

Revision Notes for Class 10 Social Science

Economics Chapter 5 – Consumer Rights

Introduction:

- Understand the significance of Consumer Rights as a crucial aspect of consumer protection.
- Gain insights into the importance of informed choices and responsible consumer behaviour.

Definition of Consumer Rights: Consumer Rights refer to the set of privileges and protections granted to consumers by law to ensure fair treatment in the marketplace.

Consumer in the Marketplace:

- The market is not always a fair playing field, and consumers, even in great numbers, are dispersed. This permits consumers to be exploited by producers who are few but large and powerful.
- Informal moneylenders are a good example of this. Farmer Swapna, for example, had borrowed money and agreed to sell the product to them at a considerably reduced price. She was also compelled to sell her land after she failed to repay the money on time. This demonstrates how market consumers can be addressed.
- Markets are inherently unjust since there are a few huge producers with a lot of power and a lot of tiny consumers who may or may not know each other. Large corporations find it easier to engage in unethical business practises and propagate false information through advertising and spending money.
- With vast monetary and social resources, they may fabricate a tale in their favour, regardless of fact. Companies, for example, promoted milk powder as the finest

supplement for infants, even over mother's milk, and tobacco commercials, which are destructive to people's lives.

- Adulteration and other malpractices, such as erroneous weight measures, are other ways in which vendors might take advantage of customers.

Consumer Movement:

- People were dissatisfied with the rampant production malpractices. There were no existing rules or regulations that penalised such behaviour among the public.
- The consumer was responsible for making a thoughtful purchase, and they avoided buying from sellers/goods with whom they had a terrible experience. Consumer movements started because of widespread dissatisfaction with such practises.
- The consumer movement as a "social force" in India arose from the need to safeguard and promote consumers' interests against unethical and unfair trade practises. As a result of all these efforts, the Indian government took a huge step forward in 1986. It is responsible for enforcing the Consumer Protection Act of 1986, also known as COPRA.

Consumer International:

- The UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection were adopted by the United Nations in 1985. This was a mechanism for countries to enact consumer protection laws, as well as for consumer advocacy groups to pressure their governments to do so. This has formed the cornerstone for consumer activism on a global scale.

Importance of Consumer Rights:

- Consumer rights empower individuals, ensuring their safety and welfare in the marketplace.
- They provide a legal framework to protect consumers from unfair trade practices and exploitation.

- Consumer rights promote competition, quality and accountability among producers and service providers.

Key Consumer Rights:

a. Right to Safety -

- Consumers have the right to be protected against hazardous goods and services.
- Manufacturers are responsible for providing safe products and adequate warnings about potential risks.

b. Right to Information -

- Consumers have the right to access accurate and transparent information about products and services, including their price, quality, composition, and expiry date.
- Companies should provide complete and truthful information to enable consumers to make informed choices.

c. Right to Choose -

- Consumers have the freedom to select from a range of products and services at competitive prices.
- Anti-competitive practices like unfair trade restrictions and monopolies are prohibited.

d. Right to Representation -

- Consumers have the right to express their interests and concerns through consumer organizations.
- These organizations advocate for consumer rights, ensuring their voices are heard in policymaking.

e. Right to Redressal -

- Consumers have the right to seek compensation and prompt resolution of grievances against unfair trade practices or deficient services.
- Consumer courts provide a legal platform for consumers to file complaints and seek redressal.

Details about Products and Services

When you buy a product, you'll see important details on its packaging, including:

- Ingredients used
- Price
- Batch number
- Date of manufacture
- Expiry date
- Manufacturer's address

This information is provided because consumers have the right to know about the products they purchase. If a product is defective, you can use this information to complain and seek compensation or a replacement.

In October 2005, the Government of India introduced the RTI (Right to Information) Act. This law guarantees that citizens can access information about how government departments operate.

Consumer Responsibilities:

- Along with rights, consumers also have certain responsibilities towards themselves and society.
- Responsible consumer behaviour includes conducting market research, reading product labels, and reporting fraudulent practices.

Justice for Consumer:

- Under the COPRA, consumer tribunals were established to offer justice to consumers whose rights had been abused.
- Consumer courts are three-tier quasi-judicial entities.
 - a. The District Forum is a district-level court that hears matters involving claims of up to Rs. 20 lakh.
 - b. The State Commission is a state-level court that hears disputes involving claims of between Rs. 20 lakh and Rs. 1 crore.
 - c. The National Commission is a national level court that hears cases involving claims above Rs. 1 crore.

How to Stay Informed:

- We will be able to discriminate and make informed choices as customers once we are aware of our rights when purchasing various goods and services.
- The enactment of COPRA resulted in the creation of distinct Consumer Affairs departments in both the federal and state governments. The ISI, Agmark, or Hallmark logo provides consumers with the confidence of quality when purchasing goods and services.

When Choice Is Not Offered

Every consumer has the right to decide whether to continue receiving a service, regardless of their age, gender, or the type of service.

Advancing the Consumer Movement:

India is one of the few countries with dedicated consumer redress courts. In India, the 24th of December is celebrated as National Consumers' Day. Consumer awareness is steadily increasing in our country after more than 25 years since the introduction of COPRA. We need individuals to put up a voluntary effort and actively participate in the consumer movement for it to move forward quickly.