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Consumer and Consumerism in Society welfare

Naveen Kumar Singh & Savita Chauhan & Shivanshu
Bhadhoriya & K.K.Upadhyay

Ideal IITM Gwalior M.P. India
KPS Science Academy, Randhwapuram TCP Gate Tekanpur
Gwalior M.P. India
Guest Faculty, Govt.P.G. College Lahar Bhind M.P. India
Department of Chemistry, Kamla.P. G .College, Dholpur
(Raj.)-328001
E-mail –csavi86@gmail.com

Abstract

Today ,consumer is called the king of market .He is at the centre stage of all market activities. It is constant endeavor of producers that the production of product must conform to the needs of consumer. In addition to the satisfaction of consumer, it also the endeavor of producer that their sale should be maximum. The aim of this paper is to enlighten the reader about the complication of this system without going into technicalities.

Keywords:-Consumer, Consumerism, business and society

Introduction

Consumerism is a social and economic order that encourages the acquisition of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts. With the industrial revolution, but particularly in the 20th century, mass production led to overproduction—the supply of goods would grow beyond consumer demand, and so manufacturers turned to planned obsolescence and advertising to manipulate consumer spending. In 1899, a book on consumerism published by Thorstein Veblen, called *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, examined the widespread values and economic institutions emerging along with the widespread "leisure time" in the beginning of the 20th century.^[2] In it, Veblen "views the activities and spending habits of this leisure class in terms of conspicuous and vicarious consumption and waste. Both are related to the display of status and not to functionality or usefulness."

In economics, consumerism may refer to economic policies that emphasise consumption. In an abstract sense, it is the consideration that the free choice of consumers should strongly orient the choice by manufacturers of what is produced and how, and therefore orient the economic organization of a society (compare producerism, especially in the British sense of the term).



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Consumerism is defined as social force designed to protect consumer interests in the marketplace by organising consumer pressures on business. Consumerism is a protest of consumers against unfair business practices and business injustices. It aims to remove those injustices, and eliminate those unfair marketing practices, e.g., misbranding, spurious products, unsafe products, planned obsolescence, adulteration, fictitious pricing, price collusion, deceptive packaging, false and misleading advertisements, defective warranties, hoarding, profiteering, black marketing, short weights and measures, etc." Consumer organisations could provide united and organised efforts to fight against unfair marketing practices and to secure consumer protection. The balance of power in the marketplace usually lies with the seller. Consumerism is society's attempt to redress this imbalance in the exchange transactions between sellers and buyers. Consumerism challenges the very basis of the marketing concept. Can a free market economy based on competition respond to the rightful public demands? Is there an inherent defect in the market mechanism? Should that defect be corrected by political means, i.e., consumer legislation and Government regulations?

Need for Consumer Protection

Consumer choice is influenced by mass advertising using highly developed arts of persuasion. The consumer typically cannot know whether drug preparations meet minimum standards of safety, quality and efficacy. He usually does not know whether one prepared food has more nutritional value than others; whether the performance of a product will in fact meet his needs and expectations; or whether the "large economy size" is really a bargain. Hence, we need consumer protection.

1. Physical protection of the consumer, for instance, protection against products that are unsafe or endanger health and welfare of consumer.
2. Ecological and environmental effects of chemical, fertiliser or refinery complexes will have to be seriously considered because they pollute water, air and food and endanger human life. Consumer wants due protection against all types of pollution; he wants enriched quality of life — a beautiful, healthy, and peaceful environment free from pollution.



3. Protection of the consumer against deceptive and unfair trade practices. Consumer must have adequate rights and means of redress against business malpractices and frauds.

4. Adequate protection of consumer public against the abuse of monopoly position and/or restrictive trade practices. Protection delayed is protection denied.

Consumerism and Consumer Responsibilities

Critical Awareness- To be alert and questioning about the goods and services they use. **Action-** To act on fair and just demands.

Social Responsibility- Consumers must be concerned about the impact of their consumption behaviour on other citizens, particularly on disadvantaged groups in the local, national or international community.

Environmental Awareness- To be sensitive about what their consumption of goods does to the environment and not waste scarce natural resources or pollute the earth.

Solidarity- To act together through the formulation of consumer groups which have the strength and influence to promote consumer interests.

This encompassed four main areas that should be basic rights for all consumers:

The right to safety - When a purchase is made, the consumer has the right to expect that it is safe to use. The product should be able to perform as promised and should not have false or misleading guarantees. This “right” is in fact a minefield for the marketing profession. Products which were at one time regarded as safe for use or consumption have subsequently been found by modern research not to be so.

The right to be informed- The right to be informed has far-reaching consequences – it encompasses false or misleading advertising, insufficient information about ingredients in products, insufficient information on product use and operating instructions, and information which is deceptive about pricing or credit terms. But this adopts a negative approach. Avoiding trouble is not sufficient.

The right to choose- The consumer has the right to choose and, of course, marketing does try to influence that choice. But, in most western markets competition is encouraged and products should not confuse consumers.



The right to be heard- The right of free speech is present in all western countries. However, do organisations listen to consumers? In a well-focused marketing organisation such feedback should be encouraged, and it should be treated as a key input for the future. This right allows consumers to express their views after a purchase, especially if it is not satisfactory. When anything goes wrong with a purchase the customer should expect that any complaint should be fairly and speedily dealt with.

We may give a few illustrations:

1. Recognition of the natural problem of providing appliances which perform reliably.
2. An improved service organisation to offer service after sale.
3. 'Cool line' programme permitting customers with a complaint or problem to contact service consultants directly and a radically simplified warranty.
4. Stopping the sale of items whose contents have been deceptively reduced to avoid a price rise.
5. Marking the phosphate contents of soaps and detergents with shelf signs.

6. Shelf-dating programme for products, such as batteries.
7. Utilising discounting, open dating, unit pricing and nutritional information plans.
8. Experimenting with tel-tags (informative labels) to improve the quality of point of sale information. Tel-tags help also the counter sales force.
9. Providing adequate and accurate information to consumers to enable them to have informed decisions.
10. Advertisers are undertaking consumer educational campaigns to fill up the information gap through special booklets with helpful details. Such a trend is always welcome.
11. Advertisers are slowly but steadily adopting norms of ethical advertising.
12. All external communications (not only media advertising but also product-label copy, warranties, guarantees, and so forth) are made as deception-free and informative as possible.

Conclusion

The goal of consumer protection laws is to place consumer, who are average citizens engaging in business deals such as buying goods or borrowing money, on an even par with companies or citizens who regularly engage in business



.Historically, consumer transaction purchases of goods or services for personal ,family, or household use-were presumed fair because it was assumed that buyers and sellers bargained from equal position.

Consumer is king of market, if he is getting exploited than the market will be ruined.

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