



Empowering Consumer For Sustainable Consumption: Consumer Education

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Abstract

Education is continuous process and gave right to education each and everyone without any discrimination. Consumer education aims to empower consumers to access goods and services, choose from a range of products and services, evaluate products and services based on quality, safety, and environmental impact, and educate them about their rights and responsibilities. It also helps them identify and avoid products and services that may be harmful to their health or safety, and seek redress if they are harmed by a product or service. Consumers need protection of economic interests, fairness and equity, redress, sustainability, privacy, representation, and participation in the democratic process to protect their rights and interests. Education aims to help consumers recognize and report fraudulent or unethical business practices, seek redress, engage in responsible and sustainable consumption practices, understand the environmental and social impacts of their choices, and protect their personal information from unauthorized access or use. Main Objectives of consumer education are to guide consumers to acquire knowledge and skills, link them to right behavior for safe consumer life. Consumer education also has an aspect as an activity of fostering people capable of coming forward to play a key role in society and contribute to its growth. The objective of Consumer Education: Consumer education mainly aims at making consumers aware of what, where, when, how, and how much to buy. It develops critical awareness and living skills which are oriented toward building a better future for all.

Key Words : Consumer , Sustainable, Consumption, Consumer Education

Introduction

Consumer education is that branch of general education, which is given to the person who consumes any item, goods or service in relation to such item, goods or service. In other words, consumer education is about making the consumer aware of their rights and duties. Consumer education includes information or knowledge about the following-

1. Properties of the goods available in the market
2. Bargaining power or contracting power.
3. Selection of consumer goods according to income.
4. Warning about harmful substances.
5. Organization of consumers.
6. Provisions of Consumer Protection Act like fraud in purchase and sale of goods, dishonesty, legal proceedings in relation to recovery of loss caused by consumption, etc.

Benefits of Consumer Education :

All the points given below are the benefits of consumer education :

1. To develop the ability to make a judicious choice of goods,
2. Safe, reliable and high quality products at fair prices
3. To be alert and aware of the corrupt practices prevailing in the market,
4. Whenever there is a problem, to find a proper solution for it.

Need or Importance of Consumer Education

The need or importance of consumer education becomes clear from the following points-

1. Development of the ability to buy the right goods - Consumer education develops the ability to buy the right goods or services.
- 2 Prohibition on consumption of harmful items - Consumer education makes the consumers aware that which item is harmful to health and which item is also helpful in improving the standard of living. Which item will be most useful for which purpose and for which use, this information is given through consumer education.

A consumer is a person who either consumes or uses various goods and services. Goods include consumer goods (such as wheat, flour, salt, sugar, fruits, etc.) and durable goods (such as television, refrigerator, toaster, mixer, bicycle, etc.). The services we buy include electricity, telephone, transport services, theater services, etc. It is to be noted that consumer is the one who buys goods and services for consumption. If a retailer sells to a wholesaler. A consumer is a person who buys goods or services for himself or on his behalf for the use or consumption of others. Commodities include items of daily consumption and permanent items. Whereas services for which payment is made include transport, electricity, watching movies, etc. Consumer can also be defined in such a way that a person who selects goods and services, spends money to obtain them and uses them to satisfy his needs is called a consumer.

Consumerism

If the consumers become alert and face together against such wrongdoings, then this type of exploitation can be reduced. The effort made by the consumers themselves in their protection is called consumerism. Consumerism refers to the movement of consumers, whose objective is to ensure fair and honest (ethical) behavior of manufacturers, traders, sellers and service providers towards consumers. This movement can be considered as an effort of any consumer agitators or consumer committees in the direction of creating awareness among consumers regarding the malpractices prevailing in the market and finding a way to protect their interests.

This movement will be successful only when the consumers are aware of their rights and responsibilities while using the goods and services.

Consumer Protection Act 1986: The Consumer Protection Act provides more protection to consumers than other laws. The consumer can get more protection in banking, insurance, finance, transport, hotel, telephone, supply of electricity or other energy, housing, entertainment or recreation etc. in a more comprehensive manner. This act provides for the formation of consumer protection advisory committees at the state and central levels. Quasi-judicial system has been created for quick and proper settlement of consumer disputes. It includes District Forum, State Commission and National Commission. These are called consumer courts.

Rights of consumers :

Today the consumer has to face competition in the market, misleading advertisements, substandard goods and services and many other problems. Therefore, protecting the interests of the consumer has become a matter of serious concern for the government and public institutions. In order to protect the interests of the consumers, the government has recognized certain rights of the consumers. In other words, if consumers want to protect themselves from exploitation and deception, then they have to recognize certain rights. In other words, if consumers want to protect themselves from exploitation and deception, then they have to recognize certain rights. In other words, if consumers want to protect themselves from exploitation and deception, they have to be given certain rights so that they are in a position to be cautious while dealing with sellers of goods and service providers. If you are aware of this right, you can ask the shopkeeper to show you different varieties of the same item, so that you can choose the item of your choice. Sometimes the shopkeeper tries to sell the goods of that brand on which he gets more commission. It may not be the best quality item or it may be available at a relatively low price. You can stop this behavior. If you exercise your right to choose and if the variety of products is not available at one store, then you can go to another store.

Some rights have been given to us by the government as per the 'Consumer Protection Act'. Let's get information about them.

1. **Right to Safety:** With this right we get protection from those products and services which are harmful to our health and property like adulterated food items and unsafe electrical equipment etc.
2. **Right to Information:** It gives us information about the quality, quantity and prices of goods and services.
3. **Right to choose:** With this right, we get the right to choose different types of goods and services of appropriate quality and price.

4. Right to be heard: With this right, we have the right to raise our voice against any kind of rigging by traders and oppressive policies of the government and to be heard on it.
5. Right to Compensation: This means that we have the right to compensation and settlement on reasonable complaints of defective goods and services.
6. Right to consumer education: With this right we can make a wise choice.

Consumer Responsibility :

There is a saying that there can be no rights without responsibility. After evaluating the rights of consumers and the objectives of these rights, it is necessary to understand whether there should be some responsibilities of the consumer, so that they can exercise their rights. For example, if consumers want to exercise their right to be heard, then it is also their responsibility to know their problems and keep receiving information regarding them. In order to exercise their right to redress their grievances, consumers should be careful to choose the right article at the right price and should also learn how to use those articles to prevent injury or loss. If we get some specific rights, then we also have to discharge some responsibilities. Some of our responsibilities are as follows –

- Take bills, receipts and guarantee cards etc., keep them safe and make a record of them. These are proof of your purchase and help you to recover the actual loss.
- Always insist on buying products of good quality and standard mark. Even if they are not well known name products. This leads to low quality products in the market. This will reduce the low quality products in the market.
- Don't be fooled by the eloquence of the salesman, the attractive label and the glitz of the packing. Advertising and free gifts are tricks to sell stuff.
- Always follow the usage and maintenance instructions given by the manufacturer regarding the product.
- Do not misuse the facilities of consumer services provided by the producer and seller such as home delivery, replacement of the product within a fixed period and making the goods available on installments.
- Report incidents of fraud etc. and encourage other consumers to do the same. Cooperate with law enforcement to bring guilty traders to justice.
- Do not waste any product. Try to conserve resources so that they last longer.

In addition to these responsibilities, the consumer has other responsibilities as well. They should strictly abide by their contract with the manufacturer, trader and service provider. In case of credit purchases, he should pay in time. They should not tamper with the means of service such as electricity and water meters, seats in buses and trains. He should remember that he can exercise his rights only when he is ready or willing to perform his obligations.

Conclusion : Today, manufacturing and selling of products in both the urban or rural markets around us is continuously increasing. Manufacturers cannot ignore consumers. The number of consumers is increasing and

the quantity of goods and services being used is increasing. Under consumer education and protection, it is important to respect and satisfy the consumer. Today's consumer needs to be alert, aware and well informed. Hence consumer education and protection is of utmost importance for today's consumer. Today the Indian consumer has a wide choice of foreign companies to choose from and can choose the best products at competitive prices. But at the same time it has become more difficult to choose the right product, as the consumer has to understand the new technology, new products and new features. Apart from this, the consumer also has to compare the price and quality. Consumer has to face many problems like poor quality, exploitation by unscrupulous sellers, deceptive advertisements. Hence it becomes important for every individual to be a sensible and aware consumer.

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