
CHAPTER - 14

ROLE OF CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

A Consumer Organization is an association of, by and for consumers. Its main goal is to satisfy the needs of consumers who are usually exploited by merchants and sellers. Consumer efforts can only be more effective if consumers unite to cooperate, share experiences and learn from others. Consumer organizations are also advocacy groups that seek to protect people from corporate abuse, unsafe products, predatory lending, false advertising, astroturfing and pollution. The goal of consumer groups may be to establish and enforce consumer rights, but they are also effective in simply using the threat of bad publicity to keep companies in the consumer's shoes.

Consumer organizations can operate through protests, campaigns or lobbying. They can be single-issue advocates, which has campaigned with great success against keg beer and for cask ale), or they can position themselves as watchdogs of consumer rights, such as the Consumers Association in the UK. One common method is the independent comparative survey or test of a particular type of product or service, involving different manufacturers or companies.

Another area in which consumer organizations are active include food safety, where campaigning needs are more difficult to reconcile with traditional methods, as the scientific, nutritional or medical evidence is generally more complex than in other areas, such as the electrical safety of household appliances. Current mandatory labelling standards in developed countries have been shaped in part by lobbying consumer groups in the past.

There are several NGOs and independent organizations in India, who work for consumer rights and protections. These consumer organizations are suggested for people who have no experience in filling case petition and complaints in consumer courts in India. They have years of experience in fight consumer rights cases and would be assisting people who are in need of help to get their rightful compensations. Most of these organizations provide consumer court lawyers to people who want them to file their cases on their behalf. The first consumer organization in India was PATRA, founded in 1915. Currently, in India, more than 2,000 active organizations exist with various names,

including consumer manuals /consumer forum /consumer protection /consumer management association /Grahakpan chat /consumer protection and education.

14.1.1 List of Consumer related Organizations

Government Organizations

- Ministry of Consumer Affairs
- Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)
- Central Consumer Protection Council
- National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)
- Telangana State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission
- Bureau of Indian Standards

Non-Government Organizations

- CCI (Consumer Confederation of India)
- CERC (Consumer Education and Research Centre)
- FEDCOT (Federation of Consumer Organizations in Tamil Nadu)
- Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group
- Consumer Guidance Society of India
- CUTS (Consumer Unity of Trust Society)
- Consumer Voice
- CONCERT (Centre for Consumer Education Research, Teaching, Training and Testing)
- Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)
- Central Council of VCA & PCA
- CANS (Consumers Action & Network Society)

14.2 CONSUMER RELATED GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

A. Ministry of Consumer Affairs

Department of Consumer Affairs is one of the two Departments under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution. It was constituted as a separate Department in June 1997 as it was considered necessary to have a separate Department to give a fillip to the nascent consumer movement in the country. It is responsible for the formulation of policies for Monitoring Prices, availability of essential commodities, Consumer Movement in the country and Controlling of statutory bodies like Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Weights and Measures.

The Department is entrusted with the following works:

- Implementation of Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- Implementation of Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016
- Implementation of Standards of Weights and Measures - The Legal Metrology Act, 2009.
- Regulation of Packaged Commodities.

- The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (10 of 1955) (Supply, Prices and Distribution of Essential Commodities not dealt with specifically by any other Department).
- Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supply of Essential Commodities Act, 1980(7 of 1980).
- Monitoring of prices and availability of essential commodities.
- Direct Selling
- Training in Legal Metrology.
- The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1952.
- Laying down specifications, standards and codes and ensuring quality control of bio-fuels for end users.
- Consumer Cooperatives
- National Test House.

Objectives:

- Enable consumers to make informed choices; ensure fair, equitable and consistent outcomes for consumers; and facilitate timely and effective grievance redressal.
- Empower consumers through awareness and education
- Enhance consumer protection and safety through progressive legislations and prevention of unfair trade practices
- Enable quality and quantity assurance through standards and their conformance
- Ensure access to affordable and effective grievance redressal mechanisms.

B. Bureau of Indian Standards

The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** is the National Standards Body of India under Department of Consumer affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India. It is established by the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016 which came into effect on 12 October 2017. It has 25 members drawn from Central or State Governments, industry, scientific and research institutions, and consumer organizations. The BIS for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto .BIS has been providing traceability and tangibility benefits to the national economy in a number of ways – providing safe reliable quality goods; minimizing health hazards to consumers; promoting exports and imports substitute; control over proliferation of varieties etc. through standardization, certification and testing. BIS is committed to provide services and benefits of Standardization and Conformity Assessment to all its stakeholders. BIS has a dedicated department for consumer related activities- Think, Nudge & Move Department (TN&MD). TN&MD at BIS Headquarters handles various consumer related activities which includes redressal of public grievances, registering consumer groups, organizing various awareness programmes for the stakeholders of BIS and celebrating Word Standards Day.

Objectives

- To promote the development of standardization, marking, and quality certification for goods and services. This includes ensuring that products meet quality and safety criteria, and that consumers can trust the quality of the products they buy.

- To promote the growth and development of industries by providing impetus to standardization and quality control.
- To meet the needs of consumers by ensuring that high-quality products are available.
- To align itself with international standards organizations.
- To develop a strategic plan for finding and establishing standards those are aligned with the growth of the industrial and trade sectors.
- To reviews standards to ensure they remain relevant and are revised or amended as needed

The various initiatives of BIS directed towards Consumer Awareness and Consumer Protection are as follows:

- **Consumer Awareness Programmes:** BIS has launched a scheme for registration of Consumer Groups. Promoting greater consumer awareness on the benefits of the usage of BIS certified products and enhancing quality consciousness among consumers are the main objectives of the programme. Emphasis is also given on cautioning consumers on danger/ill-effects of using products which are not certified by BIS. It is creating greater awareness amongst consumers in urban and rural areas about the Hallmarking Scheme of Gold 7 Silver jewellery/arti facts which has recently been made mandatory. These programmes are organized on a regular basis through the regional and branch offices.
- **Industry Awareness Programmes:** Industry Awareness Programmes are conducted for industry on the importance of standardization and management systems. In addition, information and benefits of Conformity Assessment Schemes are also disseminated.
- **Educational Utilization of Standards Programmes (EUS):** In a view to inculcate greater understanding of the subject of standardization and its benefits, students and faculty of various technical disciplines are exposed to its principles and concepts through EUS programmes. Special emphasis is placed on the understanding of standards relevant to the concerned discipline/institutions.
- **Enforcement Activities:** The BIS Standard Mark is a mark of quality. Consumers as well as the organized purchasers prefer products with BIS Standard Mark. Some unscrupulous manufacturers try to deceive the consumers by producing and marketing products with ISI mark and Hallmark without obtaining license from BIS. In order to protect interests of consumers, BIS carries out search and seizure, as and when information on such malpractices is received. Prosecution in the court of law is launched under BIS Act 2016 against the offenders after successful search and seizures.

14.2.1 Consumer related Non- Government Organizations

A. CCI (Consumer Confederation of India)

Consumer Confederation of India CCI is the national federation of consumer organizations of the country. It is engaged in the work of formulating consumer policy, strengthening consumer organizations, training of consumer protection workers to give impetus to the consumer movement in the country. CCI was established on 6 May 2001 in a Convention of consumer organizations of the country at the Constitution Club in New Delhi. At present, more than 500 voluntary consumer organizations from all over the country are associated with it. CCI has been continuously organizing national seminars, workshops and programs on various issues. CCI has also been working in coordination with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Government of India. It conducts various surveys, studies and publishes

literature. CCI is especially known for issuing consumer demands in India and doing various effective work on this basis. It is also nominated as a representative of consumer interests in various committees of the government.

B. Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC)

Consumer Education and Research Centre is India's leading consumer protection organization. This is an Ahmedabad-based NGO that has worked on protecting the rights and interests of consumers through redressal, advocacy, research and media exposuresince 1978. CERC is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to protect and promote the interest of consumers through active use of research, media, law, and advocacy and information dissemination. CERC is not affiliated to any political party and does not adhere to any political ideology. CERC is recognized by the Government of India as a research institute and by the Government of Gujarat as a consumer organization. The United Nations recognizes CERC as one of its recognized non-governmental organizations.

Goals

- Ensure total consumer safety against unsafe products and services through education, research, awareness campaign and dissemination of the findings of the comparative testing of consumer products and product information.
- Establish transparency and accountability of business and industry, including utility services and the public sector
- Resolve individual complaints
- Protect the environment

Its activities include, comparative testing of products, complaints handling, legal advice and litigation, consumer education and awareness programmes, library and information service, publication, advocacy, investor and environment protection. At CERC's in-house laboratory, comparative testing is conducted in four product categories, viz. food, pharmaceuticals, personal care products and domestic electrical appliances. The products are tested, evaluated, rated and ranked. Other than in Japan, CERC's in-house lab is the only one of its kind in Asia. The organization has published a large number of books, booklets, posters and videos on consumer protection

C. Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) is a non-profit, non-political and professional organization that works towards protecting citizen's rights in consumer and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making. CAG came into existence on 7 October 1985 as a non-profit, non-political, non-religious, voluntary and professional citizens group based in Chennai, India. S. Govind Swaminadhan, legal practitioner and former Advocate General of the State of Tamil Nadu, was the founding trustee of CAG. The Group was originally christened Consumer Action Group. After nearly a decade of our existence, we decided to change it to CAG (Citizen, consumer and civic Action Group), keeping in mind the larger role that groups such as ours have to play. Specifically, issues affecting the common citizen such as extreme pollution, lack of access to information, poor quality health care and civic amenities have emerged as priorities in the work undertaken by CAG.

Objectives

- Campaigning for greater access to information
- Monitoring the functioning of public utilities
- Advocating for greater transparency
- Accountability in governmental and private sector functioning to decentralized and localized urban planning
- Protection of open spaces and our natural environment.

D. Consumer Guidance Society of India

Consumers have often been made to endure sub-standard products, very high prices, hazardous drugs, never ending shortage of goods and many more injustices. To fight against these odds, nine ladies in Delhi came together to form Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI). The Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI) is a consumer rights organization based in Mumbai, India. It was the earliest consumer's organization in India, founded by nine women in 1966, and became the first to conduct formal product testing in 1977. CGSI publishes a magazine, Keemat.

Objectives:

- Educates consumers about their rights and responsibilities
- Protects consumers from exploitation by providing guidance and redressal services
- Resolves consumer disputes, including through mediation and consumer camps
- Raises awareness among consumers about sub-standard products, adulterated foods, and other problems
- Provides legal advice to help consumers approach consumer courts
- Tests consumer products
- Involves in the Consumer Helpline project
- Develops state-level resource centers that are networked with the National Resource Centre
- Builds capacity in state-level Voluntary Consumer Organizations
- Provides services in regional languages in addition to English

E. Consumer Unity of Trust Society

CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) began its journey in 1983 in Rajasthan, from a rural development communication initiative, a wall newspaper Gram Gadar (Village Revolution). This monthly magazine is published regularly and has been instrumental in providing a forum for the oppressed classes to get justice. In 1983, CUTS was a small voluntary group of concerned citizens operating out of a garage on a zero budget at Jaipur. Today, its annual budget exceeds US\$2.5mn or Rs13crores. The organization consists of five programme centers and one resource centre in India (at Jaipur with headquarters, Chittorgarh, Calcutta and New Delhi), two resource centers in Africa (at Lusaka, Zambia and Nairobi, Kenya) and one resource centre in London, UK. CUTS is probably the only Indian NGO with such overseas operations. The current staff strength is over 130 persons, of which one-third females are at managerial levels too. CUTS is registered since 1984, under the Rajasthan Societies Registration Act, 1958, the FCRA and under Sec: 80G of the Income Tax Act. It is governed by a 12-member Executive Committee, which is elected every three years from a general body of 350 life members and 150 institutional members. With the Vision of

“Consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and equality, within and across borders” the activities of CUTS, as a research, advocacy and networking organization working on several areas of public interest, are divided into:

- Consumer protection
- International trade and development
- Competition, investment and economic regulation
- Human development
- Consumer safety.

CUTS works with several national, regional and international organizations, such as Consumers International, London; International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, Geneva, etc.

Objectives:

- Aims to empower consumers at the national, international, and sub-national levels.
- Conducts research and advocacy to influence policy and practice changes.
- Promotes economic equity and social justice.
- Protects consumers through research, training, and advocacy.
- Improves inclusivity in policymaking processes by increasing the participation of stakeholders from developing countries.
- Builds the capacity of policymakers, negotiators, and other stakeholders

F. Consumer Voice

Consumer Voice is an acronym for Voluntary Organization in Interest of Consumer Education (VOICE) which has pioneered the protection of consumers in India. Based in New Delhi, the organization has championed consumer education in the country since 1983. Over the years, VOICE has been representing consumers and protecting their interests with policy-makers, the judiciary and statutory regulatory bodies. From 1991 onwards, VOICE has been spearheading an independent and non-partisan programme on “comparative testing of products” with the technical support of Stiftung Warentest of Germany. Its activities have been supported by the government of India’s Ministry of Consumer Affairs besides other ministries and departments. VOICE has among its stakeholders many reputed Indian and international organizations supporting social causes over and above individuals, academicians, professionals and volunteers who work relentlessly to educate consumers and make them aware of their rights. VOICE provides independent and unbiased reviews of food products, consumer durables, financial and banking services and much more. It also runs a legal help-desk for consumers. It continually reassess consumer priorities to ensure tackling the issues that matter most to consumers and combating the dangers like online fraud, scams, or poor transparency and developing new approaches to consumption which will enable three billion consumers to live sustainably by 2030. The organization works to drive change in the global marketplace for building a fair, safe, and sustainable marketplace.

Objectives:

- Helping Consumers to make informed choices and decisions

- Reduce consumer detriments in markets by advocating mechanisms to reduce consumer disputes as well as redress loss and injury to consumers
- Institutionalize and expand the consumer movement in India to make it self-sustainable
- Provide consumers with unbiased information to help them make informed decisions
- Raise the standard of products in India
- Encourage the government to introduce better policies to protect consumer rights
- Decode labels and verify manufacturer claims
- Highlight unsafe goods and unfair trade practices
- Communicate test results to the government and regulatory authorities to take action against malpractices
- Educate consumers about products that best suit their needs
- Build a strong consumer movement to protect consumer rights of individual citizens

Consumer Issues of VOICE

- **The Great Masala Mess by Sneha Richhariya:** Sneha Richhariya from New Indian Express does a deep dive on the masala mess that India is currently dealing with.
- **Understanding the A1 and A2 Milk Controversy:** Recently, the debate over A1 and A2 milk has sparked widespread discussion, due to the recent two advisories by FSSAI, the regulatory body responsible for ensuring the safety and quality of food products in the country.
- **A Dumping Reality Check – Domestic Hazardous Waste in India:** Did you know that simply tossing out items like nail polish, glue, dyes, or expired medicines with your regular household waste can actually be harmful?
- **Beware of Digital Arrest Scams: How to Stay Safe from Fraudulent Calls:** For e.g.; A person gets a call from someone who introduces himself as a cop and tells him there are suspicious transactions in his bank accounts.
- **Consumer Protection Act 1986 Explained:** Enacted in 1986, this Consumer Protection Act protects the interests of consumers in India against deficiencies and defects in goods or services.
- **ABC of Misleading Advertisements:** As early as 2002, misleading advertisements were identified as unfair trade practices and were officially recognized with the inclusion of this term in the 2002 amendment to the Consumer Protection Act 1986.
- **Banned Single-Use Plastic Products Still Flooding Indian Markets: Study Reveals Implementation Challenges:** One year following India's ban on specific single-use plastic items, a recent study conducted by Toxics Link, titled "India's Single-Use Plastic Ban," has discovered the prevalent use of these prohibited plastic products in five major Indian cities – Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Guwahati, and Gwalior, notably in local stores and markets.
- **Are you a SMART Consumer:** You want value for money but at times because of marketing gimmicks, end up taking a hasty decision to buy products or services that are not needed or don't have the desired features or are simply below the standards.
- **Difference between Solar Inverter and Normal Inverter:** When you plan to buy an inverter for your home or commercial space, the first question that pops into your mind is what the difference between solar inverter and normal inverter is.

- **Righteous move to remove 'fair' from lovely:** Beauty is beyond color, caste, and creed. In addition, the recent fallout by the several consumer bodies for promoting the notion of 'fairness is determinant of beauty and success' has been vehemently ridiculed.
- **Unit Price should also be declared along with Maximum Retail Price (MRP) on Packaged Commodities:** In international and Indian market, loose products are sold in standard unit of measure, such as per kilogram or litre or number or length, etc. So for consumer it is easy to compare price variation of different retailers.

G. CONCERT (Centre for Consumer Education, Research, Teaching, Training and Testing):

This organization is designed to check the safety of every vehicle model manufactured, in CONCERT (Centre for Consumer Education, Research, Teaching, Training and Testing). CONCERT along with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) studies accidents, pinpoint the causes, and take or recommend corrective steps. Such steps would have reduced accident claims to insurance companies, eventually leading to reduced motor vehicle premiums and, over the course of about a decade, brought discipline to the transportation sector.

Objectives

- Provide consumer education & information
- To conduct research
- To work with communities in problem solving
- Provide guidance and counseling
- Organize public interest programmes

H. Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is a voluntary self-regulatory organization of the advertising industry in India. Established in 1985, ASCI was registered as a non-profit company under section 8 of the Company Act. ASCI is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising, ensuring the protection of the interest of consumers. ASCI seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation, which requires advertisements to be legal, decent, honest and truthful, and not hazardous or harmful while observing fairness in competition. ASCI looks into complaints across All Media such as Print, TV, Radio, hoardings, SMS, Emailers, Internet/web-site, product packaging, brochures, promotional material and point of sale material etc. ASCI's team consists of the Board of Governors, the Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) and its Secretariat. ASCI has 16 members in its Board of Governors, four each representing the key sectors such as Advertisers, advertising agencies, media and allied professions such as market research, consulting, business education etc. The CCC currently has about 28 members: 6 are from within the industry and 8 are from the civil society like well-known doctors, lawyers, journalists, academics, consumer activists, etc. The CCC's decision on complaint against any advertisement is final.

Objectives:

- Aims to ensure that advertisements in India are self-regulated and comply with its Code for Self-Regulation.
- Protect the interests of consumers and ensuring that advertisements are safe for consumers, especially children.
- Promote fair competition and ensure that advertisements are fair to competitors.

- Maintain and enhance the public's confidence in advertising by promoting honest and decent advertising.

I. Central Council of VCA & PCA

The Central Council of Volunteer Consumer Activist and Professional Consumer Advisor is the only body in the country that works as a self-regulatory body of consumer activists and professional consumer advisors in India. It was established in 2015 and is headquartered in New Delhi. This council takes necessary steps to train people working in the field of consumer protection, provide them recognition and advocate for effective regulations to the governments for their protection. On the recommendations of Central Council of VCA & PCA, Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India issued guidelines to all the state governments to ensure the identity of consumer protection workers, accredit them and make rules for conducting various courses. The council organizes continuous events on various subjects and gives recognition to training centers related to consumer protection.

J. CANS (Consumers Action & Network Society)

Consumers Action and Network Society 'Cans' is a leading, apolitical, non-profit, registered voluntary consumer protection organization. It is engaged in consumer welfare promotion work with its three departments, six cells, three centers and many expert committees. It has a wide public base in Rajasthan. Millions of consumers of the state have benefited from its work.

CANS was established in 1991 on the initiative of internationally renowned consumer activist Dr. Anant Sharma. In the last 34 years, it has successfully expanded its activities. In these 34 years, through it, the problems of thousands of consumers have been resolved directly and it has indirectly benefited consumers. Thousands of cases have been taken to consumer by it while providing free legal aid to more than fifty thousand consumers so far. Till date, the organization has organized 65 national level, more than 375 state level and more than 5700 local level consumer protection awareness programs which include seminars, workshops, awareness campaigns, adulteration checking camps etc. At present, it is carrying out its work through its three departments (1) Department of Awareness and Consciousness (2) Department of Publications and (3) Department of Public Relations and Publicity, three centers (1) Consumer Education and Training Center, (2) Center for Consumer Studies and Surveys and (3) Center for Standard Promotion and Quality Control, six cells (1) Consumer Grievance Redressal Cell, (2) Free Legal Aid Cell, (3) Banking Consumer Interest Protection Cell (4) Community Development Cell, (5) KENS Women Cell and (6) KENS Student Cell, besides expert committees formed on various subjects.

14.3 CONSUMER ADVOCACY IN INDIA

Consumer advocacy, movement or policies aimed at regulating the products, services, methods, and standards of manufacturers, sellers, and advertisers in the interests of the buyer. Such regulation may be institutional, statutory, or embodied in a voluntary code accepted by a particular industry, or it may result more indirectly from the influence of consumer organizations. Consumer advocacy involves obtaining input from current consumers to publicize their positive encounters with a specific product or service in order to persuade others to also choose to use the same offerings from the corresponding companies or groups. This will lead to a 50% boost in marketing. Consumer advocates are devoted to Consumers who aim to share their experiences with company and assist other Consumers in

maximizing the benefits of product or service. Consumer advocates help to promote product or service through a variety of outlets, like:

- Blog posts
- Case studies
- Back links
- Public speaking

Consumer advocacy is the act of putting Consumer needs first and working to deliver solution-based assistance through your products and services. Businesses that adopt a mindset of Consumer advocacy are constantly finding new ways to support their Consumers and ensure their needs are being met.

14.3.1 Importance of Consumer Advocacy:

Consumer advocacy refers to the process in which Consumers actively endorse and recommend a brand, product, or service to others. It extends beyond mere consumer satisfaction and indicates a deeper level of engagement and loyalty. Consumer advocates are enthusiastic supporters of a company who eagerly share their positive experiences with others through word-of-mouth, social media, online reviews, and various other channels. Consumer advocates represent valuable resources for businesses since their recommendations and testimonials can greatly influence brand reputation, credibility and Consumer acquisition. They are inclined to put in extra effort to promote a brand, serving as voluntary brand ambassadors.

14.3.2 Significance of consumer protection

- It enhances the recognition of the brand with other Consumers via word of mouth, public speaking, or social media.
- It provides information on products and helps other clients.
- Consumer advocacy programs offer several important advantages.
- Advocates brand and helps to promote products or services, leading to organic marketing efforts and heightened brand presence.
- Enhances trustworthiness and credibility
- Increased Consumer loyalty by engaging Consumers through advocacy programs that boost satisfaction and decrease churn rates.
- Consumer advocates offer valuable input, assisting in enhancing your products to better meet Consumer needs and expectations.
- Advocacy programs have the potential to boost sales because happy Consumers are more inclined to buy from you again and refer others to your offerings. This results in a stronger Consumer foundation and increased income.

14.3.3 Consumer advocacy in India is supported by a number of laws and organizations, including:

- **The Consumer Protection Act, 1986:** This act established consumer rights, created a structure for resolving consumer complaints, and introduced the concept of "consumer". It also established consumer forums at the federal, state, and local levels.

- **The Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** This act established Consumer Dispute Redress Forums in every district, where consumers can file complaints.
- **The National Consumer Helpline:** This helpline provides advice, information, and guidance to consumers on a variety of issues, including defective products, unfair trade practices, and deficiency in services. Consumers can call the helpline at 1800-11-4000.
- **The National Test House (NTH):** This is a multi-location, multi-disciplinary industrial testing laboratory under the Department of Consumer Affairs.
- **The Right to Information Act (RTI):** This act gives citizens the right to request information from public authorities.

14.3.4 Stages of the Consumer Advocacy Marketing Strategy:

1. **Identifying and Engaging:** How to identify the advocates.
2. **Create opportunities:** What advocates can be asked to fulfill that would be useful to the organization.
3. **Mobilize /Utilize:** How to use advocacy in sales and marketing of the firm.
4. **Reward:** The incentives should be used to reward the advocates, in order to build a strong relationship with them.



14.3.5 Objectives of Consumer Advocacy:

- To advocate for consumers' interests in all issues before the Commission by obtaining input from consumer representatives.

- To serve as an information resource for consumers and offer them essential advice on different consumer-related matters.
- To perform an assessment of the performance criteria of licensees to benefit consumers and to relay this information to the Commission.
- To guarantee that every choice and action within the state is not only friendly to consumers but also considerate of the environment.
- To enable consumers to actively engage in the consumer regulatory processes.

14.3.6 Main Functions of Consumer Advocacy:

- To enable consumers to engage actively in the Regulatory Process
- To advocate for consumers on all issues pertaining to the power sector.
- To serve as a resource for information to the consumers.
- To organize workshops and training sessions for consumer Advocacy Groups, NGOs, and Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- To distribute newsletters, fact sheets, and additional informative content for the benefit of consumers.
- To address grievances and complaints from consumers received by the Commission and to organize surveys and publish reports on matters concerning consumer services.
- To spread information using television, media, radio, and printed publications.
- To act as a liaison between the Commission and the Consumers and highlight important issues for the Commission's awareness to safeguard Consumer Interests.
- To assist consumers in understanding their Rights/Obligations, grievance redressal processes, and more.

14.3.7 Types of advocacy campaigns

- **Consumer referral programs:** Target Consumers who are likely to recommend your products and services to others.
- **Gathering and executing Consumer feedback:** Consumers feel valued when their feedback is implemented in a timely manner.
- **Email marketing:** Personalize and target email advertising to Consumers who are interested in your product.
- **Engagement incentives:** Provide incentives to increase advocate engagement and ensure they are focused on your brand's goals.
- **Social shares and engagement:** Use social media management software to find engagement data on your social media accounts.

14.3.8 Benefits of Employee Advocacy

- **Increases Trust:** Employees are considered more trustworthy sources of information than official brand channels, building greater credibility. A successful employee advocacy initiative enhances brand credibility by boosting branded material.
- **Increases exposure and understanding:** Utilizing employee networks in Employee Advocacy helps the brand organically reach a broader audience.
- **Boosts Employee Involvement:** Employee advocacy initiatives motivate employees to participate more actively on social media for business-related reasons.

- **Cheaper Option:** Employee advocacy offers a cost-effective alternative to traditional paid advertising.
 - **Encourages natural growth of networks:** By implementing a strategic employee advocacy plan, employees expand their social connections, leading to higher engagement and influence.
 - **Boosts Job Satisfaction:** Staff involved in employee advocacy programs typically experience higher levels of satisfaction and remain with the company for longer periods.

14.4 SUCCESSFUL CONSUMER ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

- Apple's global "Shot on iPhone" campaign was highly successful in advertising without requiring a large budget. They requested the current iPhone users to take a photo and send it to them. Apple Company selected 77 photos from 24 countries out of all submissions, which were then used for advertising iPhone on billboards and hoardings.
- Swiggy's marketing campaign emphasizing hunger led to a rise in the utilization of the Swiggy app for food orders. Current users were requested to document their food desires on Instagram, leading to an uptick in participation.
- Starbucks' promotion through advocate marketing was named Tweet-A-Coffee. The concept was rather straightforward - it would enable users to purchase a \$5 gift card for their friends via Twitter. Customers simply needed to mention the @tweetacoffee handle along with the recipient's Twitter handle in a tweet. The initial 100,000 individuals who enrolled in the program were also given a \$5 gift card each.
- Not only did it prove to be a successful tactic (resulting in approximately \$180,000 in revenue for Starbucks), but it also helped the company pinpoint loyal supporters and prospective clients (with more than 27,000 brand advocates actively taking part).
- Provide customers with an irresistible offer - a half-price discount for purchases of \$50 in one day.
- Despite the riskiness of the strategy, it was incredibly successful. 534 Gap deals were being purchased every minute leading up to midday on the release date. Clearly, the company's efforts were successful, resulting in revenue of approximately \$11 million.
- One of the most motivational ad campaigns, "Share a Coke," originated in Australia and generated incredible customer interaction on a global scale. The campaign's goal was to establish a more personal connection with customers by moving away from focusing on the product and instead focusing on the individual. They aimed to replace the traditional logo with "Share a Coke with" followed by a person's name or a generic term (mom, dad, mate, bestie, etc.) to encourage people to gather and enjoy a special moment with a Coca-Cola. They began with a list of the top 150 names and later asked people to vote online for the names they wanted on the bottles, with 65,000 people participating in the vote as the campaign gained popularity. **According to the company,** the brand saw a 4% increase in category share and a 7% rise in consumption among young adults through the campaign, reversing years of declining sales.
- In Australia alone, 76,000 virtual Coke cans were shared online and 378,000 personalized Coke cans were printed at local malls following the initial launch.
- Social media platforms were pivotal in driving sales, with 496,000 uses of the #share a coke hashtag on Instagram and 89,000 on Twitter.

- In 2024, Sephora recognized their ambassadors, a team of 20 dedicated members who enhanced the community. These ambassadors engage in different activities like sharing their shopping hauls, generating and organizing discussions in the Forum, and responding to queries in the Q&A section. They also attend events such as SEPHORA, encouraging more individuals to get involved in the community.
- Nike has succeeded in advocacy marketing by incorporating endorsements from star athletes and tapping into its relationship with regular customers to share an engaging brand narrative. Encouraging customers to share their personal experiences and achievements with its products is a key element of Nike's strategy. Marketing initiatives such as "Just Do It" and "Dream Crazy" inspire individuals to think ambitiously and break barriers, promoting empowerment and perseverance. Nike is a frontrunner in digital marketing, involving followers on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube through interactive content and campaigns. Some examples include 'Better for It Play', 'Inside Play', 'For the World', which encouraged users to share their fitness progress and stay active in difficult circumstances. Nike has an enormous social media presence, boasting over 300 million Instagram followers.
- Tesla developed referral programs that provided advantages for both the referred individuals and the referrer. In this way, both parties received appealing discounts (a \$1,000 discount on a new buy). Another possibility was that if someone recommended more than ten people, they could purchase the exclusive Founder Series of the Model XUV, which was not available for regular purchase. Additionally, the initial individual to accomplish this task would receive the car at no cost. During that time, Tesla implemented numerous modifications to its referral program, all of which offered impressive rewards for customers. It offered new Roadsters, a tour for two at the Space X headquarters in Los Angeles, an invite to Tesla events, and numerous other rewards.
- Businesses such as Uber have greatly benefited from employing this tactic. Uber has established referral programs for riders and drivers alike. The program was suitable for the company's business model. Afterward, Uber utilized the 'refer-a-friend' strategy to attract both drivers and customers. To gain an advantage over Lyft, its main rival in the US, Uber developed a unique referral program for drivers.
- The advocacy marketing campaign "UO on You" was launched by Urban Outfitters in 2013. The design of the campaign was basic yet achieved impressive results.
- Thus several NGOs are working for the benefit of consumers in India to protect their rights and to exercise their responsibilities effectively. Consumer organizations are educating the consumers and playing a pivotal role in consumer advocacy. When consumer himself endorses the quality of product or service, rest of the consumers will have faith in the product to get their worth of money and in turn will increase the business growth as well. The successful campaigns will motivate other manufacturers too to give right advertisement and promotion of their products and services.

End of Chapter Questions

1. Discuss about role of consumer organizations in educating consumer about malpractices.
2. What is consumer advocacy? How it is beneficial to consumers and producers.
3. Elucidate the successful advocacy campaigns that you have observed in India/in your State.
4. Trace out the relation between consumer organization and consumer advocacy.
5. Enlist and explain the objectives of consumer associations and organizations working in India.

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