

## Customer Services and Consumer Protection

In this recording we summarise the content of chapter 37 Customer Services and Consumer Protection.

Studying this chapter should help you define and evaluate the requirements for customer satisfaction and customer service; list common methods to protect consumer interests; .

Introducing the chapter, the authors start with 1. Commercial organisations spend a great deal of effort assessing the needs and wants of their customers, and yet, as we saw in Chapter 31, there are a variety of possible orientations towards customers. Not all firms are 'market oriented' to the extent that they put the customers' needs and wants before all else. Even if firms were completely market oriented, they would still make errors of judgement from time to time. Therefore, even in the best-regulated circles, the customer may sometimes be badly treated. Over recent years consumers have become more vocal in reacting to shoddy products or poor service. As a result there are now Government, as well as private consumer organisations whose purpose is to stand up for consumers' rights. The word 'consumerism' has been coined to describe the activities of pressure groups in this area, and the term 'consumer protection' used to describe the efforts made by Government and other bodies to provide rules and codes of conduct for relations between commercial organisations, public services and customers or users.

2. A consumer may be defined as 'any person (including a corporate body) who buys goods and services for money.' A 'user', in this context, describes someone who uses a public service of some kind (e.g. a national health service). Aside from companies wanting to protect customers in order to win business, in the UK, there are several means by which consumer interests may be protected. These involve the application of one or more of the following: The Law, Codes of 'Good Practice' or various Charters, Standards and Trade Marks and Independent Consumer Groups. Each of these will be examined briefly in this chapter, along with some of the leading public and private pressure groups which help ordinary citizens to obtain redress against unfair trading in goods and services. We start with arguments that are directly in the interests of organisations making an offer to market and consider their self-driven pursuit of customer satisfaction..

The key concepts discussed within this chapter are:

Customer satisfaction - when an exchange meets the needs and expectations of the buyer; Customer service - Customer satisfaction in terms of physical distribution, availability, promptness and quality; .

Other terms discussed include:

Consumer movement; product liability; Trademark; .

Summarising and concluding, the author(s) make the following comments - 18. Treating customers fairly is vital to ensuring customers are both won and retained. In this chapter we have evaluated the need for organisations to satisfy customers through the application of the marketing mix, customer service and compliance with the law, standards and codes. We noted that it may not be profitable to attain 100% satisfaction levels and this may not be a suitable goal for some organisations. However, some aspects of satisfaction (consumer protection) are beyond the realm of organisational choice and there may be legal requirements that govern action. Since advertising and promotion play such a significant part in the marketing of consumer goods, it is not surprising that consumer protection applies to these activities..

We have now reached the end of the chapter 'Customer Services and Consumer Protection'.

There are a number of references for this chapter where further reading opportunities are identified for you.