CONSUMER PROTECTION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

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INTRODUCTION:

Although consumerism movements took place earlier in the developed countries and consumer protection legislation and programs were implemented as early as the beginning of this century, the consumerism movement which has been active since the early 1960s is different from the previous ones in duration, scope and impact.[1] The consumerism movement of the 1960s, which emerged first in the United States, resulted from different circumstances, has covered more issues and activities than the previous consumerism movements, and is still in existence. In addition, the 1960s consumerism movement in the United States has had a more far reaching effect on all parties involved in the market place, namely, Federal State and local governments, consumers, business firms, consumer advocates and consumer Organizations than any previous consumerism movement.[2]

This consumerism movement produced a somewhat negative response by business enterprises during its early stage, but this response became positive and important at a later stage. Many business firms in the United States have adapted to the demands of the consumerism movement through development of good and useful products; providing consumers with accurate and sometimes adequate information; better services and better warranties; and also establishing effective channels of communication for handling consumers' complaints.

The role of the Federal and State governments in the United States and other governments in developed countries also expanded to deal with many issues and cover a large number of activities. Moreover, the role of domestic and international consumer organisations, intergovernmental agencies and other international organisations with regard to consumer protection has also expanded.[3]

The consumerism movement also resulted partly from, and had an impact on, writers and academicians, particularly during the 1970s.

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Marketing professors became critical of the marketing concept, which had dominated the thinking of academicians and business leaders for a long period of time. Toward the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, some writers questioned the validity of the marketing concept as a basis for the activities of a business enterprise in view of its consequences in terms of consumer interests and the welfare of the society as a whole. One writer advocated the replacement of the marketing concept with a broader one which may be called the "human concept", according to which the role of the enterprise would be the fulfillment of human needs. This could be achieved by directing the activities of the enterprise toward the development of human resources, satisfying consumers' needs and generating long-term consumer welfare, as well as dealing with societal problems.[4] Other writers advocated broadening of the marketing concept into the "societal marketing concept" to take into account consumers' long-term welfare and society's well-being.[5]

Other marketing scholars also advocated the modification of the marketing concept to more relevant business philosophy, according to which all activities of the firm must be directed to enabling the consumer to maximise the benefits he derives in the long run from his expenditure on goods and services. This calls for giving consumers' long-term interests priority over profits, as well as cooperation between organisations for achieving such goals.[6] Still another writer who advocates the adoption of a revised marketing concept by business enterprises points out that:

> "A revised marketing concept must recognise the public consumer's stake in the private relationship between the individual consumer and the firm. It must also recognise the legitimate responsibility of the manager for influencing the choices of consumers and for determining what is truly in the consumer's interest instead of simply responding to the individual's call for immediate satisfaction and selling what is easiest to sell."[7]

In dealing with the relationship between profits and consumers' interests under the revised marketing concept, the writers adds:

> "Social responsibility is seen as more than a set of constraints, imposed from outside the firm, within which management must seek profits. Rather, the firm through its marketing activities and decisions, must take active responsibility for defining and serving the ever-changing public interest by offering consumers a flow of goods and services. The new criterion of marketing effectiveness involves "full accountability to the individual citizen, for both social and economic consequences" and a new definition of profit not "as advantage or benefit" but as "the social and economic increment left

over after a full accounting for all social and economic resources used in the production of goods and services".[8]

The issues and problems of consumer protection in developing countries are, however, different from and more complicated than those in developed countries. This difference results from the characteristics of developing countries, particularly those related to the level and distribution of income; the role and structures of governmental, business, and other social institutions; the low literacy rate; and lack of concern on the part of consumers in some developing countries for their long-term interest and the society's welfare when making purchasing decisions.

The effort of the United Nations, particularly the effort of the Centre on Transnational Corporations, in the area of consumer protection is of great importance. The Social and Economic Council's resolution 2111 is an extremely significant step toward consumer protection, particularly in developing countries.[9] Following this resolution, some of the United Nations agencies have developed and coordinated programs dealing with various aspects of consumer protection, particularly in developing countries.

In this paper the writer will review briefly the consumer's recognized rights in the United States; discuss the characteristics of developing countries which are thought to be related to the problems and issues of consumer protection in developing countries; and then proceed to a detailed discussion of the problems and issues of consumer protection in developing countries.

Consumers' Rights

In 1962, President Kennedy announced what is known as the consumer bill of rights. These rights according to President Kennedy were to include:

1. The right to safety
2. The right to be informed
3. The right to be heard
4. The right to choose[10]

A large number of laws were enacted, and the activities of federal government agencies were expanded and strengthened to help establish these rights. In 1970, President Nixon restated the consumer's rights as follows:

1. The right to make an intelligent choice among products and services.

2. The right to accurate information on which to make his free choice.

3. The right to expect that his health and safety have been taken into account by those who wish his patronage.

4. The right to have his complaints heard when his interests are badly served.[11]

The scope of consumers' rights has been broaded, as mentioned before, by the enactment of legislation and the expansion and strengthening of consumer protection programs.[12] The right to safety includes the prevention of the sale of harmful products, protection of consumers against themselves (e.g fixing of seat belts in automobiles), protecting individuals against harm that may be caused by the use of products by other individuals (e.g. prohibition of smoking in public places, compensation for harm or injury caused by products such as paint containing lead, and compulsory use of anti-pollution devices in automobiles), and discouragement of potential consumption of harmful products, such as banning cigarette commercials on radio and television.

The right to be informed goes beyond the prevention of deceptive advertising messages to include the right to obtain accurate information about the identity of products and services; ingredients they contain; their uses, prices, and terms of sale. The scope of the right to be informed was also broadened to include the right to consumer education which was formally recognized in the United States by the enactment of the Consumer Education Act of 1972. Various consumer education programs were developed and implemented by the Federal government, State governments, universities, consumer organisations, and business enterprises in the United States.[13]

The right to choose includes the consumers' rights to the availability of products and services. This requires that there would be a number of alternative products and services, as well as alternative producers and sellers, through the maintenance of competition and the elimination of barriers to entry into new fields by enterprises for the production of products and the provision of services. Maintenance of competition has been the concern of the Federal government in the United States for a long time which has been enforced through antitrust laws.

The right to be heard includes consumers' representation in the formulation of policies, participation in hearings related to the enactment of legislation affecting their interests, and consumers' rights to redress for grievances relating to the purchase and use of products and services.

In addition to the above, other rights have been partially acknowledged through the enforcement of legislation and programs. These include the right to equality; the right to fairness and honest treatment; the right to future consumption; and the right to a physical environment which will enhance the quality of life. One writer advocates two other rights of consumers. These are the right to adequate services and the right to an efficient marketing system. An efficient marketing system requires the efficient use of resources in the country in order to conserve resources, lower prices, and increase the benefits to consumers from their expenditures on products and services.[14]

Although consumers' rights have not been formulated in other developed countries, some rights have been recognized through the enactment of consumer legislation and the administration of consumer protection programs. Effective consumer protection programs exist in the member countries of the European Economic Community, Western European Countries, and Canada. Also, some of the consumers' rights, particularly those related to consumers' safety, have been recognized by some developing countries through consumer protection legislation and programs. However, the consumers' rights which have been recognized in developing countries are far fewer than those which have been recognized in developed countries. The writer will deal with the extent to which consumers' rights in developing countries are recognized and protected when dealing with the problems and issues of consumer protection in such countries. This will be achieved through the discussion of the various aspects of acquiring and using products and services in developing countries.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Although there is no agreement on a multiple variable index of economic development, there is an agreement that development is a process which involves economic as well as socio-cultural variables. In fact, sustained increase in per capita income is probably the most agreed upon single indicator of economic development. One scholar defines economic development as "the process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a long period of time."[15] Another scholar emphasizes the capacity of a country to produce goods and services per capita as an important aspect of economic development and, accordingly, uses per capita output as an index of economic development.[16]

Other scholars who accept the notion that economic development is a process, and that per capita income is an important measurement of economic development, emphasize that socio-cultural factors are important elements in the process of economic development. Irma Adelman defines economic development as "the process by which an economy is transformed from one whose rate of growth of per capita income is small or negative to one which a significant self-sustained rate of increase of per capita income is a permanent long-run feature".[17] However, she points out that the above definition of economic development is in no sense a "single criterion" definition. Rather, the assignment of an economy to the category of "underdeveloped" must be made upon a rather complete examination of its economic and socio-cultural behavioral relationships.[18] In dealing with economic growth of an economy, she uses a production function which includes a variable to take into account the impact of social, cultural, and institutional changes upon the productivity of the economy under consideration.[19] The socio-cultural environment is essential for both the technical progress and the development of enterpreneurial activities, which are, in turn, essential for economic development. Thus technical and sociocultural variables must be assigned the role of prime movers in the **initiation** of economic development.[20]

Emphasizing the impact of the socio-cultural variables on economic development, Meier and Baldwin, writing in 1957, pointed out that poor countries are characterised by certain socio-cultural conditions which result in low labor efficiency, labor immobility, limited specialization in occupations and trade, lack of enterpreneurship, economic ignorance, and a value system and social structure that minimize the incentives for economic change.[21] Elaborating on the above characteristics, the writers point out that such characteristics resulted from certain socio-cultural factors which existed in some developing countries, such as: rigid social structure, illiteracy, low value placed on work, lack of economic individualism, a tendency to keep the established pattern of economic life, and lack of recognition and reward for enterpreneurial activities.[22]

Kindleberger also attaches great importance to the impact of socio-cultural factors on economic development. He demonstrates the relationship between economic development and a number of social and cultural factors, which include: the relation of an individual to his society; family structure; class structure; race relations; religion; city-country differences; the size of social unit; cultural personality; the level of the need for achievement; and other existing social institutions.[23] However, in emphasizing the relative role of both economic and socio-cultural factors in economic development, the writer adds that "socio-cultural and economic factors interact in an ongoing process in which it is unlikely that one always dominates the other".[24]

From the foregoing discussion, it appears that economic development is a complex process in which many variables, both economic and non-economic, interact. Accordingly, a variety of criteria based on factors related to economic development are needed to identify the enormous variety of economic and social conditions which exist in countries classified as "developing". This has led to the development of multiple-variable indices to classify developing countries. However, for the purpose of our discussion in this article, we will use a number of economic and socio-cultural variables to describe developing countries. Thus, developing countries are likely to have the characteristics presented in the following section of this article.[25]

Low Per Capita Income and Unequal Distribution of Income

As mentioned above, real per capita income is widely accepted as a single criterion for economic development. Thus, developing countries are those which have low per capita income. One scholar points out that "any country should be considered underdeveloped if more than half of its population lives in poverty". He than defines poverty as "a level of living that provides no margin above the food, clothing, and shelter essential for health-for simple luxuries ---, recreation, education, and provision for sickness, old age, and temporary loss of income".[26] Referring to the level of income which may be used to describe underdeveloped countries the writer also points out that countries are likely to be underdeveloped if they have a per capita income below one-fifth or one quarter of the United States.[27] However, a high level of per capita income is not by itself an indication of economic development. The distribution of income in a country is also a criterion which is widely accepted as an indicator of economic development. Developing countries may have high per capita income but inequitable distribution of income.

Technological and Regional Dualism[28]

An important characteristic of most of the developing countries is the existence of technological and regional dualism. Technological dualism is the division of the economy into two distinct and radically different sectors in terms of the technology used. One sector is a technologically advanced sector, which may also be called a leading sector. The other sector is a technologically retarded sector, which may be termed "a lagging sector". The advanced sector usually includes the petroleum industry, modern manufacturing, large-scale mechanized plantation and agriculture, modern trade institutions, as well as other services such as banking and finance, insurance, storage, communication and transportation. The advanced sector also employs capital-intensive techniques and advanced managerial and marketing systems. Productivity per man-hour is high in the advanced sector.

The traditional sector, on the other hand, includes the peasant agriculture, handicrafts or cottage industry, very Small-Scale industry, and the services related to the activities of this sector. In the traditional sector, techniques used are traditional and labor-intensive, and the managerial and marketing methods employed are not advanced. Productivity per man-hour in a traditional sector is low.

Many developing countries are also characterized by the existence of regional dualism which reflects the existence of rich or leading regions and poor or lagging regions. In the leading regions, per capita income is high, and there exist modern establishments and services. The lagging regions, on the other hand, are characterized by low income, traditional business establishments, and low quality services. The existence of regional dualism in a country prevents economic and social integration. Thus elimination of regional dualism is an important step toward economic development.

In some developing countries technological and regional dualism overlap. In such cases regional dualism becomes a reflection of technological dualism. Thus, disparity among regions exists in terms of productivity per man-hour, income, and standards of living. In some cases the lagging regions are also characterized by the existence of people with traditional cultures and patterns of behavior which may impede economic development of such regions as well as the country as a whole.

High Level of Unemployment

Many developing countries are characterized by high levels of unemployment. In some cases, unemployment may be a reflection of technological dualism and the use of capital-intensive techniques. It may also result from regional dualism and the lack of opportunities to create employment in lagging regions. Furthermore, a common feature in developing countries is the existence of disguised unemployment, low-productivity employment, and seasonal unemployment. A high level of unemployment results in lowering per capita income in a country, decreasing purchasing power, and accordingly decreasing the level of investment in enterprises in low-income regions. Moreover, it may prevent progress in education and manpower development, and consequently contribute to occupational and social immobility. All these factors will result in impeding economic development in a country.

Low Level of Literacy and Education

Literacy and education levels are low in many developing countries. These factors may be a reflection of low income levels, rigid social structure, and traditional cultures and behavioral patterns.

Low Proportion of Industrial Output in National Output

Developing countries seem to have a lower share of industrial output of the total output than that which exists in developed countries. The share of output of primary sectors such as agriculture, petroleum and mining in developing countries is considerably higher than that of developed countries, with a few exceptions. Productivity in primary sectors in developing countries, excluding advanced sectors such as mechanized plantation and agriculture, mining, and petroleum is low. Besides, the share of the tertiary sector (commerce, trade and services) of total output in developing countries is also high. However, productivity in the tertiary sector in some developing countries is likely to be lower than productivity in similar sectors in developed countries as a result of lack of utilization of advanced managerial and marketing techniques, lack of adequate infrastructure, and the existence of small business units.

Concentration of Exports in Few Commodities and Heavy Dependence on Imports of Manufactured Products.

A large number of the developing countries derive their export earnings from the export of a small number of primary commodities. The low level of earnings of developing countries (with the exception of oil exporting countries) from the export of such commodities has prevented the increase of their export earnings. At the same time, developing countries themselves depend heavily on imports of equipment and machinery, technology, semi-processed products, and raw materials. This, in addition to the increase in oil prices, resulted in serious deficits in the balance of payments for many developing countries which are not oil producers. Payments deficits for these countries reached $ 45 billion in 1975.[29]

Rigid Social Class and Traditional Social Structures

Developing countries share socio-cultural factors which are different from those which exist in developed countries. Such factors are considered obstacles to economic development. Rigid class structures which exist in many developing countries impede social and occupational mobility. Also, in some developing countries social structures exist which are characterized by emphasis on face-to-face relations, extended family systems, and kinship systems which emphasize the importance of the family to the individual's survival and progress as well as its authority over him. An individual's decisions are mainly shaped by such social conditions. In addition, the educational systems in many developing countries emphasize memorization rather than problem solving, taking initiatives and analytical skills. Closeness of social relationships and the importance of the family in an individual's life decisions impedes geographic and occupational mobility and the development of "individualism" among people in developing countries. These, in addition to educational systems characterized by the above, are obstacles to the development of a high achievement motive among individuals in developing countries. This, in turn, is likely to impede the emergence of a class of enterpreneurs who are essential for economic development.

Problems and Issues of Consumer Protection

On the basis of the forgoing analysis we may now proceed with the discussion of the various problems and issues of consumer protection in developing countries. The discussion will deal with the problems resulting from the size and structure of markets; availability of products and their suitability to consumers' demands; consumer information and education; problems and issues related to advertising and promotion, pricing, aftersale services, warranties and consumer representation and redress. The discussion will also deal with the extent of consumer protection in developing countries in the light of the recognized consumers rights presented earlier in this article.

Problems and Issues Resulting from Size and Structure of Markets

As mentioned above, most of the developing countries are characterized by low level of income, a high proportion of the labor force engaged in agriculture and residing in rural areas, the existence of technological and regional dualism, dependance on imports, and rigid social structures which prevent occupational mobility. All these characteristics have resulted in the small size of markets, particularly in rural areas, and market structures characterized by lack of competition in many developing countries.

Rural areas which are characterized by low levels of income also contain small markets for many products. In some rural areas, low income levels resulted partly from the lack of incentives for farmers to increase their production of agricultural commodities because of poor marketing conditions and lack of efficient transportation facilities. Such conditions resulted in high unit cost and quality deterioration of perishable produce. In addition, lack of storage facilities, capital to hold produce after harvest, and Large-Scale processing enterprises near places of production also contribute to the low-level of prices and price fluctuations of agricultural commodities.

Low prices for agricultural products also resulted from monopoly buying in rural areas, due mainly to lack of competition between buyers, weak bargaining power on the part of farmers, lack of market information, and credit ties between buyers and farmers according to which farmers are obligated to sell their produce to the merchants from whom they received credit advances. All these factors contribute to the low price of agricultural and farm products in developing countries. Although the government of some developing countries established cooperatives to act as marketing agents of agricultural and farm products, in some cases such steps were not effective in strengthening the bargaining positions of farmers, since local managers of cooperatives were tempted to exploit their monopoly position.[30]

The difficulty in obtaining consumer goods of adequate qualities at reasonable prices, and needed supplies such as fertilizers, insecticides, improved seeds, and farm equipment also contributed to the lack of incentives among farmers in developing countries to increase their production of agricultural and farm products. Abbott cities some cases in this regard.[31] Some developing countries also established cooperatives in rural areas for the marketing of consumer goods and farm supplies in order to enable farmers to obtain government support for consumer cooperatives through subsidies, extension of credit, provision of physical facilities, exclusive trade licenses, and exemption from taxes and import duties. However, some consumer cooperatives in rural areas were not effective, and their practices resulted in restricting competition. In other cases, government departments became involved in activities of the cooperatives through regulation and support programs.

All these advantages which cooperatives were granted made rational economic evaluation of their usefulness in terms of satisfying consumers' needs lacking.[32]

Some developing countries have also imposed restrictions on the activities of international firms and traders related to the handling of produce and the distribution of consumer goods and supplies in rural areas. Such firms had good links with international markets and were characterized by efficient operations. Restrictions imposed on their activities resulted in reduction of exports of agricultural and farm products, on the one hand, and the increase of prices of consumer goods and supplies which they usually made available to farmers on the other.[33] The above conditions contributed to a low level of output of agricultural and farm products, which in turn resulted in low level of income in rural areas of some developing countries. This also resulted in small market size for many consumer goods.

Small market size in addition to regional dualism in many developing countries resulted in poor marketing performance. Small market size gave rise to the increase in the number of small-scale wholesalers and retailers, not only in rural areas, but also in urban areas of developing countries. There is also a redundancy of labor in wholesale and retail outlets in developing countries, which causes labor productivity to be low. This, in addition to poor financial, transportation, and marketing services, which are some aspects of regional dualism, result in high distribution costs and high prices. The establishment of cooperatives and government or quasi-government marketing organizations did not contribute substantially to the improvement of marketing conditions. Such organizations were characterized by inefficiency, insensitivity to consumers' needs, and imposed restrictions on competition in many cases. This is evident in some developing countries which adopted such measures.

Thus, the issue of how to strengthen the position of farmers in developing countries to attain good prices for their produce and supplies suitable to their needs at reasonable prices is evident. Resolving this issue is essential in expanding the size of markets and improving marketing conditions in rural areas in developing countries. It is equally essential in the making of national markets in developing countries through the more effective linking of rural and urban areas. The development of a national market is also a necessary step for increasing exports of a country. Thus, a developing country, by establishing industries which gain efficiency through the development of a national market, may stand competition in world markets.[34]

Market structures prevailing in developing countries have a direct impact on consumers' welfare in such countries. In some developing countries the limited size of markets for many manufactured products have prevented the development of large-scale manufacturing enterprises. Besides, many of the manufacturing enterprises do not follow advanced marketing concepts and practices. Also, as a result of insufficient financial resources, small-scale operations, and the lack of skilled marketing personnel, manufacturing enterprises are production-orientated. They are mainly concerned with products rather than satisfying consumers' needs. They are encouraged in their practices in this respect by the scarcity of products. Thus, they neglect obtaining marketing information, and do not adopt sound marketing practices. Such enterprises also do not have adequate sales and distribution facilities, and therefore depend on agents or wholesalers in distributing their products. Wholesaling in some developing countries is characterized by a large number of small enterprises. An example is Egypt, whose wholesaling system has for a long time consisted of many small wholesalers who distribute products of many small manufacturers to a large number of small retailers. Many of these wholesalers often extend credit to retailers, and sometimes to manufacturers. Their marketing activities are confined mainly to selling and transporting of products and extension of credit. They rarely provide manufacturers with market information related to demand.[35] The existence of small wholesaling enterprises and small, widely dispersed retailing establishments in developing countries results in inefficient operations and high prices.

As a low level of savings is a characteristic of many developing countries, there is a lack of capital to establish long-scale manufacturing and wholesaling enterprises. This results in high production and marketing costs per unit, and correspondingly high prices. Also, in some developing countries, low income level, low level of savings, and uneven distribution of income created a stratum of some wealthy individuals and families who engage in wholesaling, retailing, and importing. This, in turn, results in restricting competition, high prices, and improper marketing practices such as poor product qualities, high interest rates on credit purchases by consumers, and inadequate warranties and services. Such conditions usually prevail in import activities. In addition, governments of some developing countries imposed restrictions on competition through granting exclusive import licenses to their citizens, certain influential groups, cooperatives, or governmental organisations. Still, in some developing countries which are characterized by rigid social structures, extended family systems, close kinship relations, in addition to uneven distribution of income, there exist some wealthy families which dominate commerce. Such families control import activities and wholesaling. Studies of wholesaling in fifteen developed and developing countries in the early 1960s revealed that wholesaling constitutes a type of social power which opposing interests in a society seek to control. As wealth constitutes a leverage for gaining power, it is sometimes used for controlling the power inherent in wholesaling.[36] This state of affairs exists in some developing countries in which governments do not intervene actively to strengthen competition. Also, competition is weakened further if the governments of these countries restrict the participation of foreigners in trade, and permit the exclusive agency system of distribution. Furthermore, in developing countries in which the above conditions prevail, competition is weakened by collusion among enterprises and exclusive distributors to fix prices and determine other selling terms. All the above conditions result in restricting the consumers' right to choose with regard to products and sellers, as well as in maintaining high prices and inadequate services and warranties.

The above analysis reveals that consumers in developing countries suffer from high prices, unsuitable selling terms, and sometimes, unsuitable products as a result of small manufacturing and distribution units, inadequate competition which results from the control and distribution of products by cooperatives, government enterprises, wealthy families, and powerful merchants and enterprises. The most important issues regarding market structures in developing countries are how to regulate the activities of large and powerful import and distribution establishments, which exist in some countries and how to increase the marketing efficiency of small manufacturing and distribution units in other countries. Resolving these issues is essential for consumer protection in developing countries.

Problems and issues of consumer protection related to product availability, product qualities and standards, after-sale services, and warranties:

Most of the problems of consumer protection regarding availability of products, product qualities and standards, after-sale services and warranties in developing countries result from low income levels, inequitable distribution of income, imperfect markets, the existence of technologial and regional dualism, heavy dependence on imports, balance of payments deficits and the practices of transnational corporations.

As most developing countries are characterized by low levels of income and uneven distribution of income, there exist mainly three groups of consumers which largely determine the types and qualities of products that will be marketed in such countries. There is the affluent consumer group which constitutes a small percentage of consumers. Another larger group consists of middle-class consumers with high income level, but lower than the income level of the first group. The third group, which comprises the majority of consumers in many developing countries, consists of consumers with low income at the subsistence level or slightly higher than the subsistence level.

The types of economic activities, social structure, and social policies in a country determine the size and income levels of each group, the economic activities they perform and their geographic distribution. In a country which is characterized by technological dualism and sharp differences in the distribution of income, there usually exists a small class of owners of large-scale agricultural enterprises, industrialists, owners of financial and commercial enterprises, and top government officials. Middle-class consumers in such countries are those who own medium-size enterprises or hold high-paying jobs in the enterprises of the technologically advanced sectors. Low-income consumers are usually low-wage employees and workers in the technologically advanced sectors, and peasants in the lagging agricultural and handicraft sectors.

In some countries where technological dualism and regional dualism overlap, geographic distribution of the three groups of consumers reflects clearly such conditions. A small group of affluent consumers and a larger group of middle-class consumers are concentrated in leading regions where technologically advanced economic enterprises are also located. The majority of low-income consumers and a smaller number of middle-class consumers are found in lagging regions.

The existence of regional dualism which may be associated with technological dualism, as mentioned above, leads to a lack of integration of national markets. Thus, dualism in marketing also exists under such conditions. As mentioned earlier, inefficient marketing operations, poor marketing services, inadequate transportation, storage, and financial facilities are the characteristics of marketing systems in lagging regions in developing countries. Low income levels in such regions result in small market size for many goods and services. This, in addition to other marketing conditions which exist in the lagging regions in a developing country, result in the lack of many products needed by consumers in such regions. Not only are many products and services not available to consumers residing in such regions, but also qualities of products are low. Moreover, warranties are inadequate, costs of after-sale services and consumer credit are higher than those in other areas, and sanitary conditions related to the distribution of goods are poor. Lack of effective government control over product standards, product qualities, sanitary conditions, weights, prices, consumer credit, warranties and services contribute greatly to the prevailing marketing conditions in lagging regions in developing countries.

Low income levels of many consumers residing in leading regions in developing countries make marketing opportunities related to the production of many goods needed by low-income consumers less attractive for enterprises than the opportunities related to the production of goods needed by affluent and high income consumers. Accordingly, many goods needed by low-income consumers are not available. However, low-income consumers residing in advanced regions in a developing country are more likely to obtain the products available at better selling terms and in better qualities than consumers residing in the lagging regions.

Many developing countries depend heavily on imported goods needed by affluent and middle-class consumers. This is a major problem facing consumers' welfare in developing countries. Due to the demonstration effect, a concept which was originally formulated by Singer, affluent and middle-class consumers tend to adopt life styles and consumption patterns which are similar to those existing in advanced countries. This tendency is enhanced by the dominance of transnational advertising and communications firms and the activities of transnational enterprises. Transnational advertising firms which are based in advanced countries utilize advertising practices which are aimed at creating needs and consumption patterns existing in advanced countries. Futhermore, transnational firms transmit behavioral patterns and managerial practices which exist in their advanced home countries to developing countries through their affiliates. They also adopt production patterns which encourage the marketing of goods needed by the affluent and middle-class consumers in developing countries, without giving adequate attention to the satisfaction of the needs of low-income consumers. Transnational advertising agencies, who follow their transnational clients, contribute greatly to the adoption of the advanced-countries' life styles by affluent and middle-class consumers. This, in turn, contributes to the lack of products needed by low-income consumers in developing countries. One writer who is an expert at the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations points out in this respect that:

> Values and patterns of behavior acquired during the colonial era and especially the consumption patterns created, maintained or reinforced by transnational advertising agencies do not reflect the conditions of developing countries. Rather, they reflect the wants and the abundance of developed countries. At least for the time being, these wants can only be satisfied through continued imports from abroad. Consequently, economic dependence on countries and institutions that can help to fulfill these foreign-oriented wants continues and is reinforced. At the same time, scarce domestic resources are siphoned off and squandered for production and in processes that do not provide for basic goods and services for the great majority of the population.[37]

The adoption of the advanced countries' life styles and consumption patterns by affluent and middle-class consumers in developing countries, and accordingly, the marketing of goods and services which have both advanced-countries' cultural bias and high-income bias are enhanced by the spread of newspapers, movies, news films, and television programs produced in advanced countries. Consumers in developing countries are exposed almost daily to these various programs which influence their life style and values. This process of influence is made possible by the heavy dependence of developing countries on news and communication services, films, and television programs produced by firms in advanced countries, and the dominance of some big and transnational communications networks based in advanced countries. U.S. networks play a dominant role in developing countries, particularly in Latin America. The leading U.S. television networks dominate the markets for television programs in developing countries through the control of affiliates in these countries engaged in television broadcasting, through technical assistance programs with networks, as well as other tie-in arrangements related to the distribution of their programs. Some of these tie-in arrangements enable a U.S based television network to place a television program with a designated commercial in a number of developing countries.[38]

Thus, the dominance of transnational advertising agencies and transnational communications networks contributes to directing the activities of the marketing systems in developing countries toward the production of goods needed by affluent and middle-class consumers, and diverting part of the scarce resources from satisfying the needs of low-income consumers. In some developing countries this takes place through dependence on imports, and in others, through the activities of transnational corporations, as illustrated later in this paper. In some developing countries which restrict imports and in which the activities of transnational firms are limited, enterprises which engage in the production of import-substitution goods are established. Such enterprises usually give primary attention to the production of goods needed by affluent and middle-class consumers for which demand is high. The rate of return on investment in the projects needed for the production of such goods is likely to be higher than the rate of return on the projects needed for the production of goods for low-income consumers. This results in the neglect of satisfying the needs of low-income consumers, and in limiting grealty their exercise of the right to choose in making purchasing decisions.

In cases where developing countries adopt and encourage programs for the production of import-substitution products, the needs of low-income consumers are often neglected. As mentioned above, business enterprises tend to engage in the production of goods needed by affluent and middle-class consumers. They usually tend to copy the design of products which were previously imported rather than engage in product development activities according to the prevailing economic conditions. In adopting such practices, business enterprises are usually motivated by their desire to appeal to affluent and middle-class consumers, and avoid high costs of product development. Also, such enterprises may rely on licensing or technical assistance by firms based in developed countries. In such cases, local enterprises tend to imitate the designs of products produced by the foreign firms with which they have licensing or technical assistance agreement. Local firms rarely adopt new designs with the objective of increasing the benefits of products to consumers.

In the developing countries which depend heavily on imports, goods imported are not developed according to the needs of consumers in these countries. They are rather developed on the basis of what managers in enterprises in developed countries think of the need of consumers in developing countries. In other words, goods exported to developing countries reflect what one writer[39] calls the "self-reference criterion" of developed-country managers. This often leads to the export of goods which are not suitable to the economic conditions in the developing countries. These goods may have built-in obsolescence and result in high operating maintenance expenses. This also results in the neglect of the needs of low-income consumers for low-cost transport services or vehicles, appliances, housing, and low-priced food products with adequate nutrition value.

The dependence on imports also creates an inefficient marketing system in a developing country. Import markets are characterized by the dominance of a small number of importers who determine the types, qualities, and quantities of goods to be imported. They are usually motivated by high margins on goods imported regardless of the benefits to consumers. Furthermore, importers in developing countries tend to create artificial shortages of products by hoarding inventories of imported products in order to raise prices. This also contributes to the lack of many imported goods. In addition, importers in developing countries are interested in selling their products in local markets in which a high level of demand exists. They are not interested in penetrating the markets in remote areas. This impedes integration of national markets, and contributes to the existence of marketing dualism in the developing country. This, in turn, is likely to result in shortages of imported goods which some middle-class consumers residing in rural areas of developing countries may be willing and able to buy.

After-sale services and warranties are not usually adequate in developing countries which depend heavily on imports. As few powerful importers control the markets for imported goods, the bargaining power of consumers becomes weak. Importers or their agents determine the availability of spare parts, types of warranties and the cost of after-sale services. Some spare parts may not be available or only available at high prices. Warranties may not be adequate, and after-sale services may be available only at high cost to the consumers in terms of price paid and the time lost in performing services. Again the lack of qualified technicians and service facilities in developing countries usually contribute to poor quality and high costs of product services. All these result in problems related to consumer protection in developing countries regarding warranties and the availability and costs of maintenance services.

Other conditions which exist in many developing countries and which lead in many cases to product shortages are those conditions which are associated with problems of balance of payments. As many developing countries suffer from deficits in their balance of payments they adopt measures aimed at the restriction of imports and the encouragement of exports. Restrictions on imports usually result in Shortages of many products and the creation of unregulated markets for imported goods. This restricts consumers' choices. Some countries adopt measures leading to the export of many basic commodities for the purpose of obtaining foreign currencies. This leads to shortages of many commodities in local markets. Some of the commodities designated for export may be available in local markets, but in low qualities. In addition, some developing countries with balance of payments deficits may concentrate on the manufacture of certain products primarily for export. This leads in many cases to diverting the production capacities from the manufacture of the products needed by their consumers, and consequently to product shortages. As some developing countries enter into bilateral trade agreements the problems of product shortages and lack of consumer choice are increased. In addition to product shortages created by designating some agricultural and manufactured products for export, imported products on the basis of bilateral trade relations may not be suitable to consumers' needs or may be of low quality.

Faced with problems of shortages of basic commodities which are exported, some developing countries may exclude certain commodities which are in short supply in the local markets from export, or limit the quantities exported. This, coupled with imposing a ceiling on prices of such commodities, may paradoxically result in limiting their supply in the local market. Producers of such commodities tend to build temporary inventories, or limit their production, hoping that export restrictions may be lifted.

Problems of lack of consumers' products in developing countries are increased by transnational corporations and their activities related to product development. One of the major criticisms of transnational corporations operating in developing countries is that they do not adapt products to suit the conditions of host countries. Rather they tend to manufacture products which have been developed for affluent and high-income consumers in advanced countries. These products sometimes have a built-in bias, and include unnecessary features which increase their prices and maintenance costs. Local companies in developing countries also tend to imitate transnational firms in product development activities. This results in the lack of many products needed by low-income consumers. Although a few transnational companies, such as Ford and General Motors, have adapted some products to the needs of developing countries, many tend to market products which were produced for advanced countries without modification. A study conducted by the Conference Board, which dealt with overseas research and development expenditures by U.S. multinationals, throws some light on the practices related to product development in host countries.[40] The study included an estimate of research and development expenditure in 1972 on the basis of a survey which included a sample of large U.S. parent companies and their foreign affiliates. The study reveals that overseas research and development expenditure by U.S. multinationals in 1972 was about 10.7 per cent of all research and development expenditures of parent companies financed by company funds in that year.[41] These overseas research and development expenditures were concentrated in highly industrialized countries of Western Europe and Canada. Research and development expenditures in developing countries in 1972 amounted to only 3.3 per cent of overseas research and development expenditure of U.S. multinationals.[42]

The above-mentioned study also reveals some interesting results related to overseas research and development expenditures in terms of product fields. The overseas expenditures by U.S. multinationals on applied research and development, which accounted for about 97 per cent of all overseas research and development expenditure in 1972, were concentrated in two product fields. These were motor vehicles and equipment (54 per cent) and office, computing, and accounting machines (30 per cent).[43] The percentages of overseas applied research and development expenditures on food and kindred products, drugs and medicines, agricultural chemicals, and construction and mining were negligible. They were 1.3 per cent, 1.5 per cent, 0.3 per cent, and 0.7 per cent for the above mentioned product groups respectively. In addition, the study reveals that expenditures on applied research and development by 135 foreign affiliates of 37 U.S. parent companies were in product fields similar to those product fields of parent companies on which applied research and development expenditures had been made. Foreign affiliates allocated applied research and development expenditures on 149 product fields of which 83 per cent, or 124, were identical in classification with those of the parent companies. "There were only 25 product fields receiving attention from the foreign affiliates that were not on the research roster of their parents". Thus, applied research and development on the part of foreign affiliates of United States multinationals seems to have been primarily an extension of research in product fields of the parent companies.[44]

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, it seems reasonable to conclude that transnational firms have not given enough attention to the development of products appropriate to the conditions of developing countries. In addition to cultural bias and engineering bias on the part of executives in multinational companies, lack of concern for development of products appropriate to developing countries may have resulted from two other conditions. One of these conditions is the high cost of product development, on the one hand, and the small market size for many products in developing countries, on the other. This may result in a low rate of return on investment. The other condition is related to market structures in developing countries. Some transnational firms with monopoly positions may have an irrational bias against products appropriate for developing countries, the resulting reduction in profits being covered by high profits in consequence of their monopoly position.[45]

In addition to the problems of product availability and product qualities in developing countries, which have been discussed in detail in this section, there are other problems related to product safety, product quality, and services in developing countries which stem from conditions other than those discussed earlier. One of these conditions is the lack of effective mechanisms for the establishment and enforcement of product standards in many developing countries. In some developing countries, manufacturing has not developed to a stage where enterprises have gained expertise in product development, thus preventing voluntary establishment of product standards. Such lack of development of manufacturing may also be a factor in the lack of effective measures by the governments of developing countries to establish product standards and enforce their application. Programs related to product standards may not be conceived as having priority in such developing countries in comparison with other important measures aimed at industrialization.

In developing countries which rely heavily on imports, the establishment of product standards and enforcement of their application may constitute a difficult task given the diversity of resources, bureaucratic structures of governmental agencies, and the relative priorities of other developmental programs. The absence of programs for the establishment and administration of product standards in developing countries may result in the marketing of products of poor quality and unsafe features. It may also be a barrier to good purchasing decisions by consumers.

The preoccupation of developing countries with industrialization and other developmental programs may result in giving low priority to consumer protection programs in general. Some aspects of consumer protection which may not receive high priority by governments of developing countries are those which regulate the flow of products to overcome product shortages; establish measures for product safety in order to protect consumers against themselves and against harm that may be caused through the use of products by other consumers; and aim at the prevention of air pollution, water pollution and pollution of other parts of the environment. Such programs and measures are usually lacking in rural areas of developing countries.

The existence of unregulated ring markets in rural areas of developing countries usually aggrevates the problems of consumer protection since control over various product characteristics and other selling conditions are difficult to establish in such markets.

Problems related to the availability and other marketing aspects of services are complex in developing countries. Some types of insurance services such as medical insurance are not available, or available only in limited scope and at high costs in developing countries. The cause may be lack of concern for medical insurance among consumers and employers, low level of income, or inadequate government support of such programs in developing countries. Medical services are not usually adequate in terms of scope and quality. The performance of medical services by private hospitals and physicians is not well regulated in many developing countries.

Thus, the major issues related to consumer protection regarding the availability of products and services, product standards and qualities, and adequacy of after-sale services and warranties in developing countries are:

1. To what extent may the uneven distribution of income be allowed to be a factor in directing the marketing system toward the satisfaction of the needs of affluent and middle-class consumers, and result in the neglect of the needs of low-income consumers.

2. To what extent may unattractive marketing opportunities related to the marketing of products and services to low-income consumers be allowed to be a barrier to the availability of products and services to such consumers.

3. To what extent may the lack of competition in markets for many products be allowed to result in product shortages.

4. To what extent may balance of payments deficits be allowed to influence the availability and quality of products.

5. To what extent may transnational firms be allowed to pursue production policies which might result in satisfying the needs of affluent and middle-class consumers, and achieving high level of exports at the expense of satisfying the needs of low-income consumers.

Problems and Issues Related to Prices:

The problems of consumer protection regarding prices in developing countries are somewhat different and more complicated than those which are encountered in developed countries. Not only are prices for many products in developing countries higher than prices for similar products in developed countries, but - also pricing practices by enterprises in many developing countries are against consumers' welfare. The problems related to prices in developing countries result from pricing practices and the monopoly position of transnational firms, lack of competition in local markets, inadequate price control programs, rigid social structures, traditional behavioral patterns, and purchasing practices of low-income consumers.

Pricing and other business practices of transnational firms may result in higher prices in developing countries. An important objective of transnational firms is to maximise profits on their global operations. This leads to the adoption of transfer pricing policies which aim at minimizing taxes paid by transnational firms, overcoming the restrictions on the remission of profits to the home country, or avoiding criticism by various groups regarding high profits generated in host countries. Thus, transnational firms may adopt pricing policies which result , in turn, in high prices paid by consumers in host countries. The pricing practices of the subsidaries of transnational pharmaceutical firms in Colombia have resulted in considerably high prices for medicines in this country.[47] Also, transfer pricing practices by transnational firms may result indirectly in high prices in developing countries. Some transnational firms may underprice their exports to foreign affiliates in countries with lower tax rates than those existing in other countries in which they have some of their operations. However, high salaries and high expenses incurred by the foreign affiliates may result in higher costs of the products they produce. When such affiliates export their products to other countries, prices to consumers may be high. Some cases of underpricing of exports byaffiliates of some transnational companies were also cited by Barnet and Muller.[48] In addition to transfer pricing policies,transnational firms may engage in price-fixing in colloboration with their foreign affiliates, thus causing an increase in prices paid by consumers in host countries. This was also a practice followed by some transnational pharmaceutical companies.[49]

Transnational firms may also cause an increase in prices for products produced by their foreign affiliates or by other independent firms by charging high prices for various elements of technology transferred by them to such enterprises, thus raising the costs of their products. High costs are then recovered through increasing prices paid by consumers.

The monopoly position which some transnational firms enjoy usually results in the control of markets for many products in developing countries. Although competition faced by transnational firms in global markets is increasing, some transnational firms may be able to attain a dominant position in local markets through product differentiation strategies and advertising practices.[50]

Some transnational firms may adopt the practice of paying artifically high commissions or other questionable payments in some developing countries to avoid governmental restrictions or gain control over markets. Such practices may increase the firms' operating expenses in local markets, and may ultimately result in increased prices paid by consumers in developing countries. A transnational firm which adopted questionable promotional methods in the Philippines in order to control the market for infant's milk illustrates this point.[51]

The lack of competition in the markets for many products, and the lack of effective governmental control programs are the main causes of increase in prices in many developing countries. As mentioned above, the markets for many products, especially imported products, in developing countries are characterized by the lack of competition. Some enterprises in such countries engage in price-fixing practices. Some importers may also engage in corrupt practices to influence governmental officials to abandon programs aimed at strengthening competition in local markets. An unsuccessful attempt by some importers of pharmaceutical products in Egypt in 1978 to influence the Minister of Health in order to abandon programs aimed at the manufacture of pharmaceutical products in the country illustrates this point. The Minister exposed this attempt to the public.[52]

If a developing country has a rigid social structure and a traditional culture which emphasize kinship and personal relations there may be discrimination in prices among consumers. Higher discounts and better selling terms are granted to buyers with high social status or with good personal relations with the seller. This is a recognized feature of the marketplace in many developing countries which have the above characteristics. These practices result in a violation of a basic right of consumers, namely the right to equality, which has been recognized in the United States and other advanced countries. The final effect of such practices is usually seen in high prices paid by low-income consumers in developing countries.

Prices paid by low-income consumers in developing countries may also be higher than prices paid by high-income consumers. This results from the purchasing habits of low-income consumers. Such consumers do not usually shop discriminatingly for alternative products and sellers. They often buy in small quantities and rely heavily on credit. Some merchants in areas of low-income consumers take advantage of these consumers and charge high mark-ups for lower quality items. They are enabled to follow this practice by extending credit to low-income consumers. Studies have also revealed that consumers residing in low-income areas in the United States pay more for particularly durable consumer goods than consumers residing in high-income areas.[53]

Problems of Consumer Protection Related to Promotion, Consumer Information and Consumer Education.

Advertising and other promotional methods are used widely by business enterprises in developing countries to influence consumer's buying decisions regarding products and services. Advertising messages rarely aim at providing information to consumers in order to enable them to make good purchasing decisions. Frequently, advertising messages used in advanced countries are also used in developing countries without any changes, or by merely translating the texts of the advertisements or television commercials. Such advertising messages may influence the consumer's decision-making process in a way which may counter his own interests and welfare.

There are no effective control programs over advertising in most developing countries since consumer protection in general is not given high priority by governments of such countries. Thus, consumers are frequently exposed to deceptive advertising messages of various types. There is a lack of legislation and programs which establish criteria for determining the form and extent of deception contained in advertising messages; measures for control over advertising prior to the publication or broadcast of advertisements and commercials; and measures of corrective advertising when necessary.

In addition, few adequate controls exist over promotional methods in developing countries. One method which usually involves inappropriate practices is th use of "sale" programs by retailing establishments in which the prices of selected products are to be reduced during a specific period of time. Retailers usually use incorrect information about reductions in prices. In addition, items sold at reduced prices usually include those items for which demand is low because of their obsolete styles or models, as well as items which are available only in limited colors and sizes. This results in deceiving consumers regarding the conditions surrounding such "sale" programs.

The use of other sales promotion methods, such as the distribution of some products such as gifts, or stamps which may be redeemable for gifts, may be against consumers' welfare in developing countries. Such practices succeed due to the low level of awareness among consumers of the real value of the items they receive free in connection with their purchases, as well as the lack of effective control measures on the use of sales promotion methods. Moreover, some sales promotion items are suitable mainly to the need of high-income consumers. In addition, sales promotion items may be used by retailers to get rid of low quality or obsolete products, or to disguise the real effect of price increases. Thus, it may not be evident to consumers that they are not receiving more value for their money when buying products in connection with some sales promotion items.

Consumers in developing countries suffer from the lack of correct and adequate information regarding products, terms of sale, and procedures to be followed for handling complaints. Inadequate attention is given to information regarding product quality, ingredients, performance, uses, unit prices, and the harm that may be caused by the use of certain products. Ingredient and nutrition labelling of products is not common, with the exception of a small number of imported products for which ingredients, and sometimes, nutrition information is provided on packages in the language of the country of their origin. Unit pricing for packaged products is almost non-existent. Under these circumstances consumers do not have access to information which enables them to evaluate alternative products and make intelligent purchasing and consumption decisions. A lack of information also exists regarding cost of credit on instalment purchases, terms of warranties, and occasionally costs of maintenance services.

The lack of such information in developing countries can be attributed to inadequate attention given by governments of developing countries to the establishment of product standards, product testing, gathering and dissemination of information, as well as lack of concern among consumers for obtaining and using information. This lack of concern among consumers results primarily from the existence of low levels of income, education, and literacy in many developing countries. It also proceeds from a general low level of skills among consumers in developing countries with regard to determining consumption needs and making purchasing decisions. To raise the level of consumers' skills in this area, there is a need for effective consumer education programs.

The right to consumer education is not recognized in developing countries. Consumer education programs are confined only to home economics courses at the high school level. In addition, such courses are limited in scope and given to female students only. Thus, there is a lack of consumer education programs for consumers at various levels of society in developing countries. Such programs are urgently needed to raise the consumers' skill in making intelligent consumption and purchasing decisions, rational management of their financial resources, and protection of their rights as consumers.

Problems and Issues Related to Consumer Representation and Redress

In most developing countries there is a lack of adequate consumer representation in governmental decisions and in the enactment of legislation dealing with various aspects of the marketing system and consumer protection. This situation has come about mainly from the powerful position of manufacturers, wholesalers, and sometimes retailers, in relation to consumers, together with the absence of consumer advocates and consumer organizations in many developing countries. As the majority of consumers in these countries have low incomes, low education, or are illiterate, they are not able to organize into consumer groups. They are also not likely to be concerned with issues of consumer protection. Moreover, affluent consumers in developing countries may not feel the pressure of high prices and inappropriate marketing practices, since their level of income enables them to maintain a high standard of living. Middle-class consumes constitute the only group which may feel the need for consumer protection. However, the absence of consumer organizations may frustrate their efforts regarding consumer protection. Similarly, the consumers' right for redress is severely limited in developing countries due to lack of effective mechanisms for handling of complaints, lack of consumer legislation, lengthy and costly judicial procedures, and the absence of consumer organizations. Problems of consumer redress in rural areas in developing countries are extremely complex. As consumers in these areas have low-incomes, and are mostly illiterate, they are not able to protect their rights through the complicated and costly judicial procedures.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a summary of the historical development of consumerism in the United States, see Robert O. Herman, **The Consumer Movement in Historical Perspective** (University Park, Pennsylavia: February, 1970) and G. Glenn Walters, **Consumer Behavior: An Integrated Framework** (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1973), pp. 60-73. For a discussion of consumerism in the United States during its early stages see Kenneth Dameron, "The Consumer Movement", **Harvard Business Review,** (January 1939, pp. 271-289).

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5. Kotler, **op. cit.,** pp. 54-55

6. Martin Bell and C. William Emory, "The Faltering Marketing Concept", **Journal of Marketing,** October 1971, pp. 31-42.

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8. **Ibid**,p. 109.

9. In operative paragraph 2 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution 2111 (LXIII) of 11 August 1977 on "Consumer

Protection," the Economic and Social Council requests the Secretary-General to prepare, and to submit to the Council at its sixty-fifth session, a survey illustrative of the range of institutional and legal arrangements existing in the field of individual consumer protection at the national level, with a view to identifying needs for co-operative and assistance in this field that may be provided at their request to the countries concerned, particularly developing countries." Also, see **Consumer Protection: A Survey of Institutional Arrangements and Legal Measures,** report of the Secretary General, United Nations Economic and Social Council E/1978/81, 8 June 1978.

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12. See Aaker and Day, **op. cit.,** pp. XVIII-XX, Walters, **op. cit.,** pp. 70-73 and Udell, **op. cit.,**p. 337.

13. For a brief survey of consumer education programs in the United States, see Paul N. Bloom and Mark J. Silver "Consumer Education: Marketers Take Heed", **Harvard Business Review,** January-February 1976, pp. 33-36 and p. 40.

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٤ ـ مدى تأثير نشاطات الشركات الدولية على ظروف تسو يق السلع بالدول النامية.

٥ ـ مشاكل حماية المستهلك الناتجة عن عدم وجود برامج كافية لتوعية المستهلك.

٦ ـ مشاكل وقضايا حماية المستهلك المرتبطة بنظم التوز يع وسياسات التسعير.

حماية المستهلك بالدول النامية

مشاكل وقضايا

د. محمد بسطامي منصور

عادت حركة حماية المستهلك الى الظهور بالولايات المتحدة الامريكية منذ اوائل الستينات ثم ازدادات في الانتشار هناك وانتقلت الى الدول المتقدمة و بعض الدول النامية منذ ذلك الحين.

ولقد تميزت حركة حماية المستهلك الاخيرة، عن حركات حماية المستهلك السابقة، بانها اشتملت على عدد اكبر من القضايا والمشكلات المتعلقة بحماية المستهلك و بطول الفترة التى استمرت خلالها. وما زالت معظم القضايا والمشكلات والاجهزة المختلفة لهيئة الامم المتحدة. كما نتج عن حركة حماية المستهلك الحالية مجموعة من الحقوق تعرف «بحقوق المستهلك».

و يشتمل هذا المقال على مناقشة لحقوق المستهلك التي تم الاعتراف بها في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية و بعض الدول المتقدمة، وكذلك مناقشة تفصيلية لقضايا ومشاكل حماية المستهلك بالدول النامية. و يتناول المؤلف باختصار خصائص الدول النامية خصوصا تلك التى تؤثر على النواحي المختلفة لحماية المستهلك، ثم يتناول بعد ذلك مشاكل وقضايا حماية المستهلك بالدول النامية بالتفصيل ومدى تأثير هذه المشاكل على امكانية ممارسة المستهلك لحقوقه التى تم الاعتراف بها ببعض الدول المتقدمة كما تم ايضاحه بالمقال.

وترتبط مشاكل وقضايا حماية المستهلك كما تمت مناقشتها في المقال بالنواحي التالية:

١ ـ مشاكل وقضايا حماية المستهلك الناتجة عن حجم وهيكل الاسواق.

٢ ـ مشاكل وقضايا حماية المستهلك المرتبطة بمدى توفر المنتجات، وانواع المنتجات ومواصفاتها، وخدمات مابعد البيع والضمانات المرتبطة ببيع المنتجات.

٣ ـ مدى تأثير اعتماد الدول النامية على الاستيراد على رفاهية المستهلك وانماط الاستهلاك.