

## **Consumer Awareness in India: A Case Study of Chandigarh**

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### ***Abstract***

*Every man is a consumer, and ought to be a producer. He is by constitution expensive, and needs to be rich. “Herbert Hoover”*

*This paper has been written to study the general consumer awareness among consumers regarding various acts that have been formed for the protection of their rights. With the increasing competition, every firm is trying to attract more consumers with variety of products. In spite of this everyday number of unsatisfied customers are increasing. It studies the level of awareness regarding the procedural formalities in consumer forums. For this purpose a sample of 100 respondents has been taken. Both primary and secondary data has been collected through questionnaire, interviews with officials, and observation. So in the true sense, competition is not only the basis of protection to the consumer, but is the incentive to progress. Businesses are not doing any favour by serving the consumers instead consumers are helping firms by providing them opportunity to serve them. Efforts have been made to suggest some measures to strengthen the consumer position.*

***Keywords: Consumer, Consumer Protection, Problems.***

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of world as a global village and growing interdependences of the business practices have increased the importance of consumer rights, protection and promotion. People are demanding quality products and services for the value which they pay. Notwithstanding of great impact on the quality and safety of goods and services, still the customers are facing dishonesty Unfair and exploitative trade practices in many ways like high prices, misleading advertisement etc. Both the government and businessman should lay emphasis on the satisfaction of the consumers.

### **CONSUMER AWARENESS**

A person who buys any goods or services for a consideration which has been paid or promised or partly paid and partly promised or under any system of deferred payment is a Consumer. A person who obtains such goods for resale or for any commercial purposes will not be a consumer. However, if such goods are bought by a person exclusively for the purpose of earning his livelihood by means of self-employment then such a person will be considered as a consumer. The Consumer awareness is essential in all of the following stages:

### 1. BEFORE BUYING

- Planning in advance
- Enquiring past performance of product / service
- Enquiring about reputation and past performance of producer / seller / service provider

### 2. WHILEBUYING

- Asking for demonstration regarding how to operate / use the product/service
- Enquiring about after-sales service and ensuring availability, phone number, address and e-mail of service centre
- Knowing the contents of guarantee / warranty card dully signed/sealed by dealer
- Demanding for approved sale bill with serial number, address, phone number, etc.

### 3. AFTER BUYING

- Using products according to instruction given in user manual.
- Immediately contacting dealer/service centre in case of fault information.
- Keeping record for all correspondences like bills and guarantee card.
- Seek immediate redressal of deficiency in product

## CONSUMER PROTECTION FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

The consumer movement in India is very old, even at the time of Kautilya there are evidences of consumer protection with respect to quality, and weight etc. but there was no systematic movement. Now-a-days the increasing competition and technology have made the marketing process twisted around. All these have increased the need of consumer protection. It started in year 1824 and now 15th of March is observed as the World Consumer Rights Day every year. In India we have recently started celebrating 24<sup>th</sup> December every year as the National Consumer Rights Day.

In India various Acts intended to protect the consumers against different forms of exploitation were enacted, from the year 1837 in the form of various specific acts but the efforts were not so fruitful till the time consumer protection act came into force in the year 1986. To protect the interest of the consumers following Acts came into being, such as;

**Table-1: Acts relevant to the Consumer Protection in India**

Year	Acts
1837	Agriculture Produce (Grading and Marketing) Act

1860	Indian Penal Code
1872	Indian Contract Act
1930	Sale of Goods Act
1940	Drugs and Cosmetics Act
1950	Drugs Control Act
1951	Industries (Development and Regulation) Act
1954	Prevention of Food Adulteration Act
1955	Essential commodities Act
1972	Hire purchase Act
1975	Cigarettes (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act
1980	Prevention of Black-marketing & Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act
1984	Multi-State-Co-operative Societies Act
1985	Standard of Weights and Measures (Enforcement) Act
1986	Consumer Protection Act

The guidelines constitute a comprehensive policy framework outlining what governments need to do to promote consumer protection in following seven areas:

- Physical safety
- Protection and Promotion of the consumer economic interest
- Standards for the safety and quality of consumer goods and services
- Distribution facilities for consumer goods and services
- Measures enabling consumers to obtain redress
- Measures relating to specific areas (food, water and pharmaceuticals) and
- Consumer education and information programme.

These guidelines provide basic objectives for developing and strengthening the consumer protection policies and legislations. These factors responsible for legislations to protect consumers are:

- The consumers often face imbalances in economic terms, educational levels and bargaining power.
- And to increase the importance of promoting just, equitable and sustainable economic and social development.
- Growing size and complexity of production and distribution system.
- High level of sophistication in marketing and selling practices, in advertising and other forms of production.
- Removal of personal relationship of buyer and seller as a result of mass marketing methods.
- Consumers' increased mobility.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the level of consumer awareness among the different age groups in the Chandigarh region.
- To gain the knowledge regarding the procedure followed by consumer forums for the redressal of the grievances of the consumers.
- To study the problems which are being faced by the consumers and give suggestions for the better functioning of the redressal machinery.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this purpose of study, data has been collected through primary as well as secondary sources.

**Primary data** has been collected through questionnaire and observation. Information is also been collected through interviews. Interviews of the officials of the concerned forum have been taken. A sample of 100 consumers has been taken for the purpose of research in the Chandigarh region. This sample number includes consumers from all age groups.

**Secondary data** has been collected through various web sites, articles, journals of consumer forums and other published data.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To study the implications of different issues in the implementation of the *Consumer Protection Act* and also to identify the areas already investigated, the Researchers has referred important studies already undertaken on consumer protection.

**Saxena (1978)** in his article analysed and compared the Indian and Western consumerism and concluded that the main causes for lack of consumer awareness in India are-soaring prices, poor and sub-standard products and service performance, inadequate production, gross adulteration, arbitrary weight and measures, deceptive advertising and publicity campaign.

**Sahu (1981)** in his paper explains that consumerism is concerned with the entire society, as every body is a consumer of some kind or the other of goods or services. According to him, the major problems that are faced by Indian consumers are: over charge, underweight, adulteration, imitation, defective packing and bad services by fraudulent, deceptive, unethical and unscrupulous businessmen. The root cause of these problems is the illiteracy, ignorance and lack of awareness among the majority of Indian consumers about their rights. Consumers can be alleviated of this baleful problem, if both the government and general public join hands with all sincerity and dedication.

**Chaudhary (1982)** in his article offers a great insight into the issues involved in the consumer protection moment. He is of the view that the government, business and society shall benefit in enlightening themselves as the emerging forces exhaling from the buying side of business and understanding the social, political, legal, economic and psychological aspects of Indian consumers' movements.

**Singh (1983)** conducted a study in the Union Territory of Chandigarh and found that only 51.6 per cent of the consumers were fully aware of the existence of a District Forum in the city, while a good number of consumers 28.1 per cent were not at all aware of it. Of these who were aware, 50 per cent were found to be members of some consumer organizations. However, the rest of the respondents said that although they felt the need, they did not have the time to approach the District Forum. In their opinion, it was useless to become a member of consumer organization and moreover, it is a very time consuming process.

**Kumar and Batra (1990)** conducted a survey on “*Consumer’s rights – awareness and actions in small cities*”. Their study indicated that although most of the consumers are well aware of their rights, but only a few consumers exercise them. This is not because consumers are lethargic or inactive or unenergetic, but the actual cause for not availing their rights is the unsatisfactory response of their voice and they assume filing a complaint as a cumbersome task.

**Singh, G (1993)** in his book “*Law of Consumer Protection*” traces the development of consumer protection movement and the history of consumer legislations in different countries of the Western world and briefly summarizes the objects of consumer laws and the importance of consumer guidance. It includes model petition of complaint and appeal etc. for the guidance of consumers. It also provides comprehensive information on all aspects of the consumer protection and is of great assistance, value and utility to the consumer organizations individual consumers as well as to the legal profession.

**Ghosh (2000)** is of the view that the consumers should be well informed and aware about their power and their rights and he stresses that consumer education is a powerful tool that can take consumers from the current disadvantageous position in the market place to one of strong position where consumer can be called as the “king of the market”.

**Mathew (2000)** in his article highlighted that market has emerged as a big force which can control life style and thought process of people of all age groups, irrespective of their socio-economic background. No one seems to have escaped from the clutches of commercialization

### CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT-1986

The Consumer Protection Act was enacted in 1986 with the objective of providing better protection of consumer’s interests. The Act provides for effective safeguards to consumers against various types of exploitations and unfair dealings, banking mainly on compensatory rather than punishment or cautionary approach. The Act applies to all goods and services unless specifically exempted, and covers the private, public, and cooperative sectors and provides for speedy and inexpensive adjudication.

**Table-2: Some Facts of Consumer Protection Act-1986**

Purpose of act	Major focus areas	Important features
To prevent practices having adverse effect on competition.	Prohibition of anti-competitive agreements.	The Act applies to all goods and services unless specifically exempted by the Central Government.

To promote and sustain competition in markets.	Prohibition against abuse of dominant position.	It covers all the sectors – private, public and cooperative.
To protect the interests of consumers.	Regulation of combinations.	The provisions of the Act are compensatory in nature.
To ensure freedom of trade carried on by other participants in the markets, in India.	Advocacy of competition policy.	It provides adjudicatory authorities, which are simple, speedy and less expensive.

### Consumer Rights under the Act

- The right to be protected against the marketing of goods which are hazardous to life and property.
- The right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods so as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices.
- The right to be assured, wherever possible access to variety of goods at competitive prices.
- The right to be heard.
- The right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumer.
- The right to consumer education.
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### Mechanism for protection of Consumer Rights under the Act

1. The Act provides for the establishment of the Consumer Protection Councils at the National, State and District levels. The main objective of these councils is to promote and protect rights and interests of consumers in the society.
2. The National Commission, State Commissions and District Forums are required to give judgment regarding complaint, within a period of 90 days from the date of notice received by the opposite party, provided complaint does not requires any analysis or testing of commodities in laboratory. In case of analysis or testing of commodities then a period of 180 days is given.
3. Appeals can also be made against the order of the District Forum to the State Commission and against the order of the State Commission, to the National Commission within 30 days. Appeals can also be made to the Supreme Court against the order of the National Commission within a period of 30 days.

**Table-3: Which Consumer Forum Needs to Approach by the Consumer**

Amount of goods or services	Concerned Forum
Less than 20,00,000	District court
20,00.001 to 1,00,00,000	State commission
More than 1,00,00,000	National commission

4. In case complainant wants to make an appeal to National Commission and State Commission there is a requirement for depositing Rs. 35000/- and Rs. 25000/- Fee structure for the cases filed in the District Forums has been prescribed by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution by Rule 9A of the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Rules, 2004, which is as follows:

**Table-4: Fee Payable by the Consumer with Complaint**

Value of goods or services	Amount of fee payable
Up to one lakh rupee	Rs. 100
1 lakh and above 1 lakh but less than 5 lakh rupees	Rs. 200
5 lakh rupees and above but less than Rs.10 lakh	Rs. 400
10 lakh rupees and above but not exceeding Rs.20 lakh	Rs. 500

### A Complaint

A complaint is an allegation in writing made by the complainant that:

<b>Trade</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any unfair trade practice or restrictive trade practice has been adopted by any trader.</li> <li>That a trader has charged a price in excess of the stipulated price for the goods or services mentioned in the complaint.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fixed by or under any law; or</li> <li>displayed on goods; or</li> <li>displayed on any package containing such goods</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>Goods</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The goods bought or agreed to be bought suffer from one or more defects.</li> <li>That goods or services which are hazardous to life and safety of the public are being offered to the public</li> </ol>
<b>Services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Services hired/availed or agreed to be hired/availed suffer from deficiencies in any respect.</li> </ol>

A Complaint should contain the following information:

- The name, description and address of the complainant
- The name, description and address of the opposite party or parties
- The facts relating the complaint and when and where it arose
- Documents 'if any' in support of allegations
- The relief which the complainant is seeking
- The complaint should be signed by the Complainant

Reliefs available to consumers:

- Removal of defects/ Replacement of the goods
- Refund of the price paid or to provide adequate costs to parties
- Award of compensation for the loss or injury suffered
- Discontinue and not to repeat unfair trade practice or restrictive trade practice
- Not to offer hazardous goods for sale
- If the loss or injury has been suffered by a large number of consumers who are not identifiable conveniently, to pay such sum (not less than 5% of the value of such defective goods or services provided) which shall be determined by Forum
- To issue corrective advertisement to neutralize the effect of misleading advertisement

#### ANALYSIS OF FUNCTIONING OF CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

**Table-5: Information Regarding Vacancy Position in the State Commissions and District Forums**

Sl. No.	States	State Commission		District Forum		As on
		President	Member	President	Member	
	<b>National Commission</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>30.06.2014</b>
1	Andhra Pradesh	0	2	14	13	30.06.2014
2	A & N Islands	0	0	0	0	31.3.2006
3	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	14	31.05.2014
4	Assam	0	0	1	9	31.05.2014
5	Bihar	0	1	8	18	31.12.2013
<b>6</b>	<b>Chandigarh</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31.03.2014</b>
7	Chhattisgarh	0	1	0	19	30.06.2014
8	Daman & Diu and DNH	0	0	0	2	31.03.2011
9	Delhi	1	2	1	2	30.06.2014
10	Goa	0	0	0	0	30.06.2014
11	Gujarat	0	0	5	10	30.06.2014
12	Haryana	0	2	6	11	31.05.2014
13	Himachal Pradesh	0	1	0	4	30.06.2014
14	Jammu & Kashmir	0	0	0	0	31.12.2011
15	Jharkhand	0	0	7	14	30.09.2013
16	Karnataka	0	1	18	34	30.06.2014
17	Kerala	0	1	0	1	31.05.2012
18	Lakshadweep	0	2	1	1	31.05.2014
19	Madhya Pradesh	0	1	0	18	31.05.2014

20	Maharashtra	0	1	9	38	31.12.2013
21	Manipur	0	0	0	1	31.12.2008
22	Meghalaya	1	0	0	1	31.10.2012
23	Mizoram	0	0	0	0	08.03.2010
24	Nagaland	0	0	0	0	31.12.2011
25	Odisha	0	1	2	4	31.10.2013
26	Puducherry	0	0	1	0	31.12.2012
27	Punjab	0	0	2	5	30.06.2014
28	Rajasthan	0	0	0	4	31.05.2014
29	Sikkim	0	0	0	4	31.12.2012
30	Tamil Nadu	0	0	15	17	30.06.2014
31	Tripura	0	1	0	0	30.06.2014
32	Uttar Pradesh	0	0	11	12	31.01.2014
33	Uttarakhand	0	1	0	10	30.04.2014
34	West Bengal	0	0	0	0	30.06.2014
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>266</b>	

The above table shows that most of the National Commission are functioning without President and sufficient number of members in the National and District Forums which shows that how weak is the implementation of Consumer Protection Act in India.

**Table-6: Total Number of Consumer Complaints Filed / Disposed since inception Under Consumer Protection Law**

Sl. No.	Name of Agency	Cases filed since inception	Cases disposed of since inception	Cases Pending	% of total Disposal
1	National Commission	89495	77770	11725	86.90%
2	State Commissions	645486	554341	91145	85.88%
3	District Forums	3442730	3176518	266212	92.27%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4177711</b>	<b>3808629</b>	<b>369082</b>	<b>91.17%</b>

The above table shows that the positive side of the consumer protection act is that a number of consumers have filed a number of complaints for their rights and most of them have been disposed .

#### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

On the basis of questioner filled by 100 consumers the data has been analysed as under:

##### 1. Examine the expiry date of the food items and medicines bought by the consumers.

	No of consumer	%
Yes	94	94%
No	2	2%
Others	2	2%
Total	100	

**Analysis:** More than 95% of the consumers examine the expiry date before purchasing any product. Which shows that the primary level of awareness related to health exist in large area of consumer market. Consumers are aware of the basic product examination.

##### 2. Examine & read the nutritional labels on food products by the consumers.

	No of consumer	%
Yes	70	70%
No	25	25%
Others	5	5%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** 70% of consumers check the nutritional value of the product, but, still approximately 25% of consumers are unaware of the importance of checking the details of the products and 5% of consumers don't bother to check labels on the food products they buy.

##### 3. Cross check of the weights of the products mentioned on the product pack by the consumer.

	No of consumer	%
Yes	60	60%
No	33	33%
Others	7	7%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** 60% of the consumers verify the weights of the product that is mentioned on the label and 33% of the consumers does not check the label at all and simply purchase the product and 7% of consumers have no knowledge of the product information provided on the product.

##### 4. Comparison of the price of goods, at other stores by the consumer.

	No of consumer	%
Yes	70	70%
No	29	29%
Others	1	1%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** Indian markets are price sensitive and therefore 70% of the consumers pay attention to the prices charged by different seller and carefully chose them. But about quarter of the market i.e. 29% of consumers consist of consumers who purchase the goods without adequate research about price.

**5. Check the M.R.P. (Maximum Retail Prices) before buying the products by the consumer.**

	No of consumer	%
Yes	98	98%
No	1	1%
Others	1	1%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** Awareness level is very high when it comes to checking the market price printed on the item. In fact it is the first thing that any consumer checks.

**6. Level of consumers' belief on the information read by them on product.**

	No of consumer	%
Yes	60	60%
No	30	30%
Others	10	10%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** Consumers show trust on the sellers. But 30% of the consumer recheck the weight and compare the prices with other products before buying.

**7. Experiences regarding adulteration in food stuffs.**

	No of consumer	%
Yes	30	30%
No	64	64%
Others	6	6%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** Near about 30% of the consumers have come across the adulteration in foodstuff and 6% of consumers were not even aware about any adulteration and rest 64% of consumers have not experienced adulteration.

**8. In case of adulteration experiences, complaint to the following by the consumer**

- a) Shopkeeper
- b) Main supplier
- c) Elsewhere (specify)

	No of consumer	%
Yes	65	65%
No	30	30%
Others	5	5%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** In case of any complaint regarding the product, near about 65% of consumers prefers to go to seller, from whom the product is being purchased but 30% of consumers straight away go to the main supplier of the product.

**9. Satisfaction level of consumer towards complaints response by supplier/shopkeeper.**

	No of consumer	%
Yes	50	50%
No	35	35%
Others	15	15%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** Approximately 50 % of the consumers got satisfied with the solutions provided by the concerned shopkeeper/supplier. 35% of the consumers are not satisfied about the solutions given by shopkeeper or supplier and remaining 15% of the consumers are indifferent towards solutions.

**10. Awareness about marketing tactics used by manufacturing shopkeeper to influence consumers buying habits.**

	No of consumer	%
Yes	47	47%
No	30	30%
Others	20	20%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** 47% of the consumers know about the various tactics that sellers are using to persuade them to buy a particular product. 30% of the consumers are not even aware of the tactics and 23% of the consumers don't pay attention to seller's activities.

**11. Awareness about consumer courts, for redressal of grievances of consumers.**

	No of consumer	%
Yes	98	98%
No	2	2%

Total	100	100%
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**Analysis:** 98% of the people are aware about the consumer forums that are available for the redressal of the grievances.

### 12. Experience about filing a case in the consumer court.

	No of consumer	%
Yes	20	20%
No	80	80%
Total	100	100%

**Analysis:** Even though the major portions of the consumers are aware about the consumer courts, still majority of them have not filled a case if they face any discrepancy or deficiency in the product or the services.

### CHALLENGES REGARDING CONSUMER PROTECTION IN INDIA

On the basis of study it can be observed that the following challenges are there regarding Consumer Protection in India:

1. **Time Consuming:** Grievance Redressal in case of consumer cases is a very lengthy and time consuming process. Because the opponent party against whom a complaint is being filed can ask for adjournment i.e. extension in time of explanation leading to delay in decisions.
2. **Inadequate Staff:** Most of the posts in various consumer forums are lying vacant. Therefore the consumer redressal process is slow.
3. **Territorial Jurisdiction:** This is major problem that is being faced by many customers. As the consumers must file a complaint in the consumer forum falling within the jurisdiction where the incident occurred, irrespective of the place where they are residing.
4. **Bureaucracy:** Section 12, 13, 14 of the act provides the provisions that if a consumer wants to file a complaint against any service provider then there is a lot of paper work that needs to be done. Supporting documents are required, to prove the evidences, further for these evidences an affidavit has to be attached, so it becomes cumbersome process for consumers.
5. **Time Limitation:** There is a time limitation for filling a complaint. It's within 2 years from the date of course of action but sometimes due to leniency on part of the opponent party the time period lapses which creates problem for the consumer in getting the claim.
6. **Filtered Information:** At the time of making contract the service provider or dealer might not pass on the proper and authentic information. There are some clauses in the

agreement that needs to be specifically mentioned like exclusion clause which provides that if a consumer tells a lie while taking policy; in that case he will not be indemnified if that same situation happens again.

7. **Review of Order:** District Court does not have the power to review its own order once the judgment is given.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSUMER ACT

### A. Regarding Authority

- **Prompt Grievance Redressal:** Higher authorities should show more concern towards solving the case within 90 days which is the maximum limit. In the case of delay officials have to give an explanation and record an opinion why it was not decided in the stipulated time period.
- **Competent Staff:** The vacant posts should be filled with the qualified, experienced and competent personnel so that the redressal machinery works effectively and the pending cases should be given proper attention.
- **E-complaints:** Technology plays an important role in every sphere of life. So the process of e-complaining should be equal importance.
- **Strict Government Rules:** The government should make strict rules and regulations for eliminating unfair trade practices.
- **Timely Delivery of Justice:** It is said that justice delayed is justice denied. Unlike the civil courts, the consumer courts are quasi-judicial bodies that need to follow a simple, summary procedure for quick disposal of complaints. However repeated adjournments, delays on the part of the state government to fill up the posts of judges and unnecessary technicalities slow down the process of justice for the consumers. Delays often take away the essence of the law.

### B. Regarding Consumers

- **Creating Awareness:** The efforts must be taken at government level to spread awareness about consumer rights. Various campaigning aids should be introduced by government making the consumers aware about their rights like "JAGO GRAHAK JAGO".
- **Measures enabling consumers to obtain redress:** Adequate measures should be adopted by government by which the grievances and problems of the consumers should be redressed speedily which will further help in gaining their trust.

- **Information programme and consumer education:** -Support of the government, business organizations, and educational institutes are required along with involvement of people at large to make this programme successful.
- **Dealing with Advertisements:** Advertisements have become an important part of our lives and even if we try we cannot avoid them, we can never escape from them. Companies are trying to sell their products by making attractive audio-visuals, publishing only that part which may be eye catching and hiding other crucial information and so on. Consumers need to be cautious of such deceptive advertisements. Children are the worst victims. They need to be guided properly by parents from time-to-time.
- **Buying Quality Certified Products:** There are lot of products which are certified by recognised agencies as safe to consume and good in quality. For example the Indian Standard Institute (ISI) conducts quality testing of many consumer goods. If the product is according to the standard then it is labelled with ISI mark. For many food products the quality assurance is certified by a seal called AGMARK. Consumers should choose products with these marks only which ensures their good quality. Another important thing before purchasing food products or medicines etc. is that the consumer must see the expiry date.
- **Demanding Bill of the Purchase:** Every consumer must demand the bill after purchase of goods and services. The bill is the proof of purchase and can be used to seek justice if the consumer feels cheated after buying the commodity. Through the bill the consumer also ensures that the government receives tax on the product because it is mandatory for the seller to mention the tax amount on the bill. Such act of the consumer makes him/her a responsible citizen of the country.
- **Being a Green Consumer:** A consumer must consume those products which do not cause damage to our environment. Plastic bag is one example which has caused serious damage to the environment. People should use biodegradable products which can easily mix with soil and water after they are disposed of and do not harm our mother nature. Similarly people should save electricity, gas etc. by its judicious use. Consumers are also responsible for automobile pollution in town and cities. In fact, they should use eco-friendly vehicles.
  - **Consumers as Managers:** Consumers can unite together to provide themselves and the community at large of a locality or village some basic needs such as drinking water supply, health, education etc.

## CONCLUSION

From the various reports and feedback received by the Central Government, it is evident that many of the consumer forums have not been provided with adequate accommodation, infrastructure facilities and competent staff. In many State Commissions and District Forums, vacancies of Presidents/Members have not been filled up which adversely affects the disposal of cases. It should be remembered that the confidence of the consumer ultimately depends upon the successful functioning of the Consumer Commissions/Forums. It is, therefore, a matter of utmost importance that these agencies must function effectively, efficiently and without any

interruption. For this to happen state governments are having definite role to play and it must take some firm steps to improve the position of the consumer in the economy.

An economy, in which consumers are aware, can practice their duties and exercise their rights freely, efficiency of the sellers and producers will be higher and so the economy will be more developed.

## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE CONSUMER AWARENESS IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF CHANDIGARH

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS

NAME - \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS - \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NO. - \_\_\_\_\_

SIZE OF THE FAMILY - \_\_\_\_\_

INCOME - \_\_\_\_\_

AGE [15-18]  [18-25]  [25-35]  [35+]

#### PRODUCT NAME-AWARENESS RELATED QUESTIONS

**DO YOU EXAMINE THE EXPIRY DATE THE FOOD ITEMS AND MEDICINES WHEN YOU BUY THEM?**

A) YES B) NO

**HAVE YOU EVER CROSS CHECKED THE WEIGHTS OF THE PRODUCTS MENTIONED ON THE ITEM?**

A) YES B) NO

**DO YOU CHECK THE PRICES, OF GOODS YOU BUY, FROM ALTERNATIVE SOURCES?**

A) YES B) NO

**DO YOU CHECK THE M.R.P. (MAXIMUM RETAIL PRICES) BEFORE BUYING THE PRODUCTS?**

A) YES B) NO

**HAVE YOU EVER COME ACROSS ADULTERATION IN:**

**FOOD STUFF**

A) YES      B)NO

**MILK**

A) YES      B)NO

**IF YES, DID YOU COMPLAIN TO:**

**SHOPKEEPER**

**MAIN SUPPLIER**

**ELSEWHERE( PLEASE SPECIFY)**

**WAS YOUR COMPLAINT TO THE SUPPLIER/SHOPKEEPER ATTENDED BY HIM TO YOUR SATISFACTION?**

A) YES      B)NO

**ARE YOU AWARE OF CONSUMER COURTS, FOR REDRESSAL OF GRIEVANCES OF CONSUMERS?**

A) YES      B)NO

**IF YES, HAVE YOU EVER FILED A CASE IN THE CONSUMER COURT?**

A) YES      B)NO

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