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CONSUMER PROTECTION IN TECHNOLOGY

“A consumer society is about simplifying and degrading the consumer as well the product.”- William S. Burroughs.

While the different positive and negative impacts of digitalization for consumers everyday lives gain much attention from both policy makers and academia, the question how digital technology can be applied to better attain consumer policy goals has so far learn comparatively little consideration. The endeavours fill this gap by analysing the potential of the consumer protection technologies. With this term digital technologies are described that are used to foster consumer policy objectives. Then they argue with the new digital technologies that can significantly contribute to the attainment of priority consumer policy outcomes, namely consumer protection, consumer empowerment as well as consumer law and rights enforcements. Yet, more awareness of consumer policy actors and academics for the potential of these digital technologies as well as systematic review of consumer protection technologies are needed.

Consumerism in India is old as trade and commerce. In Kautilyas Arthshastra there are references to the concept of consumer protection against exploitation such as through the manipulation of weights and measures and adulteration. But the process of development with increasing liberalisation and globalisation across the country has enabled consumers to realize their increasingly important role in the society and governance. Today, the consumer is not only the heart of the marketing but also the controller of marketing functions. However, concentration of the market power in the hands of a select few has affected consumers behaviour over the time. In a developing country like India where the incidence of poverty and unemployment is very high and the level of literacy is very low the people face of volume of problems, particularly in the

context of consumer related issues. Unlike in the developed world, consumers in these countries have not been able to play a greater role in the development process.

Consumer behaviour in the digital era has undergone significant transformations. With the widespread adoption of technology and the internet, consumers have access to a wealth of information and choices. This shift has revolutionised how individuals interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. To thrive in this evolving landscape, businesses must understand and adapt.

Online medium easily allow perpetrators to impersonate lawful business activities far more convincingly and trap potential victims. Often, even before the victims realise being cheated the perpetrators get away from detection by maintaining anonymity. They become untraceable As they keep relocating when detected. In this digital age, authorities around the world are concerned with new challenges in consumer protection. The government therefore have a significant role to update, adapt and maintain a stronger consumer protection framework that is efficient and reactive to the interconnected nature of e-commerce. This would aid the growth of a digital economy and protect consumers' digital rights, like in most developed countries wherein their governments have enacted laws that are facilitative of such interactions.

In the era of emerging e-commerce and improvised information technology the consumers are for the deprived of their rights to get a qualitative product in reasonable rates. This has led to the increasing number of consumer exploitation cases around the world. Consumer exploitation is a situation where the consumers get cheated by the business community explicitly by providing poor quality products or by charging high prices. Some of the common ways are: sometimes the goods sold are not measured or weighed properly, sometimes the goods sold are of poor quality, charging higher price than the prescribed retail price, traders create artificial scarcity by hoarding the sell the goods at higher prices which is called as 'black marketing', etc.

In order to shield the consumers being exploited many protective measures have been adopted across the globe whereas in India the Consumer Protection Act ,1986 , is one of the examples that is to be treated as a milestone in the history of socio- economic legislation to protect the interest

of the consumers in India. Consumer Protection laws focus on regulating the quality of products and services and protecting consumer interests to help them make informed decisions.

The Protection Act covers all goods and services of all public, private or cooperative sectors, except those exempted by the central government. The act provides a platform for a consumer where they can file their complaint, and the forum takes action against the concerned supplier and compensation is granted to the consumer for the hassle he/she has encountered.

The Consumer Protection Act 2019 has wide and the scope of the definition of “consumer” to include person who buy or avail of goods or services online or through electronic means which was not present in the Consumer Protection Act of 1986. It has also included definition of ‘advertisement’ as any audio or visual publicity, representation, endorsement or pronouncement made by means of inter-alia, electronic media, internet or website.

The Consumer Protection Act 2019 explicitly includes e-commerce transactions within its scope, defining ‘e-commerce’ as the buying or selling of goods or services including digital products over digital or electronic network.

To safeguard consumers from unfair trade practices in e-commerce, the Department of Consumer Affairs has already notified the consumer protection (E-Commerce) rules, 2020 under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act. These rules, inter-alia, outline the responsibilities of e-commerce entities and specify the liabilities of marketplace and inventory e-commerce entities, including provisions for customer grievance redressal.

The role of consumer protection in the digital economy starts with the position that governments want to ensure that people remain protected as digital tools and experience transform their countries. It is a part of a series of brief that take a broad view of how policy and regulatory frameworks can be leveraged to create a well functioning digital economy. Typically, government want to ensure that people remain protected as digital tools and experiences transform countries.

Even today, a large proportion of population is illiterate. They need to be educated to make right choices. Some honest traders and manufacturers may exploit consumers in various ways consumer awareness among the masses are nice necessary to prevent such exploitation. Consumers must

know the health aspects of commodities and services purchased by them. Adulterated goods are the main source of human sickness and suffering. To make them good citizens, consumers ought to know their privileges and responsibilities. The study enables the consumers to greater preferences also with reasonable and cheap prices.

Consumer Protection means protection of consumers from diverse and unfair trade practices, so as to provide exploitation and check over various business malpractices that may be detrimental to their rights and interest in the competitive markets. Needless to mention that commercial organisations are well organised, better informed and they have a better dominating position over consumers while conducting transactions. Consumers protection is vital not only to protect buyers from the salads but also to ensure equitable global standards and protracted grow through Indian economy.

In the era of globalisation, liberalisation and industrialisation where the business houses want to earn more and more profit even by deceiving the consumers, the consumer need to be protected from such unfair trade practices. In the modern era, the consumers are considered to be the king of the market and on the other hand this concept of consumer trust is no beyond a shadow of doubt because in reality the consumer are still the most deprived part of the market and are in a disadvantages position due to non-fortification of their rights.

Consequently, Consumer Protection is necessary for a variety of reasons including: ensuring social and ethical responsibility by commercial organisations, increasing awareness, ensuring consumer satisfaction, ensuring social justice, upholding principle of trusteeship, support survival and growth of business.

Thus “Consumer Protection Mechanism” is crucial not only to fight the battle for providing adequate protection of consumers rights in the emergent global market but also to ensure social, ethical and professional responsibility of business organisations under the perspective of healthy business growth and success.

The growth of e-commerce has greatly influence the way business is being carried in the present generation. Unlike in the past consumers have become an integral part of the growing community of global traders in the e-market. Apart from new opportunities, it has also created numerous concerns and challenges on business and consumers who embark on this new course of business. E-Commerce can be achieve to its full list potential in the electronic civilization only when online consumers are afforded the same level of protection as conventional consumers.

Consumers should be afforded adequate and transparent information about the business, products being sold and the entire transaction details. Consumer education and awareness about the use of the e-commerce platform should be enhanced through wide media platform publications. Consumer will not engage in the impersonal click and mortar system unless they are either familiar with the business that they are transacting or have the confidence that if something goes wrong they will have recourse to a quick and easy redressal of their grievances. In order to build the trust, businesses carrying E-Commerce should provide for internal mechanism that can guarantee cheap and effective and enforcement of consumer rights.

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