

Social science Chapter 5 - Consumer Rights

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Question 1:

Why are rules and regulations required in the marketplace? Illustrate with a few examples.

ANSWER:

Rules and regulations are required in the marketplace to protect consumers. Sellers often abdicate responsibility for a low-quality product, cheat in weighing out goods, add extra charges over the retail price, and sell adulterated/ defective goods. Hence, rules and regulations are needed to protect the scattered buyers from powerful and fewer producers who monopolise markets. For example, a grocery shop owner might sell expired products, and then blame the customer for not checking the date of expiry before buying the items.

Question 2:

What factors gave birth to the consumer movement in India? Trace its evolution.

ANSWER:

The factors that gave birth to the consumer movement in India are manifold. It started as a “social force” with the need to protect and promote consumer interests against unfair and unethical trade practices. Extreme food shortages, hoarding, black marketing and adulteration of food led to the consumer movement becoming an organised arena in the 1960s. Till the 1970s, consumer organisations were mostly busy writing articles and holding exhibitions. More recently, there has been an upsurge in the number of consumer groups who have shown concern towards ration shop malpractices and overcrowding of public transport vehicles. In 1986, the Indian government enacted the Consumer Protection Act, also known as COPRA. This was a major step in the consumer movement in India.

Question 3:

Explain the need for consumer consciousness by giving two examples.

ANSWER:

There is a need for consumer consciousness so that the buyers themselves can take action against cheating traders. The ISI and Agmark logos are certifications of good quality. Consumers must look for such certifications while buying goods and services. Secondly, to be able to discriminate and make informed choices, a consumer needs to have an adequate knowledge of the goods or services purchased by him/her.

Question 4:

Mention a few factors which cause exploitation of consumers.

ANSWER:

Exploitation of consumers is caused by a variety of factors. Producers are always looking for easy ways to increase profits. Adulterated or low-quality goods have less production costs, and if the consumer is unaware or illiterate, it is easy to cheat him/her. Also, shopkeepers brush off their responsibility by claiming that the manufacturer is to blame. Consumers feel helpless in this situation.

Often, when the consumers are known not to check the retail price of a commodity on its packing, sellers add extra charges to the same. In places where there is no awareness of consumer rights and the COPRA, consumer exploitation is rampant.

Question 5:

What is the rationale behind the enactment of Consumer Protection Act 1986?

ANSWER:

The rationale behind the enactment of Consumer Protection Act of 1986 is to protect the consumer against unethical and unfair trade practices. Also, it recognises the consumer's right to be informed, right to choose, right to seek redressal and right to represent himself/herself in consumer courts.

Question 6:

Describe some of your duties as consumers if you visit a shopping complex in your locality.

ANSWER:

Some of my duties as a consumer if I visit a shopping complex include checking expiry dates of the products I wish to purchase, paying only the maximum retail price printed on the goods, preventing shopkeepers from duping me with defective products, and registering a complaint with a consumer forum or court in case a seller refuses to take responsibility for an adulterated or flawed product.

Question 7:

Suppose you buy a bottle of honey and a biscuit packet. Which logo or mark you will have to look for and why?

ANSWER:

While buying a bottle of honey or a biscuit packet, the logo or mark one will have to look for is ISI or Agmark. These are logos certifying the quality of goods in the market. Only those producers are allowed to use these marks who follow certain quality standards set by the organisations issuing these certifications. Thus, if a bottle of honey or a biscuit packet has one of these logos on it, then it implies that the product is of good quality.

Question 8:

What legal measures were taken by the government to empower the consumers in India?

ANSWER:

Legal measures taken by the government to empower consumers in India are plenty. First and foremost being the COPRA in 1986. Then, in October 2005, the Right to Information Act was passed, ensuring citizens all information about the functioning of government departments. Also, under COPRA, a consumer can appeal in state and national courts, even if his case has been dismissed at the district level. Thus, consumers even have the right to represent themselves in consumer courts now.

Question 9:

Mention some of the rights of consumers and write a few sentences on each.

ANSWER:

Some of the rights of consumers include the right to be informed, the right to choose, the right to seek redressal and the right to representation in consumer courts. Under the RTI Act of 2005, consumers can now even get information regarding the working of government departments. The right to choose allows a consumer to choose if he wishes to continue or discontinue the use of a service he purchased. The right to seek redressal permits a consumer to complain against unfair trade practices and exploitation.

Question 10:

By what means can the consumers express their solidarity?

ANSWER:

Consumers can express their solidarity by forming consumer groups that write articles or hold exhibitions against traders' exploitation. These groups guide individuals on how to approach a consumer court, and they even fight cases for consumers. Such groups receive financial aid from the government to create public awareness. Participation of one and all will further strengthen consumer solidarity.

Question 11:

Critically examine the progress of consumer movement in India.

ANSWER:

The consumer movement in India has evolved vastly since it began. There has been a significant change in consumer awareness in the country. Till the enactment of COPRA in 1986, the consumer movement did not bear much force, but ever since its inception, the movement has been empowered substantially. The setting up of consumer courts and consumer groups has been a progressive move. However, in contemporary India, the consumer redressal process is quite complicated, expensive and time-consuming. Filing cases, attending court proceedings, hiring lawyers, and other procedures make it cumbersome. In India, there are over 700 consumer groups of which, unfortunately, only about 20-25 are well-organised and functioning smoothly.

Question 12:

Match the following.

(i)	Availing details of ingredients of a product	(a)	Right to safety
(ii)	Agmark	(b)	Dealing with consumer cases
(iii)	Accident due to faulty engine in a scooter	(c)	Certification of edible oil and cereals
(iv)	District Consumer Court	(d)	Agency that develops standards for goods and services
(v)	Consumers International	(e)	Right to information
(vi)	Bureau of Indian Standards	(f)	Global level institution of consumer welfare organisations

ANSWER:

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Question 13:

Say True or False.

- (i) COPRA applies only to goods.
- (ii) India is one of the many countries in the world which has exclusive courts for consumer redressal.
- (iii) When a consumer feels that he has been exploited, he must file a case in the District Consumer Court.
- (iv) It is worthwhile to move to consumer courts only if the damages incurred are of high value.
- (v) Hallmark is the certification maintained for standardisation of jewellery.
- (vi) The consumer redressal process is very simple and quick.
- (vii) A consumer has the right to get compensation depending on the degree of the damage.

ANSWER:

- (i) False
- (ii) True
- (iii) True
- (iv) True
- (v) True
- (vi) False
- (vii) True