

# Consumer awareness

[Economics](#), [Consumer](#)



THE PROCESS of development along with the expanding globalisation and liberalisation process has increased the number of consumer related issues. Consumer protection has earned an important place in the political, economic and social agendas of many nations. In India, the Government has taken many steps including legislative, to protect consumers. Education is a life long process of constantly acquiring relevant information, knowledge and skills. Consumer education is an important part of this process and is a basic consumer right that must be introduced at the school level. Consumers by definition include all citizens who are, by and large the biggest group, who are affected by almost all government, public or private decisions. The most important step in consumer education is awareness of consumer rights. However, consumer education is incomplete without the responsibilities and duties of consumers, and this influences individual behaviour to a great extent. Definition Consumer awareness is making the consumer aware of His/Her rights. Consumer awareness is a marketing term. It means that consumers note or are aware of products or services, its characteristics and the other marketing P's (place to buy, price, and promotion). Need : we need it so we will not be misled by producers, it explains if what we buy is worth to our money.. and not harmful to us and to environment . Many people are ignorant of their rights to get protected against the exploitation by so many others. So when there is a forum for such redress of grievances there seems to be no such exploitation by many; and becomes a rare one. So in order to get a clear picture of the level of exploitation of consumers, the awareness is required. Role of producers proper labeling, full information, health warnings, handling information, expiration date, etc. keep to requirements, norms,

standards label products according requirements, providing true facts If they are providing a service they should carry it out with due skill and care. They must also make sure that any materials they provide as part of this service are fit for the purpose. It is also illegal for a supplier to cut off, or threaten to cut off, supply to a reseller (wholesale or retail) because they have been discounting goods or advertising discounts below prices set by the supplier. Consumer awareness is about making the consumer aware of his/her rights. It is a marketing term which means that consumers are aware of products or services, its characteristics and the other marketing P's (place to buy, price, and promotion). Though the first consumer movement began in England after the Second World War, a modern declaration about consumer's rights was first made in the United States of America in 1962, where four basic consumer rights (choice, information, safety and to be heard ) were recognized. Ralph Nadar, a consumer activist, is considered as the father of ' consumer movement'. March 15 is now celebrated as the World Consumer Rights Day. The United Nations in 1985 adopted, , certain guidelines to achieve the objectives of maintaining protection for consumers and to establish high level ethical conduct for those engaged in production and distribution of goods and services. High prices, duplicate articles, underweight and under — measurements, rough behavior, undue conditions, artificial scarcity are some of the ways by which consumers are exploited by manufacturers and traders. Limited information, limited supplies and low literacy are factors causing exploitation of consumers. In India, the concept of consumer protection is not new. References to the protection of consumer's interest against exploitation by trade and industry, underweight

and measurement, adulteration and punishment for these offences, were made in Kautilya's ' Arthashastra'. However, an organized and systematic movement to safeguard the interest of consumers, is a recent phenomenon. The consumers have to be aware not only of the commercial aspects of sale and purchase of goods, but also of the health and security aspects. Food safety has become an important element of consumer awareness these days. In case of food products, its quality depends not only on its nutritional value, but also on its safety for human consumption. Consumption of contaminated or adulterated food is a major cause of human illness and suffering. This called for strong legal measures to ensure that the manufacturers and sellers observe uniformity and transparency in prices, stocks and quality of their goods. Enactment of Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was one of the most important steps taken to protect the interests of consumers. The provision of the Act came into force, with effect from July 1, 1987. The act recognizes consumer's right to seek redresses and right to consumer education. The salient features of the Act are as follows:- - Applies to all goods and services unless specifically exempted by the Union Government; - Covers all the sectors whether private, public or cooperative; - Enshrines the consumer's rights related to safety, information, choice, representation and redress and consumer education. - The act gives consumers an additional remedy besides those which may be available to them under the provisions of other existing laws and they are free to choose the remedy. - Empower consumers seeking discontinuance of certain unfair and restrictive trade practices, defects or deficiencies in services and stopping in services or withdrawal of hazardous goods from the market.

There are no legal formalities for filing the complaint. Suppose, you find yourself cheated by trader or a manufacturer and wish to make a complaint to consumer court, you can write the details on a plain paper. Attach the supporting documents, that is, guarantee or warrantee card and cash memo with the complaint and submit it in the district consumer court. You do not have to go to any lawyer or professional for legal assistance. You yourself can plead the case in the consumer court. Since, the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act and even before that, newspapers and magazines have been responding to the needs of consumers. Apart from publishing articles, columns etc newspapers have also tried to come to the rescue of harassed consumers. The Indian Express was one of the first newspapers to start a consumer complaint column. There are 500 consumer associations, which are working in the field of consumer protection. They deal with various aspects of consumer exploitation. Some of the prominent ones are: Consumer Guidance Society of India, Mumbai; Citizens Action group, Mumbai; Common Cause, New Delhi; Voice, New Delhi; Consumer Utility and Trust Society, Jaipur. So next time you find yourself at the wrong end of a purchase don't just sit back and blame, go to a consumer court and make your claim.

CONSUMER AWARENESS THE PROCESS of development along with the expanding globalization and liberalization process has increased the number of consumer related issues. Consumer protection has earned an important place in the political, economic and social agendas of many nations. In India, the Government has taken many steps including legislative, to protect consumers. However, this is largely unknown to many citizens irrespective of whether they are educated or uneducated. With an enormous

population along with high levels of poverty, unemployment and poor literacy levels, consumer awareness continues to remain low. Education is a life long process of constantly acquiring relevant information, knowledge and skills. Consumer education is an important part of this process and is a basic consumer right that must be introduced at the school level. Consumers by definition include all citizens who are, by and large the biggest group, who are affected by almost all government, public or private decisions. The most important step in consumer education is awareness of consumer rights. However, consumer education is incomplete without the responsibilities and duties of consumers, and this influences individual behaviour to a great extent. With the increasing changes in economic conditions, the children especially are becoming young consumers at an early age. Children must learn to obtain information about goods and services, understand the psychology of selling and advertising, learn to shop wisely and distinguish between wants and needs. They must also understand the alternatives of conserving and saving rather than buying and consuming. Children are spending more of their leisure time watching television at the cost of other pursuits such as reading or sports. With the introduction of a number of specialised satellite channels, television enjoys a large viewership base consisting of children. Exposure to the marketplace as young shoppers has made most children aware of the different kinds of products that are available. Advertisements are no doubt an important source of information as they help to inform consumers about the availability of different products before making their choice. A majority of the advertisements are aimed at young children today, especially those covering food products, beverages and

cosmetics(especially toothpaste/fairness creams). Advertising influences the food preferences and eating habits of children to a large extent.

Unfortunately, many advertisements make false promises, are highly exaggerated and give incomplete descriptions of products. The media, schools and parents along with consumer groups need to help children develop the ability to understand the purpose of advertising. There is so much more information available to children that they must perceive the importance of distinguishing between different sources of information. The consumption patterns are changing fast and children today are very clear on their choices regarding food, clothing, cosmetics or accessories. Parents are increasingly permitting their children to take decisions when shopping. It then becomes very important for children to check details (for example, labels) before buying products. Children can be taught to shop wisely and a few simple precautions will ensure that they choose the right product at the right price. It is but natural that parents wish the best for their children, and strive hard to fulfil their demands. But this is not always a good idea as it affects both the parents and children in a negative way in the long run.

Consumer education also involves environmental education as it deals with the importance of conserving (natural resources) and sustaining (recycling and reusing) the environment, including the direct health effects of environmental pollution and toxic products on consumers. Schools must incorporate consumer education into school curricula as it is important to impart the practical skills and critical ability needed to cope with social and economic changes. Anyone who consumes goods is a consumer. Consumers get exploited in the market. They respond to advertisements and buy goods.

Generally advertisements do not give all the information that a consumer needs to know or wants to know about a product. Definition Consumer awareness is making the consumer aware of His/Her rights. Consumer awareness is a marketing term. It means that consumers note or are aware of products or services, its characteristics and the other marketing P's (place to buy, price, and promotion). Usually commercials and ads increase consumer awareness, as well as "word of mouth" (a comment from someone you know about a product or service).

1. Need : we need it so we will not be misled by producers, it explains if what we buy is worth our money.. and not harmful to us and to environment . Many people are ignorant of their rights to get protected against the exploitation by so many others. So when there is a forum for such redress of grievances there seems to be no such exploitation by many; and becomes a rare one. So in order to get a clear picture of the level of exploitation of consumers, the awareness is required.
2. Role of producers proper labeling, full information, health warnings, handling information, expiration date, etc. keep to requirements, norms, standards label products according requirements, providing true facts They have to produce and deliver the goods/services of right quality at right price at right time at right place at right quantity with right fact if they are providing a service they should carry it out with due skill and care. They must also make sure that any materials they provide as part of this service are fit for the purpose. It is also illegal for a supplier to cut off, or threaten to cut off, supply to a reseller (wholesale or retail) because they have been discounting goods or advertising discounts below prices set by the supplier. Some of the common methods of exploitation are

1. Under weight and under



measurements —not measured or weighed correctly  
 2. Substandard Quality —defective home appliances and medicines beyond expiry date  
 3. High prices—charging above the retail price  
 4. Duplicate Articles—selling fake items in the name of the original  
 5. Adulteration and Impurity—is done to get higher profits  
 6. Lack of safety Devices—absence of inbuilt safe guards in appliances  
 7. Artificial Scarcity—hoarding and black marketing  
 8. False and Incomplete Information—misleading information on quality, durability, and safety.  
 9. Unsatisfactory after sales Service—high cost items like electronics and cars require constant and regular service.  
 10. Rough behavior and Undue conditions—harassment in getting LPG connection or a telephone connection..

Factors causing exploitation of Consumers.

1. Limited Information—providing full and correct information will help in the choice
2. Limited Supplies—when goods and services are in short supply then price shoots up
3. Limited Competition.—single producer may manipulate the market in terms of price and stocks.
4. Low Literacy.—illiteracy leads to exploitation. Hence Consumer Awareness is essential

Rise of consumer Awareness

Kautilya was one of the earliest to write in his Arthashastra about the need for Consumer awareness and protection. With the growth of private sector there is a greater need for discipline and regulation of the market. Consumers must be aware of the sale and purchase of goods, the health and security aspects also. Ensuring the safety of food items sold in the market is essential these days. Legal measures for consumer safety and consumer awareness must be uniform, and transparent in terms of prices, quality of goods, and stocks. Consumers must have the tools to combat malpractices and protect their rights.

Rights and Duties of Consumers

As codified under the Indian Laws the Consumers

have the following Rights

1. Right to Safety—to protect against hazardous goods
2. Right to be Informed—about price, quality, purity
3. Right to Choose—access to a variety of goods and services at competitive prices.
4. Right to be Heard—consumers interest and welfare must be taken care of
5. Right to seek Redressal—protection against unfair trade practices and settling genuine grievances.
6. Right to Consumer Education.—Knowledge about goods and issues related to consumers.

Duties

1. Get a bill for every important purchase and also the Warranty card
2. Check the ISI mark or Agmark on the goods
3. Form consumer awareness groups
4. Make a complaint on genuine grievances.
5. Consumers must know to exercise their rights.

Consumer protection Measure

1. Legislation concerning Consumer Rights. The Consumer Protection Act 1986 provides for consumer disputes redressal at the state and national level. With the help of this law the agencies can solve grievances in a speedy, simple and inexpensive manner. A separate department of consumer affairs was set up at the state and central government. A three tier system of consumer courts at the National, State and District levels were set up. These agencies have done good work by handling lakhs of cases.
2. Public Distribution System . To protect the poor from price rise and black marketing the government food security to the poor by supplying essentials through the ration or Fair price shops.
3. Standardisation of Products . These are done to assure the quality of products. The ISI stamp on goods is placed by the Bureau of Indian standards. This caters to industrial and consumer goods. These goods can be trusted to confirm to specific standards. Agmark is meant for Agricultural products. At the International level the International Organization for Standardization

(ISO) located in Geneva sets common standards. The FAO and WHO provide food standards. 4. Legal formalities for filing a complaint . The complaint can be written on plain paper. The supporting documents like the warranty card must be attached. A lawyer is not required. We can argue our case