CHAPTER - 4

CONSUMER EDUCATION POLICY AND FRAME WORK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
CHAPTER IV

CONSUMER EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK & ITS IMPLICATIONS.

INTRODUCTION

In a free economics set up, the consumer is said to be sovereign. Business Organizations are generally expected to formulate their policies in such a manner as to provide a very important place to the consumer interest. Theoretically, consumer is the boss. He gets what he wants. In words, the consumer has the right to choose, right to represent. The sale of the product is controlled by the decision of the consumer.

Unlike the advanced countries consumerism in India is in its infancy, it is just like a movement which can be equated with several other social movement e.g. Independence movement, civil right movement etc. It is the result of a social conflict and can not therefore be wished away. It will be with us till the conflict facing the consumer is resolved. So it is the need of it is the hour that consumerism must be developed in a concrete shape.

Similarly, there is little doubt that any movement to spread consumer awareness in a society like ours, with a rapid population growth, a vast unorganized sector of trade and manufacture and high levels of illiteracy, needs governmental intervention to give it more teeth. Over the years, because of an incipient but growing awareness of the multi practices indulged in by trade and manufacture, the government has introduced an array of laws designed to protect the consumers interest. These include the Indian Sale of Goods Act, prevention of Food adulteration Act, Drugs Control Act, drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act, Essential Commodities Act, Standards of Weights of Measures Act, Trade and
Merchandise Act, Indian Standards Institution (certification Mark) act, prevention of Black Marketing and maintenance of supplies of Practices Act. In addition to these the Indian Penal Code 1860 also comes to the rescue of the consumer. Sections 264 to 267 of the Penal Code relating to false weights and measures, sections, 272 to 276 relating to adulteration of food drink and drugs and section 479 to 489 relating to property marks also provides protection to consumer interest.

But these laws have not had the desired effect in preventing both organized and unorganized business from using unfair means to palm off their shabby products on the unsay buyer. To cite an example an official survey has noised that the Indian consumer is cheated of about Rs.1,600 crores a year through defective weights and measures and this is despite the laws framed to prevent such unfair practices.

Similarly, though the public sector has been developed and expanded to serve the public interest by providing effective competition to the private sector, increasing production, improving distribution etc. it is yet to produce benefits commensurate with the investment. It is an irony that though consumer welfare is an avowed objective of public sector, in certain areas the poor performance of the public sector monopolies has made the plight of the consumer more miserable. Some of them even charged with unfair trade practice. For instance, electricity - consumer are compelled to pay service charges for the services they never or hardly receive. Such is the plight of the telephone consumer also. In the case of the state owned road transport corporations, it is common that passengers who have paid fares for luxury of express services are compelled to travel in ordinary coaches.

Profiteering in the guise of local taxes is widely prevalent. Though the maximum retail price is printed on packet of a product,
the phrase, local tax extra, provides enormous scope for profiteering. Similarly, ISI entrusted with the task of setting and enforcing standards for manufactures, has failed to make any appreciable impact on the consumer or the manufacturers despite decades of its existence. A large number of household gadgets used are not only of inferior quality but pose a threat to the life of user.

The brightening scenario of above environment forced the consumer movement to take its own shape. The consumer movement is gaining momentum in India and consumer groups are doing well espousing a number of causes. Voluntary consumer bodies like the Indian Federation of consumer organizations, Consumer Education and Research centre, national consumer Protection Council, Consumer Guidance Society, Professor of Bombay, 187 consumer groups exist in India, However these groups are isolated from one another, and the weakest link of the movement is lack concerted action. The group need to co ordinate their efforts and also develop relations with corporate bodies and insist upon corporations to setup consumer relations departments. To make it more effective, the government could put a substantial portion of its resources in the development of consumer interest. In fact it should evolve a national consumer policy and frame guideline on the use of fund by voluntary agencies that promote consumerism.

In the words of the noted economist and diplomat, John Kenneth Galbraith: "It is not the consumer who is the king, but it is the large corporation who is the king in the economy. Whatever happens is not because the consumers want it that way, but simply because powerful large corporations prefer it that way." In other words, the perfect market place is a myth and an economist's dream.
and consumers are at the mercy of business, if not fully, but to a large extent.

This goes against the notion of consumers' sovereignty, which says that the right person to make the decision is the consumer herself/himself. If the purpose of economic activity is to allocate resources to meet consumers' needs, then the purpose is most likely to be defeated unless there are planned efforts to educate the consumers.

India is one of the very few countries where consumer education has already been introducing in school curricula. However, adult community education is just as important in order to build a society of critically aware consumers. Education programmes should therefore be geared towards the young as well as towards adults, the low-income consumers.

The United Nations Guidelines

The UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection, 1985, which include the right to consumer education, were primarily set up to promote the interests and needs of consumers. They were to be used as a standard against which various practice (production, supply, dissemination of information, propaganda and campaigns), that have a bearing on consumers, would be tested for their beneficial or harmful aspects.

Necessary legislation to curb unfair business practices etc., that are harmful to consumers and encroach upon their rights as per the UN Guidelines, would have to be put in place. Government as well as the international community should facilitate the process with help from the executive and judiciary.
DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES

What is the right?
"The right to consumer education means the right to acquire the knowledge and skills to be an informed consumer throughout one's life. The right to consumer education incorporates the right to knowledge and skills needed for taking actions to influence the factors which affect consumer decisions."

In stating the objectives of consumers' right to consumer education, the UN Guidelines state that:

- Governments should develop or encourage the development of general consumer education programmes, bearing in mind the cultural traditions of the people concerned. The aim of such programmes should be to enable people to act as discriminating consumers, capable of making an informed choice of goods and services, and conscious of their rights and responsibilities. In developing informed choice of goods and services, and conscious of their rights and responsibilities. In developing such programmes special attention should be given to the needs of disadvantaged consumers, in both rural and urban areas, including low income consumers and those with low or non-existent literacy levels;

- Consumer education should, where appropriate, become an essential part of the basic curriculum of the education system, preferably as a component of the education system, preferably as a component of the existing subjects;

- Consumer education programmes should cover such important aspects of consumer protection as the following:
  - Health, nutrition, prevention of food-borne disease and food adulteration,
  - Product hazards,
• Product labeling,
• Relevant legislation on how to obtain redress,
• How to approach appropriate agencies and organizations for consumer protection,
• Information on weights and measures, prices, quality, credit conditions and availability of basic necessities, and
• Pollution and environment;

• Governments should encourage consumer organizations and other interested groups, including the media, to undertake education programmes, particularly for the benefit of low income consumer groups in rural and urban areas;
• Business should, where appropriate, undertake participate in factual and relevant consumer education programmes;
• Bearing in mind the need to reach the rural and the illiterate consumers, governments should develop or encourage development of consumer education programmes in mass media; and
• Government should organize or encourage training programmes for educators, mass media, professional and consumer advisers, to enable them to participate in carrying out consumer education programmes.

GOVERNMENT POLICY
In India there is no clear government policy with regard to consumer education. However, the Union as well as the state governments have accepted the introduction of consumer education in school curricula. The National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), has been given the ask of developing the syllabus and text books.

The importance of consumers’ right to consumer education has
been re-iterated in various statements by government officials, including the concerned Ministers.

Addressing the National Convention on Consumer Protection in 1993, A K Anthony, then Minister for Civil Supplies, stated: “There is a lot of talk about transparency in public administration. The consumer movement should also ensure that the trade plays a fair game. Free play of market forces is perhaps a myth. We know that the prices are subject to all kinds of manipulation. Therefore, as a first step towards transparency in trading practices, we should educate the consumer to demand for easy availability of cost data of various industrial products. Slowly, we should strive for a culture whereby the market rejects products which are not consumer friendly.”

In a related context (in line with the objective stated above – “as appropriate, pollution and environment”), The National Conservation Strategy & Policy Statement on Environment & Development, Ministry of Environment & Forests, stated: “Implementation of the conservation strategy would be impossible without the active participation of the people. Non-governmental organizations can play an important role in mobilizing the people at grass root levels. This will need a network among NGOs and interface between the people and governments to work on community involvement, providing education and information on environmental surveillance and monitoring, transmitting development in science and appropriate technology to the people at large.”

IMPLEMENTATION

The above mentioned discussion on the imperative for, and the objective of, consumers’ right to consumer education clearly calls for implementation of various policies and strategies with respect to consumer education in a decentralized manner. Mere legislation will
Role of the Government
To educate consumer organizations and other sections of society, the Department of Consumer Affairs, under the Ministry of Consumer affairs & Public Distribution, is conducting training programme in the field of consumer protection. These training programmes are being conducted for State Government officials, Non - judicial members of State Commissions / District For a and Voluntary organizations.

Besides these, publicity measures through documentaries like “Mubarak Kadam” and “Misleading Advertisements” have been prepared and were telecast on Doordarshan. A 12 part serial in Hindi on consumer related matters, entitled “Grahak Dhost”, was produced and began it’s telecast in June 1998. This is now being produced in regional languages.

The Department has also brought out the following printed publicity materials that are being distributed free of cost:

- Brochures entitled “Salient Features of Consumer Protection Act, 1986”, “Rights of Consumers” and “Consumer Protection Act and you”
- Booklets entitled “Help prevent Adulteration”, “Consumer protection & Weights & Measures” and “Directory Address of Redressal Agencies” have been printed.
- Seven booklets in Hindi on various aspects of consumer awareness, for their use in Adult Education Programmes mainly for the rural masses.
- Quarterly journal entitled “Upabhokta Jagaran” which is distributed to consumer organizations.
Role of consumer organizations

The Government of India, through the consumer Welfare fund, has a provision to fund consumer education programmes undertaken by consumer groups or state governments. The Consumer Education & Research Center (CERC), Ahmedabad, the Federation of Consumer Organizations of Tamilnadu (FEDCOT), and Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), Jaipur and Calcutta, have produced videocassettes on consumer education. The Mumbai Grahak Panchayat, Mumbai, brings out a consumer magazine in Marathi.

Over the years, CUTS has been publishing a consumer newsletters in Hindi, Upbhokta Tarang (Consumer Movement), to reach out to society. Furthermore, since 1991, CUTS has been conducting “Upbhokta Mitra Training” (Training for Consumers’ Friends), to train and educate young consumer leaders from rural areas, who then multiply their knowledge at local levels. As part of this programme, CUTS has published two relevant documents: “Reaching Out” and “Reaching Justice”.

Furthermore, the Steering Committee of the Central Consumer Protection Council has welcomed the idea of setting up of the National Institute of Consumer Education by voluntary consumer organizations.

Consumer Co-ordination Council

The Consumer Co-ordination Council (an apex body of consumer organizations of India), has been conducting several programmes on consumer education for activities and others. It has published training manuals covering:

- The Consumer Protection Act, 1986;
- Water, food and public distribution system;
• Health, drugs and cosmetics; and
• Road transport and railways.

Role of the press

In the past few years, particularly after the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act (COPRA), 1986, there has been widespread interest among people about their rights as well as duties as educated consumers. The number of cases filed in various consumer forums and the spurt in the growth of consumer organizations is a reflection of growing consumer consciousness.

The average consumer is now more assertive and cannot be taken for granted by the traders. While voluntary consumer organizations have been doing their best to bring about this awareness, the press and other media are also playing an effective role.

Since the enactment of COPRA and even before that, newspapers and magazines have been responding to the needs of consumers in more than one way. Apart from publishing articles, columns etc., newspapers have also tried to come to the rescue of harassed consumers. For instance, the Indian Express was one of the first newspapers to start a consumer complaint column. It carried the problems and grievances of consumers and took up the responsibility of forwarding these to the concerned authorities for redressal. In many cases the results were published and consumers were able to get their grievances settled.

The reflects the importance of informal education to consumers to settle their grievances through their knowledge of case studies. The success and popularity of the column in the Indian Express motivated other newspapers to follow suit. Today, almost all newspapers carry a consumer complaint column every week. The regional language

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newspapers are also not lagging far behind.

Role of Universities

In this regard, the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), has made a beginning by developing a comprehensive syllabus which provides the basic framework for other universities to develop a curriculum for consumer education. The details are provided in Annexure -5.1- “Proposed Application Oriented Course in consumer Studies”. The course will be conducted by the Faculty of Political Science of the School of Social Sciences of IGNOU. The Kakatiya University in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, is already running a one-year Post Graduate Course in Consumer Law. The Maharashtra Open University in Pune is also offering courses in consumer education.

UNITED NATIONS GUIDELINES FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION

1. OBJECTIVES

1. Taking into account the interests and needs of consumers in all countries, particularly those in developing countries; recognizing that consumers often face imbalances in economic terms educational levels and bargaining power; and bearing in mind that consumers should have the right of access to non-hazardous products, as well as the right to promote just, equitable and sustainable economic and social development and environmental protection, these guidelines for consumer protection have the following objectives:

(a) to assist countries in achieving or maintaining adequate protection for their population as consumers;
(b) to facilitate production and distribution patterns responsive to the needs and desires of consumers,
(c) To encourage high levels of ethical conduct for those engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services to consumers;

(d) To assist countries in curbing abusive business practices by all enterprises at the national and international levels which adversely affect consumers.

(e) To facilitate the development of independent consumer groups;

(f) To further international cooperation in the field of consumer protection;

(g) To encourage the development of market conditions which provide consumers with great choice at lower prices.

(h) To promote sustainable consumption.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2. Government should develop or maintain a strong consumer protection policy, taking into account the Guidelines set out below and relevant international agreements. In so doing, each Government should set its own priorities for the protection of consumers in accordance with the economic, social and environmental circumstances of the country and the needs of its population, bearing in mind the costs and benefits of proposed measures.

3. The legitimate needs which the guidelines are intended to meet are the following:

(a) The protection of consumers from hazards to their healthy and safety.

(b) The promotion and protection of the economic interests of consumers.

(c) Access of consumers to adequate information to enable them to make informed choices according to individuals' wishes and needs.
(d) Consumer education, including education on the environmental, social and economic impact of consumer choice.

(e) Availability of effective consumer redress;

(f) Freedom to form consumer and other relevant groups or organizations and the opportunity of such organizations to present their views in decision-making processes affecting them;

(g) The protection of sustainable consumption patterns.

4 Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in industrialized countries, are the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment. All countries should strive to promote sustainable consumption patterns; developed countries should take the lead in achieving sustainable consumption patterns in their developing process, having due regard to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The special situational needs of developing countries in this regard should be fully taken into account.

3. Policies for promoting sustainable consumption should take into account the goals of eradicating poverty, satisfying the basic human needs of all members of society, and reducing inequality within and between countries.

4. Governments should provide or maintain adequate infrastructure to develop, implement and monitor consumer protection policies. Special care should be taken to ensure that measures for consumer protection are implemented for the benefit of all sectors of the population, particularly the rural population and people living in poverty.

5. All enterprises should obey the relevant laws and regulations of the countries in which they do business. They should also conform to the appropriate provisions of international
standards for consumer protection to which the competent authorities of the country in questions have agreed (Hereinafter references to international standards in the guidelines should be viewed in the context of this paragraph)

6. The potential positive role of universities and public and private enterprises in research should be considered when developing consumer protection policies.

III. GUIDELINES

7. The following guidelines should apply both the home-produced goods and services and to imports

8. In applying any problems or regulations for consumer protection, due regard should be given to ensuring that they do not become barriers to international trade and that they are consistent with international trade obligations.

A. Physical safety

9. Government should adopt or encourage the addition of appropriate measures, including legal systems, safety regulations, national or international standards, voluntary standards and the maintenance of safety records to ensure that products are safe for either intended or normally foreseeable use.

10. Appropriate policies should ensure that goods produced by manufacturers are safe for either intended or normally foreseeable use. Those responsible for bringing goods to the market, in particular suppliers, exporters, importers, retailers and the like (hereinafter referred to as “distributors”), should ensure that while in their care these goods are not rendered unsafe through improper handling or storage and that while in their care they do not become hazardous through improper handling or storage. Consumers should be instructed in the
proper use of the goods and should be informed of the risks involved in intended or normally foreseeable use. Vital safety information should be conveyed to consumers by internationally understandable symbols wherever possible.

11. Appropriate policies should ensure that if manufacturers or distribution become aware of unforeseen hazards after products are placed on the market, they should notify the relevant authorities and, as appropriate, the public, without delay. Governments should also consider ways of ensuring that consumers are properly informed of such hazards.

12. Government should, where appropriate, adopt policies under which, if a product is found to be seriously defective and/or to constitute a substantial and severe hazard even when properly used, manufacturers and/or distributors should recall it and replace or modify it, or substitute another product for it; if it is not possible to do this within a reasonable period of time, the consumer should be adequately compensated.

B. Promotion and protection of consumer's economic interests

13. Government policies should seek to enable consumers to obtain optimum benefit from their economic resources. They should also seek to achieve the goals of satisfactory production and performance standards, adequate distribution methods, fair business practices, informative marketing and effective protection against practices which could adversely affect the economic interests of consumers and the exercise of choice in the market-place.

14. Government should intensify their efforts to prevent practices which are damaging to the economic interests of consumers through ensuring that manufacturers, distributors and others involved in the provision of goods and services adhere to established laws and mandatory standards. Consumer --
organisations should be encouraged to monitor adverse practices, such as the adulteration of foods, false or misleading claims in marketing and service frauds.

15. Governments should develop, strengthen or maintain, as the case may be, measures relating to the control of restrictive and other abusive business practices which may be harmful to consumers, including means for the enforcement of such measures. In this connection, government should be guided by their commitment to the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 35/63 of 5 December 1980.

16. Governments should adopt or maintain policies that make clear the responsibility of the producer to ensure that goods meet reasonable demands of durability, utility and reliability, and are suited to the purpose for which they are intended, and that the seller should see that these requirements are met. Similar policies should apply to the provision of services.

17. Governments should, encouraged fair effective competition in order to provide consumers with the greatest range of choice among products and services at the lowest cost.

18. Governments should, where appropriate, see to it that manufacturers and / or retailers ensure adequate availability of reliable after-sales service and spare parts.

19. Consumers should be protected from such contractual abuses as one-sided standard contracts, exclusion of essential rights in contracts, and unconscionable conditions of credit by sellers.

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20. Promotional marketing and sales practices should be guided by the principle of fair treatment of consumers and should meet legal requirements. This requires the provision of the information necessary to enable consumers to take informed and independent decision, as well as measures to ensure that the information provided is accurate.

21. Governments should encourage all concerned to participate in the free flow of accurate information on all aspects of consumer products.

22. Consumer access to accurate information about the environmental impact of products and services should be encouraged through such means as product profiles, environmental reports by industry, information centers for consumers, voluntary and transparent eco-labelling programmes and product information hotlines.

23. Governments, in close collaboration with manufacturers, distributors and consumers organization, should take measures regarding misleading environmental claims or information in advertising and other marketing activities. The development of appropriate advertising codes and standards for the regulation and verification of environmental claims should be encouraged.

24. Governments should, within their own national context, encouraged the formulation and implementation by business, in cooperation with consumer organization, of codes of marketing and other business practices to ensure adequate consumer protection. Voluntary agreements may also be established jointly by business, consumer organizations and
other interested parties. These codes should receive adequate publicity.

25. Governments should regularly review legislation pertaining to weights and measures and assess the adequacy of the machinery for its enforcement.

C. Standards for the safety and quality of consumer goods and services

26. Government should, as appropriate, formulate or promote the elaboration and implementation of standards, voluntary and other, at the national and international levels for the safety and quality of goods and services and give them appropriate publicity. National standards and regulation for product safety and quality should be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that they conform, where possible, to generally accepted international standards.

27. Where a standard lower than generally accepted international standard is being applied because of local economic conditions, every effort should be made to raise that standard as soon as possible.

28. Governments should encourage and ensure the availability of facilities to test and certify the safety, quality and performances of essential consumer goods and services.

D. Distribution facilities for essential consumer goods and services.

31. Government should, where appropriate, consider:

(a) Adopting or maintaining policies to ensure the efficient distribution of goods and services to consumers; where appropriate, specific policies should be considered to ensure the distribution of essential goods and services
where this distribution is endangered, as could be the case particularly in rural areas. Such policies could include assistance for the creation of adequate storage and retail facilities in rural centers, incentives for consumer self-help and better control of the conditions under which essential and services are provided in rural areas;

(b) Encouraging the establishment of consumer cooperatives and related trading activities, as well as information about them, especially in rural areas.

E. Measures enabling consumers to obtain redress

32 Government should established or maintain legal and/or administrative measure to enable consumers or, as appropriate, relevant organizations to obtain redress through formal or informal procedures that are expeditious, fair, inexpensive and accessible. Such procedures should take particular account of the needs of low-income consumers.

33 . Governments should encourage all enterprises to resolve consumer disputes in a fair, expeditious and informal manner, and to establish voluntary mechanisms, including advisory services and informal complaints procedures, which can provide assistance to consumers.

34. Information on available redress and other dispute-resolving procedures should be made available to consumers.

F. Education and Information Programmes

35. Government should develop or encourage the development of general consumer education and information programmes, including information on the environmental impact of consumer choices and behaviors and the possible --
- implications, including benefits and cost, of changes in consumption, bearing in mind the cultural traditions of the people concerned. The aim of such programmes should be to enable people to act as discriminating consumers, capable of making an informed choice of goods and services, and conscious of their right and responsibilities. In developing such programmes, special attention should be given to the needs of disadvantaged consumers, in both rural and urban areas, including low-income consumers and those with low or non-existent literacy levels. Consumer groups, business and other relevant organizations of civil society should be involved in these educational efforts.

36. Consumer education should, where appropriate, become an integral part of the basic curriculum of the educational system, preferably as a component of existing subjects.

37. Consumer education and information programmes should cover such important aspect of consumer protection as the following
(a) Health, nutrition, prevention of food-borne diseases and food adulteration;
(b) Product hazards;
(c) Product labeling;
(d) Relevant legislation, how to obtain redress, and organizations for consumer protection;
(e) Information on weights and measures, prices, quality, credit conditions and availability of basic necessities'
(f) Environmental protection; and
(g) Efficient use of materials, energy and water.

38. Government should encourage consumer organizations and other interested groups, including the media, to undertake -
- education and information programmes, including on the environmental impacts of consumption patterns and on the possible implications, including benefits and costs, of changes in consumption, particularly for the benefit of low-income consumer groups in rural and urban areas.

39. Business should, where appropriate, undertake or participate in factual and relevant consumer education and information programmes.

40. Bearing in mind the need to reach rural consumers and illiterate consumers Governments should, as appropriate, develop or encourage the development of consumer information programmes in the mass media.

41. Government should organize or encourage training programmes for education, mass media professionals and consumer advisers, to enable them to participate in carrying out consumer information and education programmes.

G. Promotion of sustainable consumption

42. Sustainable consumption includes meeting the needs of present and future generation for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

43. Responsibility for sustainable consumption is shared by members and organizations of society, with informed consumers, Government, business, labour organizations, and consumer and environmental organizations playing -

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particularly important roles. Informed consumers have an essential role in promoting consumption that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, including through the effects of their choices on producers. Government should promote the development and implementation of policies for sustainable consumption and the integration of those policies with other public policies. Government policy making should be conducted in consultation with business, consumer and environmental organizations, and other concerned groups. Business has a responsibility for promoting sustainable consumption through the design, production and distribution of goods and services. Consumer and environmental organisations have a responsibility for promoting public participation and debate on sustainable consumption, for informing consumers, and for working with Government and business towards sustainable consumption.

44. Governments, in partnership with business and relevant organisations of civil society, should develop and implement strategies that promote sustainable consumption through a mix of policies that could include regulations; economic and social instruments; sectoral policies in such areas as land use, transport, energy and housing information programme to raise awareness of the impact of consumption patterns; removal of subsidies that promote unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; and promotion of sector-specific environmental-management best practices.

45. Governments should encourage the design, development and use of products and services that are safe and energy and resource efficient, considering their full life-cycle impacts.
Governments should encourage recycling programmes that encourage consumers to both recycle waste and purchase recycled products.

46. Governments should promote the development and use of national and international environmental health and safety standards for products and services; such standards should not result in disguised barriers to trade.

47. Governments should safely manage environmentally harmful uses of substances and encourage the development of environmentally sound alternatives for such uses. New potentially hazardous substances should be evaluated on a specific basis for their long-term environmental impact prior to distribution.

48. Governments should safely manage environmentally harmful uses of substances and encourage the development of environmentally sound alternatives for such uses. New potentially hazardous substances should be evaluated on a scientific basis of their long-term environmental impact prior to distribution.

49. Governments should promote awareness of the health-related benefits of sustainable consumption and production patterns, bearing in mind both direct effects on individuals health and collective effects through environmental protection.

50. Governments, in partnership with the private sector and other relevant organizations, should encourage the transformation of unsustainable consumption patterns through the development and use of new environmentally sound products and services.
and new technologies, including information and communication technologies, that can meet consumer needs while reducing pollution and depletion of natural resources.

51. Governments are encouraged to create or strengthen effective regulatory mechanisms for the protection of consumers, including aspects of sustainable consumption.

52. Governments should consider a range of economic instruments such as, inter alia, fiscal instruments and internalization of environmental costs, to promote sustainable consumption, taking into account social needs, the need for disincentives for unsustainable practices and incentives for more sustainable practices, while avoiding potential negative effects for market access, in particular for developing countries.

53. Governments, in cooperation with business and other relevant groups, should develop indicators, methodologies and databases for measuring progress towards sustainable consumption at all levels. This information should be publicity available.

54. Governments and international agencies should take the lead in introducing sustainable practices in their own operations, in particular through their procurement policies. Government procurement, as appropriate, should encourage development and use of environmentally sound products and services.

55. Governments and other relevant organizations should promote research on consumer behaviour related to environmental damage in order to identify ways to make consumption patterns more sustainable.

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H. Measures relating to specific areas

56. In advancing consumer interests, particularly in developing countries, Government should, where appropriate, give priority to areas of essential concern for the health of the consumer, such as food, water and pharmaceuticals. Policies should be adopted or maintained for products quality control, adequate and secure distribution facilities, standardized international labeling and information, as well as education and research programmes in these areas. Government guidelines in regard to specific areas should be developed in the context of the provisions of this document.

57. Food. When formulating national policies and plans with regard to food, Governments should take into account the need of all consumers for food security and should support and, as far as possible, adopt standards from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Health Organisation Codex Alimentarius or, in their absence, other generally accepted international food standards. Governments should maintain, develop or improve food safety measures, including inter alia, safety criteria, food standards and dietary requirements and effective monitoring, inspection and evaluation mechanisms.

58. Government should promote sustainable agricultural policies and practices, conservation of biodiversity, and protection of soil and water, taking into account traditional knowledge.

59. Water, Governments should, within the goals and targets set for the International Drinking water Supply and Sanitation Decade, formulate, maintain or strengthen national policies to
improve the supply, distribution and quality of water for drinking. Due regard should be paid to the choice of appropriate levels of service, quality and technology, the need for education programmes and the importance of community participation.

60. Governments should assign high priority to the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes concerning the multiple uses of water, taking into account the importance of water for sustainable development in general and its finite character as a resource.

61. Pharmaceuticals. Governments should develop or maintain adequate standards, provision and appropriate regulatory systems for ensuring the quality and appropriate use of pharmaceuticals through integrated national drug policies which could address, inter alia, procurement, distribution, production, licensing arrangements, registration systems and the availability of reliable information on pharmaceuticals. In so doing, Governments should take special account of the work and recommendations of the World Health Organisation on pharmaceuticals. For relevant products, the use of that organisation's Certification Scheme on the Quality of Pharmaceutical Products Moving in International Commerce and other international information systems on pharmaceuticals should be encouraged. Measures should also be taken, as appropriate, to promote the use of international non-proprietary names (INNs) for drugs, drawing on the work done by the World Health Organisation.

62. In addition to the priority areas indicated above, Government should adopt appropriate measures in other areas, such as
pesticides and chemicals in regard, where relevant, to their use, production and storage, taking into account such relevant health and environmental information as Governments may require producers to provide and include in the labeling of products.

IV. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

63. Governments should, especially in a regional or sub regional context:

(a) Develop, review, maintain or strengthen, as appropriate, mechanisms for the exchange of information on national policies and measures in the field of consumer protection;

(b) Cooperate or encourage cooperation in the implementation of consumer protection policies to achieve greater results within existing resources. Examples of such cooperation could be collaboration in the setting up or joint use of testing facilities, common testing procedures, exchange of consumer information and education programmes, joint training programmes and joint elaboration of regulations;

(c) Cooperate to improve the conditions under which essential goods are offered to consumers, giving due regard to both price and quality. Such cooperation could include joint procurement of essential goods, exchange of information on different procurement possibilities and agreements on regional product specifications.

64. Governments should develop or strengthen information links regarding products which have been banned, withdrawn or severely restricted in order to enable other importing countries to protect themselves adequately against the harmful effects of such products.
65. Governments should work to ensure that the quality of product, and information relating to such products, does not vary from country to country in a way that would have detrimental effect on consumers.

66. To promote sustainable consumption, Government, international bodies and business should work together to develop, transfer and disseminate environmentally sound technologies, including through appropriate financial support from developed countries, and to devise new and innovative mechanisms for financing their transfer among all countries, in particular to and among developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

67. Government and international organizations, as appropriate, should promote and facilitate capacity building in the area of sustainable consumption, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In particular, Governments should also facilitate cooperation among consumer groups and other relevant organizations of civil society, with the aim of strengthening capacity in this area.

68. Governments and international bodies, as appropriate, should promote programmes relating to consumer education and information.

69. Governments should work to ensure that policies and measures for consumer protection are implemented with due regard to their not becoming barriers to international trade, and that they are consistent with international trade obligations.
National Consumer Policy

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, described the consumer are:
“A customer is the most important visitor in our premises. He is not dependent on us, we are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work, he is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider to our business, he is part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him, he is doing us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so.”

I. Premble
1.1. the rational behind the National consumer Policy stems from Article 39 of the Constitution of India which has enshrined the Directive Principles to be followed by the State to ensure all-round welfare of the citizens of the country. The basic premise of the National Consumer Policy is to ensure that goods, services and technology are available to consumers at reasonable prices and acceptable standards of quality. There is a consumer dimension in almost every area of governance, and therefore a need to take into consideration consumers' interests in all policy decisions and implementation thereof. The National Consumer Policy seeks to provide guidelines to different branches of the Government and agencies at all level in maintaining the appropriate consumer dimension while taking any step or decision which will have an impact on consumer's interests.

1.2 In view of complexity of the market place and technology and impact of liberalization, the consumer needs to be protected. In the past, there was the system of barter and consumers did not have to choose from a large range- the allocation of resources was simpler. However, the situation has changed considerably.
With the growth and dominance of the market place, consumers' interests and protection have taken a back seat. The perfect market place is a myth, and an economist's dream.

1.3 Faced with this reality the United nations debated and adopted the guidelines for Consumer Protection in 1985. These Guidelines also call upon the member governments to develop, maintain and strengthen a strong consumer policy, and provide for enhanced protection of consumers by enunciating various steps and measure. In 1995, the Guidelines were reviewed, and some issues, which needed further elaboration and expansion, were espoused by consumer organizations. Among the issues are access to basic needs, appropriate regulatory policies, sustainable consumption etc.

1.4 India also adopted a consumer protection legislation- Consumer Protection Act in 1986 (COPRA) which recognizes the following six rights of consumers:

- Safety : The right to be protected against the marketing of goods and services which are hazards to life and property.
- Information : The right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, Standard and price of goods or services, as the case may be, so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices.
- Choice : The right to be assured, wherever possible, access to a variety of products and services at competitive prices.
- Representation : The right to be heard and to be assured that consumer's interests will receive due consideration at appropriate forums.
- Redressal : The right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or restrictive trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers.
- Consumer education : The right to consumer education.
1.5 Furthermore, from the U.N. Guidelines for Consumer Protection, 1985, two other rights of consumers are inferred:

- Basic needs: The right to basic goods and services which guarantee dignified living. It includes adequate food, clothing, health care, drinking water and sanitation, shelter, education, energy and transportation.

- Healthy environment: The right to a physical environment that will enhance the quality of life. It includes protection against environmental damage. It acknowledges the need to protect and improve the environment for future generations as well.

1.6 To promote accountability, transparency and good governance the National Consumer Policy seeks to encourage all ministries, departments and other bodies, government and non-government, to adopt “Citizens’ Charters” that will spell out the standards of service available to consumers and citizens.

II Objectives

2.1 the Constitution of India seeks to ensure for its citizens - social economic and political justice. However, as consumers face imbalances in economic terms, education levels and bargaining power, the National Consumer Policy aims to promote and protect consumer rights for just, equitable and sustainable economic and social development.

2.2 Taking into account the needs of and priorities for consumers the objectives of the National Consumer Policy thus are to:

a. Strengthen production and distribution patterns which are responsive to the needs of consumers, and with the goal of promoting sustainable consumption on an equitable basis;
b. Advocate and promote ethical conduct, transparency, consumer participation and responsiveness in the choice appropriate technology and environmental responsibility in providing goods, services and technology to consumers at all levels;

c. Promote the development of market conditions which provide consumers with appropriate choices at fair prices and right quality, and lesser burden on the environment.

d. Promote assessment of consumer impact in every area of governance where consumer interests are affected;

e. Promote participation of consumers in every area of governance, particularly in the Panchayati Raj system;

f. Promote adoption of Citizens' Charters for greater accountability and transparency in governance;

g. Encourage policies and programmes to enable sustainable production and consumption patterns; and

h. Promote regional and international co-operation in the field of consumer protection, sustainable consumption and production patterns.

III. Principles

3.1. The policy intends to:

a. Empower consumers to have access to the basic needs of life.

b. Protect consumers from hazards to their life and safety.

c. Enhance the access of consumers to adequate information to enable them to make informed and environmentally benign choices according to individual as well as societal needs;

d. Promote consumer education through formal as well as non-formal education systems so as to help consumers in their decision making;

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e. Promote accountability and transparency through adoption of Citizens’ Charters;
f. Provide expeditious and inexpensive system of delivery of justice.
g. Promote an independent consumer movement in the country by providing assistance to consumer and other relevant groups to form their organizations and giving them the opportunity to present their views in the decision-making process.
h. Initiate and implement appropriate mechanisms for exchange of information on measures of consumer protection nationally, regionally and internationally.

3.2 Bearing in mind the costs and benefits of proposed measures, the economic, social, cultural and technological diversity of the country, and the needs of its population, evolve time bound programmes for the protection of consumers.

IV. Measures

1.1 These measures will apply to indigenously produced goods, services and technology as well as to imports.

1.2 Physical Safety: Protect consumers from hazards to their life and safety:
   a. Enhance the adoption of national as well as international standards for the safety and quality of goods, services and technology; and
   b. Enhance the access of consumers to adequate information to enable them to make informed and environmentally benign choice of goods, services and
technology according to individual as well as societal needs; and
c. Encourage formulation, adoption and wide dissemination of Citizens' Charters in all ministries, departments and bodies of government, business and cooperative sectors to increase awareness, accountability and transparency.

4.4 Choice: Promote and protect consumers' interests to make informed choice of goods, services and technology:

a. Strengthen measures to prevent restrictive and unfair business/trade practices which are harmful to consumer and the environment; and
b. Develop, maintain and strengthen a fair competition policy with a view to provide consumers with appropriate range of choice of goods, services and technology at the lowest prices.

4.5 Representation: Represent consumers' view in the decision-making process:

a. Provide and strengthen representation to consumer organization in the decision-making process of the Government at all levels as well as business and co-operatives;
b. Promote and encourage an independent consumer movement in the country by providing help to consumer groups to form their organizations and giving them the opportunity to present their views in the decision-making process; and
c. Encourage formulation, adoption and wide dissemination of Citizens' Charters in all ministries, departments and bodies of government, business and cooperatives sectors to increase representation, accountability and transparency.
4.6 Redressal: Expeditious and inexpensive consumer redressal system:
   a. Strength legal and administrative measures to enable individual consumers, consumers as a class and consumer organizations to obtain redressal through quasi-judicial procedures; and
   b. Encourage consumers to take recourse to alternative dispute resolution systems such as arbitration, conciliation and/or ombudsmen schemes.

4.7 Consumer education: to help consumers in their decision making;
   a. promote consumer education as an integral part of the formal education system at primary, secondary and college levels;
   b. Encourage business to undertake publication of consumer educational material for mass distribution; and
   c. Enable consumer organizations to undertake capacity building programmes for consumers, activists and other.

4.8 Basic needs: Access of consumers to basic goods, services and technology
   a. Strengthen measures to ensure access of consumers to basic goods and services of acceptable quality which include adequate supply of basic goods like food and clothing, and utility services like health care, drinking water and sanitation, housing, education, energy and transportation; and
   b. Encourage the establishment and strengthening of consumer co-operatives and related trading activities as well as information about them, especially in rural areas.

4.9 Healthy environment: Sustainable production and consumption patterns:
a. Develop and strengthen environmental testing of products and dissemination of information through governmental institutions, media and consumer organization; and
b. Encourage consumer organizations to review the implementation of environmental regulations by provider of goods, services and technology and verification of environmental safety claims.

4.10 International exchange of information on consumer protection:
   a. Initiate and implement exchanger of information ion measures of consumer protection, regionally and internationally; and
   b. Encourage consumer organizations to participate in information exchange programmes with international organizations.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

5.1 In view of economic, social cultural and technological diversity of the country, it is essential to adopt and strength monitoring and evaluation mechanisms by involving consumer and other groups, and business in the process of implementation of the aforesaid measures to achieve the objectives.

5.2 COPRA provides for establishment of the central Consumer Protection Council at the national level and state consumer protection councils at state and union territory headquarters. Furthermore, to establish an apex National Consumer Policy Coordination council with the Prime Minister as its chairperson so that consumer protection issues receive the highest consideration in every area of governance.
How Marketing can adopt to consumerism?

Pre-Purchase stage:

The consumers are denied most of the time their right to be informed because of the information gap. They are not able to make the choice in their purchase due to inadequate information and misleading information. The most visible information is Advertising. The marketers should follow certain code of ethics and try to bring out truthful claims about their products in their advertisement. If possible, the information given should be informative and substantiated by certification. This will earn the trust from the consumers. Sometimes the wordings should be carefully chosen in order to avoid ambiguity. For example, the advertisement for Sunlight washing powder says—The prose is so less but the shining is like sunlight. Here the way the analogy made is so abstract. Similarly, a manufacture of washing machines had some problem by using the word 'automatic' and she never used any detergent when she put her dirty clothes inside the washing machine for washing. She thought that the machine will automatically wash soon after her putting the cloths inside it. When she found it was not, she came running with her complaint. The manufacturers realized during their probing, how the word 'automatic' had created the misinterpretation.

Secondly, the next source of information, where some care can be taken is the label or the packaging. This source is more useful since it gives more about the product, namely the weight, size price some instructions as how to use or prepare, the manufacturer's name, date of packing etc. Though all these information's are useful the marketers should attempt to do some research as to know the limit of the information load the consumers can intake and make use of this will help the marketers to give the needed information without unnecessarily loading them.
For the durable products demonstrations will be a better form of feeding the consumers with information. The consumers are involved in the science and a two way communication is possible. The Consumers can clarify their doubts regarding the operational difficulties.

Thus adequate information disclosure enables the consumers to make a correct or intelligent choice and it also prevents the consumer from getting dissatisfied due to information gap.

**Purchase Stage**:

The consumers have got the right to choose the product, which suits them. But unfortunately most of the time their choice decision is disturbed by the deceptive discount offers and free offers. In truth the consumers have to pay extra for these efforts though they might look free on the surface level. Sometimes they have to buy more than they need in order to get the free gift. This malpractice should be controlled. The marketers should make genuine discount or free offers and the offers should not be too large to mislead the consumers.

The markets should also prevent the intermediaries from manipulation the price their advantage. Most of the time the consumers find the maximum price mentioned in the packaging is, treated as minimum price by the intermediaries namely the retailers. The marketers should adequately compensate and train up and educate these intermediaries so that this sort of malpractice's can be prevented.

**Post – Purchase Stage**:

This stage encounters with the reaction of consumers to dissatisfaction. Post-purchase dissatisfaction result in the redress seeking behavior of the consumers. It is found out that more often the dissatisfied consumers continue to give their patronage to the products provided their complaint were given proper hearing. The -
-complaint handling can be effective if proper analysis is done about the nature of dissatisfaction its intensity, the methods or ways by which the consumers want to resolve the problems and the like. Having a separate consumer affairs department will help the marketers to handle the complaints effectively and quickly. Normally the consumers like to seek redress by getting refund, replacement or rectification. Very rarely consumers seek a legal redress by filing suits. Post purchase dissatisfactions can be solved most of the time by satisfactory warranty or guarantee tools, and efficient after sales service.