). Contrarily, Nepali consumers had low favorableness towards this right where consumers stated wide varieties of products are usually not available in different market areas to meet the needs of consumers (Rawal, 2019). This leads to the following third hypothesis for this study:

H3. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their Right to Choose.

Right to be heard, this right is to encourage consumers to raise their voices. Essentially, it ensures that consumers receive enough attention from marketers as well as public policymakers. All types of consumer grievances are supposed to be fairly and properly considered by marketers (Alsmadi and Khizindar, 2015). Nepali consumers had low favorableness towards these rights with the least mean score on businesses usually announcing free contact numbers for consumers to encourage them to express their opinions which mean consumers did not find any contact details to raise their voices (Rawal, 2019). Similarly, Cambodian consumers also had low favorableness towards these rights with a very strong statement It is not because "I don't want to tell them about the problem of the product, but I seriously have never found any public forums in which consumers are encouraged to raise a concern" (Ponleu, 2021). Jordanian consumers had medium favorableness towards this right where they state that businesses usually announce free contact numbers for consumers to encourage them to express their opinions (Alsmadi and Khizindar, 2015). This leads to the following fourth hypothesis in this study:

H4. Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their Right to be Heard.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach/Paradigm Theory

This study adopted a quantitative design. The use of the quantitative approach was justified by the study's purpose and precedence. This study was more interested in what happened rather than how or why it happened. As a result, observation and survey tools are frequently utilized to collect data (Bennett et al., 1984). The constructs for the study are the Right to Safety, the Right to be Informed, the Right to Choose, and the Right to be Heard, which are all consumer rights related to marketer practices.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study was based on primary data collected from residents of Thimphu

Thromde, as it is the country's most populous city and this region sees the most consumer complaints. Using a self-administered structured questionnaire to measure customer perception toward marketers' practices related to consumer rights, with a focus on the four basic consumer rights, each in its section as the main dimension. The sample size obtained was 400 by using the Taro Yamane sample size calculation formula at a 95% confidence level with a total population of 114,364 (Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, 2021).

$$n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$$

$$n = 114,364 / 1 + 114,364 (0.05)^2$$

$$n \approx 400$$

3.4 Findings and Discussion

Table1: Demographic Distribution		
	Option	Frequency
Gender	Male	193
	Female	207
Age (in years)	Below 20	39
	21-30	183
	31-40	123
	Above 40	55
Did you hear of the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) under the Ministry of Economic Affairs?	Yes	289
	No	111
How often do you shop (anything) in a week?	Once	90
	Twice	146
	Thrice	67
	More than thrice	97
Do you know that as a consumer you can practice certain rights in the market?	Yes	328
	No	72

A total of 400 respondents participated in this survey and there were 207 female respondents compared to 193 male respondents. Researchers were able to achieve a 100% response rate. The majority of respondents fall under the age group of 21-30 years ($n=183$) and the least was below the age group of 20 years ($n=39$). Positively, it has been found that the majority of Bhutanese consumers ($n=289$ or 72% of respondents) are aware of the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) and there are still

Where: n = sample size, N = population size, and e = Margin of error = 5%

3.3 Research Instrument

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data focusing on the four basic consumer rights. To measure the perception, the Right to Safety and the Right to be Informed had six items each, whereas the Right to Choose and the Right to be Heard had five items each.

A five-point Likert scale of the agreement was used for measurement, running from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree", with a Neutral category for scale midpoint (1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, and 5 Strongly Agree).

($n=111$ or 28% of respondents) who are not aware or heard of the OCP. Most respondents mentioned that they shop at least twice a week ($n=146$) and there were a good number of respondents ($n=90$) who shop more than thrice a week. Bhutanese consumers are certainly aware that they do have certain rights which they can practice while buying anything from the market ($n=328$) and there were ($n=72$) respondents who were not aware of their rights as a consumer.

Table 2: Consumer Awareness Comparison					
		Do you know that as a consumer you can practice certain rights in the market?			% of non-awareness
		Yes	No	Total	
How often do you shop (anything) in a week?	Once	67	23	90	25%
	Twice	116	30	146	20%
	Thrice	59	8	67	12%
	More than thrice	86	11	97	11%
	Total	328	72	400	

The main intention of the above table was to see if the consumers were aware of their rights as they shopped in the market. Interestingly, it is seen that the more they shop in a week they become more aware of the rights that can be practiced as a consumer in the market since the percentage of non-awareness of consumer rights gradually decreases as they increase the frequency of purchases in a week i.e., 25% non-awareness of consumer rights for those respondents who shop once and week and 11% for those who shop more than thrice a week.

Table 3: Reliability Test			
Sl. no.	Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Right to Safety	6	.742
2.	Right to be Informed	6	.665
3.	Right to Choose	5	.689
4.	Right to be Heard	5	.712

To assess whether the items that were picked to measure the four different variables were reliable or not, the Cronbach value was computed. Cronbach alphas for each construct are .742 for the Right to Safety, .665 for the Right to be Informed, .689 for the Right to Choose, and .712 for the

Right to be Heard. The measurement items are considered reliable if the values of Cronbach alpha are above 0.7 (Cortina, 1993). Hence, as per the calculated values, measurement items used in this study were reliable since the values of Cronbach's alpha were closest to 0.7.

The Likert measuring scale was divided into three scoring areas. As the length category for the scale was 1.333, (resulting from $5-1/3=1.333$), the three categories are:

Table 4: Mean Score Interpretation	
Mean Score (MS)	Interpretation
$1.000 \leq MS \leq 2.333$	low favorable
$2.333 < MS < 3.666$	medium favorable
$3.666 \leq MS \leq 5$	high favorable

Source: Alsmadi and Khizindar, 2015

For the purpose of scientifically testing the hypotheses, the decision rule used value 3 as a critical value in the Likert scale, as it is the scale midpoint. That is, if the perception mean score equals or exceeds 3 ($MS \geq 3$), researchers can accept the hypothesis, assuming a favorableness, and vice versa. One-sample t -test was further used to substantiate the difference

between the relevant mean score and the criterion value (3) based on a statistical significance level of 5 percent ($\alpha \leq 0.05$).

3.5 Dimension Analysis

3.5.1 Right to Safety

Table 5 below shows descriptive statistics of six statements used to measure the first dimension of the study "Right to Safety" and the one-sample t-test. The analysis in the table shows that Bhutanese consumers were *highly favorable* towards marketers' practices related to their right to product safety, with an overall mean score of ($M=3.67$) which fall under the mean score range of ($3.666 \leq MS \leq 5$) with relatively low standard deviation value (0.707), indicating little dispersion around the mean. Out of six statements, items 1-3 were *highly favorable* and items 4-6 had *medium favorableness*. The highest mean score was for the 1st item i.e., "I feel peace of mind for my safety when I use the products I buy from the market" ($M=3.96$), and the least mean score was for the 6th item "I feel that all marketers are concerned about product safety" ($M=3.41$). Positively,

none of the item's mean scores fell below the criterion value of 3 and it shows Bhutanese consumers are satisfied with the Bhutanese marketer practicing customer safety, researchers believe that probable reason could be due to the MOU signed between the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) and Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) where both have collaborated in food testing, timely inspection, compliance check to the prescribed standards, and enforce labeling of packaged food. For any unsafe food products found in the market, the two organizations would impose penalties and recall the products. (Namgay, 2021).

Since the overall mean score of 3.67 for this dimension was above the criterion value of 3, it was wise to accept H1, which states, "Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their Right to Safety". These results were further substantiated by the one-sample t-test for the dimension as a whole, which revealed that the mean score of 3.67 was statistically significantly higher than the criterion value of 3 with $t(399) = 18.977, p=0.000$. Obviously, the results of the one-sample t-test support H1, as stated above.

Table 5: Right to Safety

Right to be informed items	Mean Score	SD	Perception	t-value	Significance (α two-tailed)
1. I feel "peace of mind" for my safety when I use the products I buy from the market	3.96		High favorable		
2. I feel comfortable about my health when I use the products I buy from the market	3.74		High favorable		
3. I feel that the government is concerned about product safety	3.72		High favorable		
4. I do not remember encountering any risks while using the goods purchased from the market	3.59		Medium favorable		
5. I feel that the goods in the market meets safety standards	3.61		Medium favorable		
6. I feel that all marketers are concerned about product safety	3.41		Medium favorable		
Dimension as a whole	3.67	0.707	High favorable	0.707	0.707

Table 6: Right to be Informed

Right to be informed items	Mean Score	SD	Perception	t-value	Significance (α two-tailed)
6. Information about the products that I buy includes benefits of use	3.94		High favorable		
7. Information about the products that I buy includes warnings of abuse	3.82		High favorable		
8. Information that I find on the cover of the product is reliable enough to match the reality of the content	3.57		Medium favorable		
9. I feel that marketers do their best to inform us about all aspects of the products	3.48		Medium favorable		
10. I feel that marketers provide us with all the necessary information about products	3.42		Medium favorable		
11. There is no overstatement in the information listed on the goods that I buy	3.54		Medium favorable		
Dimension as a whole	3.63	0.622	Medium favorable	20.219	0.000

3.5.2 Right to be Informed

Table 6 above shows descriptive statistics of six statements used to measure the second dimension of the study "Right to be Informed" and the one-sample t-test. The analysis in the table shows that Bhutanese consumers were generally of medium favorableness towards marketers' practices related to sharing of information, with an overall mean score of ($M=3.63$) which fall under the mean score range of ($2.333 < MS < 3.666$) with relatively low standard deviation value (0.622), indicating little dispersion around the mean. Out of six statements, items 7 and 8 were highly favorable, which is encouraging to see this response on these items as it deals with very useful information regarding the product benefits and warnings of wrong usage that are considered to be essential for a consumer to make a purchase decision, whereas items 9-12 had medium favorableness. The highest mean score was for the 7th item i.e., "Information about the products that I buy includes benefits of use" ($M=3.94$), and the least mean score was for the 11th item "I feel that marketers provide us with all the necessary information about products"

($M=3.42$), the probable reason could be as we can still see lots of consumers complain regarding misleading advertisements on social media about the nature of the product, sale of products with unsubstantiated health benefits, failure

to supply goods as advertised on social media and failure to get compensation for double payment made by a consumer through internet banking (Dolkar, 2022). Similarly, in this dimension too there were none of the item's mean scores lower than the criterion value of 3 and it shows Bhutanese consumers are satisfied with the information-sharing practices of Bhutanese marketers. As Bhutan now mandated all manufacturers have to label the food including the ingredients used, date of manufacture, and the nutritional composition of packaged food for sale.

The overall mean score of 3.63 for this dimension was above the criterion value of 3, H2 can also be accepted, which states that "Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their Right to be Informed". These results were further confirmed by the one-

sample t-test for the dimension as a whole, which revealed that the mean score of 3.63 was statistically significantly higher than the criterion value of 3 with $t(399) = 20.219$, $p=0.000$. Evidently, the results of the one-sample t-test support H2, as stated above.

3.5.3 Right to Choose

Table 7 below shows descriptive statistics of five statements used to measure the third dimension of the study "Right to Choose" and the one-sample t-test. The analysis in the table shows that Bhutanese consumers are highly favorable towards marketers' practices related to product choices offered to consumers in the market, with an overall mean score of ($M=3.67$) which fall under the mean score range of ($3.666 \leq MS \leq 5$) with relatively low standard deviation value (0.721), indicating little dispersion around the mean. Out of five statements, items 13 & 17 were highly favorable, whereas items 14-16 had medium favorableness. The highest mean score was for the 13th item i.e., "There are always several options available for the consumer to choose product varieties in the market"

($M=4.03$) highest of all the statements used in this study, and Bhutanese consumers seem to be happy with lots of choices available in the market. The least mean score was for the 16th item "I never had to choose unsuitable products due to a lack of alternatives" ($M=3.37$) as it is seen in the market that most of the marketers sell 'me too' products instead of genuine ones. Moreover, the local market is already flooded with imported goods as far as South Korea which gives more choices to consumers (Kuensel, 2021).

The overall mean score of 3.67 for this dimension was above the criterion value of 3, H3 can also be accepted, which states that "Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their Right to Choose". These results were further confirmed by the one-sample t-test for the dimension as a whole, which revealed that the mean score of 3.67 was statistically significantly higher than the criterion value of 3 with $t(399) = 18.449$, $p=0.000$. Evidently, the results of the one-sample t-test support H3, as stated above.

Table 7: Right to Choose

Right to Choose items	Mean Score	SD	Perception	t-value	Significance (two-tailed)
12. There are always several options available for the consumer to choose product varieties in the market	4.03		High favorable		
13. Product diversity in the market is enough to meet all tastes	3.65		Medium favorable		
14. Different versions of products are available to cater to different consumer budgets	3.62		Medium favorable		
15. I never had to choose unsuitable products due to a lack of alternatives	3.37		Medium favorable		
16. Wide varieties of products are usually available in different market areas to meet the needs of consumers in different places	3.66		High favorable		
Dimension as a whole	3.67	0.721	High favorable	18.449	0.000

Table 8: Right to be Heard

Right to be Heard items	Mean Score	SD	Perception	t-value	Significance (two-tailed)
17. Marketers takes consumer feedback seriously and usually acts accordingly	3.1		Medium favorable		
18. I do not feel difficult to complaint about any aspect of business	3.26		Medium favorable		
19. Marketers look appreciative when they receive any feedback from a customer, irrespective of its nature	3.19		Medium favorable		
20. Marketers view consumer complaints and suggestions as a means to improve their business performance	3.37		Medium favorable		
21. Businesses usually announce free contact numbers for consumers to encourage them to express their opinions	3.51		Medium favorable		
Dimension as a whole	3.29	0.816	Medium favorable	7.011	0.000

3.5.4 Right to be Heard

Table 8 above shows descriptive statistics of five statements used to measure the fourth dimension of the study "Right to be Heard" and the one-sample t-test. The analysis in the table shows that Bhutanese consumers were generally of *medium favorableness* towards marketers' practices related to how receptive they are to consumers' voices, with an overall mean score of ($M=3.29$) lowest of four dimensions which fall under the mean score range of ($2.333 < MS < 3.666$) with relatively low standard deviation value (0.816), indicating little dispersion around the mean. All five statements had *medium favorableness*. The highest mean score was for the 22nd item i.e., "Businesses usually announce free contact numbers for consumers to encourage them to express their opinions" ($M=3.51$), and the least mean score was for the 18th item "Marketers take consumer feedback seriously and usually acts accordingly" ($M=3.1$). Interestingly, though it had the lowest overall mean over other dimensions, still none of the item's mean scores were less than the criterion value of 3 and it shows Bhutanese consumers are somewhat happy with the way Bhutanese marketers deal with consumers' voices. However, looking at the mean score for certain items indicates that if not taken care of, then it might drop down to *low favorableness* for items like 18th where it seems marketers are not taking consumers' feedback seriously and acting upon it and similarly, it seems Bhutanese marketers are not appreciative to consumer's feedback.

The overall mean score of 3.29 for this dimension was above the criterion value of 3, H4 can also be accepted, which states that "Consumers in Bhutan are generally favorable of marketers' practices related to their Right to be Heard". These results were further complemented by the one-sample t-test for the dimension as a whole, which revealed that the mean score of 3.29 was statistically significantly higher than the criterion value of 3 with $t(399) = 7.011$, $p=0.000$. Evidently, the results of the one-sample t-test support H4, as stated above.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

In terms of novelty, the current study stands out due to its nature, scope, and method of empirical examination, since it investigated the condition of perceived consumer rights in Bhutan for the first time, using John Kennedy's model. With overall findings, it is seen that Bhutanese consumers show high favorableness toward two dimensions the Right to Safety and the Right to Choose, and medium favorableness towards the other two dimensions Right to be Informed and the Right to be Heard. And the overall perception of consumers for marketers practicing consumer rights falls in medium favorableness where it is encouraging to see such findings in a small, culturally bounded country like Bhutan that Bhutanese marketers are safeguarding consumers' basic rights with the utmost care. Despite numerous complaints during the lockdown for unfair trade

practices, OCP and other relevant agencies have played a significant role in curbing such practices by marketers by penalizing them for fraudulent practices. For now, it seems that consumers only seek intervention from the relevant agencies once they are deceived by the marketers but the Chief of OCP has always been reminding consumers to make an informed purchase decision in order to avoid unforeseen fraudulent cases in the market.

Similarly, researchers encourage consumers to be extra cautious while buying anything from the market and practice their rights whenever necessary, and be informed about all their rights as consumers. These practices will surely lead to marketers putting extra effort into rendering consumers' rights and gradually reducing the fraudulent practices from the market. As we can see in the discussion above consumer who shops more often are well aware of their rights and similarly those who do a fewer number of shopping should also be aware of their rights as a consumer.

The discussion of the findings of this study was fully based on the study sample population of Thimphu Thromde only and it cannot be generalized to other smaller regions in the country but it leaves the scope to study further and see whether the findings are similar or not.

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