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Consumerism and Consumer Protection Act: Discursive Essay

Introduction:

Consumerism and Consumer Protection Act is one of the most essential methods for any business for the protection and promotion of the interest of the consumers. Today in this 21st century, many countries around the world are in the stages faster developing process, and that leads to many innovations of entrepreneurship for better business ideas. With the growth of many businesses around the globe, it leads to important for customers and owner to protect from unfair trade and other illegal business on them. Therefore, it is important for ever people to know and understand about the consumerism and consumer protection act of their country and the whole around the globe.

Consumerism is the idea that generates consumption of goods and services purchased in the market are always an important goal and that a customer's wellbeing and happiness depends fundamentally on obtaining consumer goods and material possessions. Consumerism is a protest of consumer against unfair trade practices and business injustices. However, Consumers' consciousness determines the effectiveness of consumerism. It is the duty of the consumer to identify his rights and to protect them. Therefore, the success of consumerism lies in the realization of the organization that there is no substitute for voluntary self-regulation for purchase of the products.

Consumer protection is one of the emerging issues in today's fast-developing materialistic world. The cases that are heard without consumer protection are of adulteration, sale, and supply of substandard goods, black marketing, etc. posing risks to the health and safety of the consumers around the globe. However, with the help of this consumer protection, this will enable them to make best choices based on the interests and prevent them from being misled by business. So, with proper instruct of the consumer protect it will generate profitability and competitiveness which will also lead to growth of the business for long run.

Therefore, every country in the world has own act against consumer protection. In our country, Consumer Protection Act was enacted in 2012 to protect consumers from unfair trade practices, false and misleading advertising, market abuses, and provide legal rights, and remedies in the consumption of products and services. In order to enforce the act, the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) was established in 2014 under Ministry of Economic Affairs and is located in the ministry's compound. Therefore, it is important to know and understand the consumer protection within and around the globe, so our group has discussed on the world consumerism practices and also difference in consumer protection acts in different countries.

Consumerism Practices

Consumerism is the protection of the consumer rights and interest. It protects the buyers or the customers while buying or seeking services so that they can consume any goods or services in a very fair and just way and

Consumerism in the world

It is extremely difficult for the single nation to produce all the goods and services that the citizens desire for, which calls for trade with other nations. There are so many positive as well as negative impact of external trade or globalization. Consumers are now participants in a global market and possibly in a cyber-market. These customers can only be protected through rules which are essentially national, and which can only be enforced within national frameworks.

Consumer protection law

It is considered as an area of the public law that regulates the private relationship between the individual customer and the business. It is an act to protect the economic interest and safety of the consumers and ensure that better consumer products and services are offered to the customer so that there are no economic harm and no harm in the products which may cause health treats.

Following are the different consumer protection acts framed in different countries:

United States

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the main federal agency enforcing consumer protection laws and promoting competition. The FTC works for consumers to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices with traditional areas of practices concerning financial

Products and practices, telemarketing fraud, unfair or deceptive advertising and marketing practices and raise health and safety concerns, as well as those that cause economic injury. Recent priorities include customer data privacy and information security, credit reporting, identity theft and internet of things.

Germany

The federal republic of Germany is a member state of European Union and is bound by the consumer protection boundaries. When issuing public warnings about products and services, the issuing authority has to take into account that this affects the constitutionally protected economic liberty (article 12).

United Kingdom

The consumer protection act 1987 gives customers the right to claim compensation against the producer of a defective product if it has caused damage, death or personal injury. The act also contains a strict liability test for defective products in UK law making the producer of the product automatically liable for any damaged caused.

Singapore

The consumer protection (Fair trading) Act (CPTFA) is a law protecting consumers in Singapore. The CPFTA applies to most consumer transactions but does not apply to sales of land and houses, employment contracts and pawnbroking. CPFTA was primarily formulated to protect the consumers against unfair practices and to give consumer additional rights in respect of goods that do not conform to contract.

Australia

The Australian consumer law sets out consumer rights that are called consumer guarantees. These includes the consumers right to a repair, replacement or refund as well as compensation for damages and loss and being able to cancel a faulty service.

Following are the ways in which consumers were exploited in different countries and how the consumer protection act played its role.

The consumers are usually exploited by the seller by charging a very high or unreasonable price for the product, the seller sometimes sell expired products to the consumer which sometimes have a dangerous impact on the health of the buyer, they sometimes sell low-quality goods and most of the tie the consumers are exploited by giving false information or fake advertisement about the product. False advertisement takes place when the seller gives false information about the product or the services to the customer which leads to the consumers taking part in the trade practices. One such example is that of red bull company. A red bull company made an advertisement stating that their drink gives wings and can improve the concentration and reaction speed. The company was sued by the number of red bull drinkers, one of them said he had been drinking the product since 2002 but had seen no improvement in his athletic performance neither did it give him wings, because of which the company had to pay out more than 13 million dollars after settling a US class-action lawsuit. In japan, Chinese eel which was a residual agricultural chemical was sold as a domestic product; the expired sweets and the leftovers were sold and served as a fresh one. With the reform in the consumer protection act in April 2001 the consumers were able to sue the businesses with the unfair trade practices, where the company was made to pay monetary penalty to the respective customers. On March 29 of 2016, the Volkswagen had to pay out up to 60 billion dollars for the false advertising they have made. The company deceived the customer with the advertising campaign "clean diesel" vehicles which was later exposed the VW had been cheating emissions tests on its diesel cars in the US for the past seven years.

Consumerism practice in Bhutan

Consumer are exploring towards different products which is sold by the markets. Marketers are trying their best to attract the consumers towards it by using different techniques such as market abuses and exploitations by corrupted traders, manufacturers, and service provider for quick profits. In that case governments are helping to eliminate this kind of practices in order to ensure rights, safety, and access to exact market information of the consumers. So government had come up with method which is consumer protection act which is introduced in 2012 on the 16th January 2012. The office officially came in to existence in Feb 2014. The main reason behind coming up with these kind of method is to protect and promote economic interest and safety of the consumers. Before many people were not aware about Office of consumer protection but today when they face problem it is directly reported to them. It had mentioned that our country is at risk from mindless growth and western consumerism. As many of the consumers are copying the lifestyle of western culture so in that cases the demand for the products are increasing which gives pressure for the manufacture to produce more of those particular products. It is obvious that traders will try to use the resources which indirectly have impacts on environment and social interconnection.

In Bhutan most of the people are not able to do the business up to the level of other countries as they are importing almost every product from outside countries. As we know that consumers are the most precious for the marketers as they solely depends on them. Without which marketers cannot survive and they are trying everything in order to attract the consumers towards it. It has been found that developing consciousness among the public around disputes such as fair trade, environmental friendliness and corporate social responsibility. In case consumers were provided with the false information

regarding the products then they have right to return that product to particular marketers. Consumer can search the information on goods and services from the social media which helps them to avoid getting reimbursement against unfair trade practices and fraudulent exploitation of consumers. For example; Marketers are bringing the products from the Bangkok, so consumer has the notion that the products in Bangkok are very expensive as well as good quality one. That's why marketers are trying to purchase the cheapest product from the Bangkok which they sell it at very high price. These types of practice are still going on within the country. That is why office of consumer protection should look into these types of cases.

Today, due to the lockdown many marketers have to go through unbearable challenges which they never thought of before. They are not able to sell the products which are demanded by the consumers. Those products are not produced within the country which they lend up increasing the price of remaining products. They are not able to make the profits as consumers are seen rarely in the markets. E.g.: as we know that sanitizer and masks play vital role in this pandemic situations as it has become essential for all the people in order to avoid the disease that is why a mass of people was seen rushing for face masks, hand sanitizers after the approval on the first COVID-19 case on 6th March. Because of increasing the demand of the product, marketers are trying to act smart by increasing the price of the product. In these case consumers protection agencies are involved in solving the issues. As we can see that many of the consumers fall victim to adulteration and high prices, poor quality of products, and black marketing among many similar other issues imposed by traders, manufacturers, and service providers in the country, so they responsible for looking into such grievances from the countries. The Office of Consumer Protection also asked businesses not to raise prices or take advantage of the situation and display price tags. Consumers are asked to inform to the Office of consumer protection if the marketers are against the rules so that they can cancel the business licenses among other actions.

Say/opinion on Consumerism and Consumers Protection Act in Bhutan

Firstly, the consumerism can have both positive effect as well as negative effective to the consumers' and the country as a whole. With regard to the consumerism, our group felt that consumerism will be bad to the consumers and the country as a whole in the long run. It will lead to environmental degradation because when peoples' demand increases, there will be pressure on the natural environment like pollution, depletion of resources and more waste which may even affect the health of the people as well as the other living beings. For example, when people demand more of a product, there will be more production which will lead to pollution and as a result the natural environment gets affected. In addition, it will even affect moral of the people like relationship, honesty and not judging others and so on. For example, one person may try to be more superior or of higher standard than others and some will also try to be even more superior. This will lead to jealousy among the people in the society and lead to more problems as their focus will be more on materialistic. Furthermore, people might even increase their debt and save less as they will be focusing on purchasing of different varieties of product. Some might even borrow more from others and financial institutions to buy luxury products to have a high standard of living which may lead to improper investment and not able to pay back the borrowed amounts. When there is improper investments and when they are not able to pay back the borrowed amounts, this may lead to mental problems like tension, stress and even depression. As a result, they might even have to work harder and lose their close relationships with their friends, families and the loved ones.

Secondly, with regard to the consumers protection act in Bhutan, it can have more advantages to the consumers and at the same time it can guide the producers and suppliers in doing an ethical business to the society. The consumers can always keep themselves informed and make proper decisions while buying. In addition, they can even ask for receipts while buying

anything and also seek clarification if they have doubt about the prices of the products. They can even complain and seek for compensation if there is unfair trade practiced by the producers through the office of the consumer protection unit. On the other, the producers and the suppliers can always provide authentic information to the consumers regarding the products sold in the market and always go on with the fair trade practices to avoid compliances compensation from the consumers. Therefore, as there is an act on consumer protection, both the consumers and producers will be aware of what they are doing and will make better use of their own rights to have a fair trade practices all around the country.

Conclusion

With the completion of this assignment, we have found out how important to know and understand the concept of consumerism and consumer protection for the consumers to be in the safer side of the business world. After going through many scenario of the world consumer practices and also the different consumer protection act of other countries, we have come out many benefits for the consumers and business for better profitable and long run succession. We have seen what are the problem face be the consumer exploitation like prices, adulteration, duplicate, product risk, and etc. And also we have come to know more about needs of consumer protection such as protection of the consumer against deceptive and unfair trade practices, ecological and environmental effects of chemical and adequate protection of consumer against the abuse of monopoly positions of the consumers. In addition, we have come to know more about rights and the responsibilities of services provider, manufacture and supplier of goods of our country and other countries that we have studies on the consumer protection act.

Now we are much aware of the act towards consumer protection and its consumerism of our country and other countries too. Our group has come to gain knowledge more about the cases of adulteration, sale and supply of substandard goods, black marketing etc. and also the risks towards health and safety of the consumers. Therefore, I concluded that consumer protection is one of the most important tools for the consumers and the business owners to understand the concept and follow as per the act that is suitable for everyone. So lastly, we the group number eight had enjoyed a lot by doing our assignment and also learned that how important consumer protection for everyone.

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