

What is Fair Trade
Commission and How Does
It Affect Me As a Young
Consumer?

By: Emily Wilson

Age: 15

School: St. Ursula School
(Ursuline Convent)

Form: 4th

Consumer Protection is an Act consisting of laws designed to protect the rights of consumers as well as the fair trade competition, ensuring that all information passed out from businesses is truthful and honest. However, companies sometimes put out false information in an attempt to get people to buy their products, this is why consumer protection has been put out there to protect our rights as consumers. For example if I bought a brand new laptop directly from the store and it came with a six month warranty and it stopped working within the first month, I am within my rights to take it back to the store from which I purchased it from and have the issue dealt with there. If not for having consumer rights I would be stuck with a laptop that does not work or I would have to pay unnecessary amounts of money to have it fixed.

In other cases where safety or the public's health is an issue the business would be required to give details and information about their business to the government so that they can then approve or disapprove. An example of a company going

Page2

against their approval and giving out false information to persuade people into buying their product was an incident in 2007 with a cigarette brand called "American Spirit Cigarettes" which the company claimed to have been made of organic, natural tobacco that was meant not to be harmful to the users of the product. Not long after, the cigarette was found to be just as harmful as the rest of cigarettes and the information being put out by the company was purely to persuade people into buying their product. The company was forced to put "No additives in our tobacco does NOT mean a safer cigarette". This was done to protect the consumers from being fooled into buying this product but if they choose to then it's at their own risk.

In being a young consumer I must look out for people trying to fool me into believing false information about their products, such as putting things like "no risk" on a product when there is, for example, certain sunscreens or anything that

can interfere with your health.

I must also look out for products which have “money back guarantee” on it. Some products may in some cases have hidden costs and may not clearly state the complications that these products may give you, and therefore when you ask for your money back they may say it is not their fault and nothing is wrong with the product.

Some companies may try to persuade you into thinking their product is better than another. For example I suffer from allergies, and there are many products available to consumers, however a certain company may compare their product to another but not state the valid reasons as to why their product is better and it is really just because the other product was available first and it gives them a chance to make it seem as though their product is better with just a more persuasive slogan. Therefore it is important for us as young consumers to use good judgement when purchasing items, as this is also extremely important in protecting yourself as well as the

Consumer Protection Act of the Fair Trade Commission for protection as consumers.

As young consumers we have to be aware of the laws of other countries as well, as we import almost everything in Barbados. For example in China there are no copyright laws protecting the intellectual property of other countries, and Chinese companies can take any company's logo and name and put it on to whatever they make, no matter the quality, and pass it off as an authentic version to the original company's product. The foreign companies can do nothing about this, one example of this is with electronic goods such as Sony. We, here in Barbados, may purchase a television thinking it is an authentic Sony, but it is infact an inferior imitation with a much shorter "life" and quality.

I, as a young consumer, would like to further emphasis this point from my own experience. A couple months ago I was shopping in Swan Street, looking for a hand bag and while browsing through the stores I came across many Louis

Vuitton bags that were obviously not authentic and were being sold for one hundred to two hundred Barbados dollars, which in fact if they were authentic would cost thousands of dollars. The bags were obviously of extremely inferior quality and could be purchased elsewhere for maybe forty Barbados dollars, this was very annoying to me, and I felt that the merchants were deceiving their customers by trying to pass off “knock off” merchandise as being authentic as the sales clerk referred to the bag as the Louis Vuitton.

In closing, I would like to say once more that along with knowing our rights, as I have made references to previously, as young consumers and throughout our lives, we must also use good judgement to protect ourselves from fraudulent advertising and misleading information as well as use the laws that are there to protect us.