

Consumer Rights

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

Solution : Rules and regulations are required in the marketplace to protect consumers against exploitation by sellers and service provider. Especially when large companies are producing these goods and these companies with huge wealth, power and reach can manipulate the market in various ways. Sellers often abdicate responsibility for a low-quality product, cheat in weighing out goods, add extra charges over the retail price, sell adulterated/ defective goods and also provide false information about a product or service. Markets do not work in a fair manner when producers are few and powerful whereas consumers purchase in small amounts and are scattered. 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.

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

Solution : The factors that gave birth to the consumer movement in India are manifold. The consumer movement arose out of dissatisfaction of the consumers as many unfair practices were being indulged in by the sellers. It started as a “social force” with the need to protect and promote consumer interests against unfair and unethical trade practices. These unfair practices in the market cause heavy loss to the consumer, they suffer from monetary loss as well as it affects their health. 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 in newspaper, magazine 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. India has witnessed an upsurge in the number of consumer groups and these have succeeded in bringing pressure on business firms as well as government to correct business conduct which may be unfair and against the interest of the consumers at large. 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.

3 Explain the need for consumer consciousness by giving two examples.

Solution : Consumer consciousness is being aware of your right as a consumer while buying any goods or services. Consumers have the right to be protected against the marketing of goods and delivery of services that are hazardous to life and property. Example :

- The ISI and Agmark logos are quality certification on certain classes of products. Consumer must look for such certifications while purchasing items requiring these marks.
- Because of conscious consumers, most of the sweet shops do not include the weight of the container when they weigh sweets.

4 Mention a few factors which cause exploitation of consumers.

Solution : Factors which cause exploitation of consumers are :

- Lack of awareness of consumer rights among buyers.
- Improper and inadequate monitoring of rules and regulations. There is no fixed law for quality and rate
- Misleading advertising in the media.
- Consumers are scattered over large areas.
- The main reason for exploitation of consumers is the lack of knowledge. Several consumers do not have the knowledge about the price, quality, services related commodities.

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

Solution : The rationale behind the enactment of COPRA 1986 was to set up a separate department of consumer affairs in Central and State governments and it has been enacted to safeguard them against the exploitation. This led to the formation of consumer courts at district and state levels.

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

Solution : 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 no more than the maximum retail price printed on the goods.
- Asking for a cash memo/receipt for the goods I purchased.
- Preventing shopkeepers from dumping 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.
- To be aware of the quality and safety of goods and services before purchasing.
- To gather all the information and facts available about a product or service as well as to keep abreast of changes and innovations in the marketplace.

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

Solution : We should look for Agmark symbol before buying the food items because this mark is certified by the government and is a certification mark employed on agricultural products in India, assuring that they conform to a set of standards approved by the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection, an agency of the Government of India.

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

Solution : Legal measures taken by the government to empower consumers in India are plenty.

- The MRTP (Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act) was enacted in 1984 to check unfair trade and practices by manufacturers and service providers.
- The COPRA (Consumer Protection Act) implemented in 1986 to protect consumers from exploitation in the market.
- 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 if they are treated unfairly in the market place.
- Then, in October 2005, the Right to Information Act was passed, ensuring citizens all information about the functioning of government departments.

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

Solution : Some of the rights of consumers are as follows :

- **Right to choice** - Any consumer who receives a service in whatever capacity, regardless of age, gender and nature of service, has the right to choose whether to continue to receive that service. Under this right, a consumer may also choose any one of the various brands of a product (say, a refrigerator) available in the market.
- **Right to redressal** - Consumers have the right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices and exploitation. He has the right to be compensated by the seller/producer if any damage or loss occurs due to the products or service purchased.
- **Right to represent** - The act has enabled us as consumers to have the right to represent in the consumer courts. In case his representation in the district

court is dismissed, he can approach the state level and then at the national level.

- The Right to be Informed and protected against fraudulent, deceitful or misleading information and to have access to accurate information and facts needed to make informed choices and decisions.

10 By what means can the consumers express their solidarity?

Solution : 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 help consumers to fight cases against them. Such groups, in return, receive financial aid from the government to create public awareness. Participation of people strengthens consumer solidarity.

11 Critically examine the progress of consumer movement in India.

Solution : 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 have been a progressive move. However, in contemporary India, the consumer redressal process is very complicated. It is an expensive and time-consuming process. Filing of cases, attending court proceedings, hiring lawyers and other procedures make it cumbersome for the consumers. There are over 700 consumer groups in India out of which, unfortunately, only about 20-25 are well-organised and functioning smoothly so far.

Even after more than 25 years of the enacting of the COPRA, a large section of the society of consumers is still unaware of their rights. Rules and regulations applicable to the market place are often not followed.

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 the 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

Solution :

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

13 Say True or False.

(i) COPRA applies only to goods.

Solution : False

(ii) India is one of the many countries in the world which has exclusive courts for consumer redressal.

Solution : True

(iii) When a consumer feels that he has been exploited, he must file a case in the District Consumer Court.

Solution : True

(iv) It is worthwhile to move to consumer courts only if the damages incurred are of high value.

Solution : True

(v) Hallmark is the certification maintained for standardisation of jewellery.

Solution : True

(vi) The consumer redressal process is very simple and quick.<.

Solution : False

(vii) A consumer has the right to get compensation depending on the degree of the damage.

Solution : True

