



Introduction

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Chapter 5: Consumer Rights

Chapter 5: Consumer Rights

Introduction

Consumer in the Marketplace

In the market, producers involved in production and consumers buy goods and services for their daily requirements. Some traders indulge in unfair trade practices such as sale of defective/adulterated goods; shopkeepers sell goods which weigh lesser than the actual weight or sell goods with additional charges. Therefore, rules and regulations are required to protect consumers in the market.

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Introduction

People participate in the market both as producers and consumers. As a producer they sell their goods and provide services to the needy people. Producers provide service in the sector like, agriculture sector or primary sector, secondary sector or manufacturing sector and service sector or tertiary sector.

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Introduction

As a consumer, a person purchase goods and services that he/she need. Consumers exploited in the marketplace by the producers in various ways. In informal sector, borrowers are exploited by the moneylenders. People borrow money from moneylenders at high rate of interest and also forced by the moneylenders to pay the loan timely.

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Consumer Movement

The consumer movement in India as a social force originated to promote and protect the interest of consumers against unethical and unfair trade practices. The consumer was responsible for making a thoughtful purchase, and they avoided buying from sellers/goods with whom they had a terrible experience.

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Consumer Movement

Consumer movements started because of widespread dissatisfaction with such practises. In 1985, the United Nations guideline for consumer protection became the foundation for the consumer movement. There were 220 member organisations from over 115 countries at the international level. With all these efforts of the consumer movement, India has enacted the Consumer Protection Act 1986, also known as COPRA, to protect consumers' rights.

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Consumer Rights:

Producers are required to follow the rules and regulations with special attention to the production of goods and services. Consumers have the right to be protected against marketed and delivered goods and services which are dangerous to life.

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Consumer Rights:

- **Right to Information:** Consumers have the right to be informed about the particulars of goods and services which they consume in the market. Information such as the ingredients, price, date of manufacture and address of manufacturer is given on the packaging. If the commodity proves to be defective before the expiry period, consumers can complain and request for replacement or compensation.

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Consumer Rights:

However, the manufacturer will neither replace nor compensate for the defective product if the expiry date is not printed on the pack of a commodity. When the trader sells a commodity at a price higher than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP), the consumer can complain against the trader. Further, the Right to Information Act was enacted by the Government of India in October 2005 to ensure citizens with all information about the functions of government departments.

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Consumer Rights:

- **Right to Choice:** Consumers have the right to choose the good or service irrespective of the nature of product or service available to them. If the right to choice is denied, consumers can lodge a complaint against the trader.
- **Right to Safety:** This is the first and the most important of the Consumer Rights. They should be protected against the product that hampers their safety. The protection must be against any product which could be hazardous to their health – Mental, Physical or many of the other factors.

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Consumer Rights:

- **Right to Heard:** If a consumer is dissatisfied with the product purchased then they have all the right to file a complaint against it. And the said complaint cannot go unheard, it must be addressed in an appropriate time frame.
- **Right to Seek Redressal:** In case a product is unable to satisfy the consumer then they have the right to get the product replaced, compensate, return the amount invested in the product. We have a three-tier system of redressal according to the Consumer Protection Act 1986.

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Consumer Rights:

- **Right to Consumer Education:** Consumer has the right to know all the information and should be made well aware of the rights and responsibilities of the government. Lack of Consumer awareness is the most important problem our government must solve.

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Consumer Forum:

- The consumer forum or consumer protection councils are formed locally in India to guide consumers on how to lodge a complaint in the consumer court.
- Three-tier quasi judicial machinery at the district, state and national levels was set up under COPRA for the redressal of consumer disputes.
 - The District Forum is a district-level court that hears matters involving claims of up to Rs. 20 lakh.

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Consumer Forum:

- **The State Commission is a state-level court that hears disputes involving claims of between Rs. 20 lakh and Rs. 1 crore.**
- **The National Commission is a national level court that hears cases involving claims above Rs. 1 crore.**

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Responsibilities of a Consumer:

The consumer has a certain responsibility to carry as an aware consumer can bring changes in the society and would help other consumers to fight the unfair practice or be aware of it.

- They should be aware of their rights under the Consumer Protection Act and should practice the same in case of need.
- They should be well aware of the product they are buying. Should act as a cautious consumer while purchasing the product.

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Responsibilities of a Consumer:

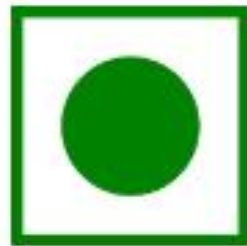
- If in case a product is found of anything false or not satisfactory a complaint should be filed.
- The consumer should ask for a Cash Memo while making a purchase.
- A customer should check for the standard marks that have been introduced for the authenticity of the quality of the product like ISI or Hallmark etc.

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ISI and Agmark:

These organisations monitor the production process of a particular product based on certain quality standards. Then the certificate is issued to the producers to use their logos. The quality standards are not mandatory for all products, but some products need to have ISI and Agmark which concern the health and safety of consumers such as LPG cylinders, cement and drinking water.

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7 Certification Marks Issued for different products in India

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Consumer Movement:

The Indian Parliament enacted the Consumer's Protection Act on 24th December 1986. It is celebrated as National Consumers' Day. It has only 20–25 well-organised and recognised consumer groups out of 700 groups in the country. The consumer redressal forum involves a cumbersome and expensive process to file a case against a defective product. Consumer awareness is gradually spreading among the people.

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