Consumer Information Systems and Consumer Policy

Hans B. Thorelli Sarah V. Thorelli

TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE DARMSTADT
Fachbereich 1
Gesamtbibliothek
Betrichswirtschattslehre
Invenid:-Nr. : 18.089
Abstell-Nr. : <u>A 28/924</u>
Sachgebiete:
5.8
00247474

Ballinger Publishing Company • Cambridge, Massachusetts A Subsidiary of J.B. Lippincott Company

Contents

List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xiii
Preface	xv
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	7
Part I Consumer Information (CI) Programs: Philosophy	15
Chapter One The Consumer Information Gap	17
The Genesis of the Information Gap The Real Gap and the Perceived Gap Information Overload and Information Stress Consumer Policy: Information, Education and Protection Consumer Information (CI) in a Technical Sense:	17 21 23 24
Product Information Sources Typology of CI Programs Information as a Public Good	26 27 30

v

vi Contents

Chapter Two Consumer Information in the Context of Consumer	
Rights and Responsibilities	35
The Consumer Interest and the Public Interest	35
Consumer Sovereignty	37
Consumer Strategy	42
CI Programs Assume Open Markets, Open Markets As-	
sume CI Programs	43
Consumer Rights and Consumer Policy: A Scenario	46
Positive and negative rights and responsibilities	48
Consumer policy measures	49
Tradeoffs and reinforcement	51
Policymakers	52
Trust in the marketplace	54
CI and the Counterculture	55
Consumer Organizations and Consumer Representation	56
Government agencies for consumer affairs	56
On professional consumers and two-way representation	57
The role of nonconsumer organizations	58
The role of consumer associations	59
Conflict and convergence of consumer interests	62
The Information Seekers	65
Consumer Information: A Rationale	66
Part II Consumer Information Programs: Operations	75
Chapter Three Consumer Information Programs in Action	77
Operating Aspects of Consumer Information Programs	77
Product selection and definition	78
Brand coverage	82
Sampling	84
Testing methods and characteristics tested	86
Timing and testing frequency	89
Product evaluation and recommendations	90
Reporting and delivery	93
Marketing strategy: promotion and pricing	97
Program Resources	98
Financial	98

Expertise	99
Laboratories	100
Special Issues	100
Conformance testing and quality control	100
Minimum thresholds	101
Voluntary and obligatory programs	102
Missing Links: Market Factors Beyond Product Characteristics	105
Usage context	105
Prices, trade-ins	106
Availability	106
Service	106
Ergonomics	107
Environmental impact of consumption	107
Psychosocial aspects	108
Interproduct tests	109
Product and service systems	109
1 rounce und service systems	100
Chapter Four	
CI Programs in Interaction	113
Interaction among Consumer Information Programs	113
The Testmakers	113
Domestic interaction	116
International interaction	119
Standardization and CI Programs	122
Interaction with Other Forms and Media of Product Infor-	
mation	124
Advertising	124
Individual producers and distributors •	128
Hobby and specialty magazines	128
Press, TV and radio	129
Para-CI organizations	130
School system	131
Interaction with Other Groups	132
Second and higher order CI organizations, special interest	
groups	132
Business	132
Government	134
Recent Decline of Labeling and Certifying Programs	135
CI Systems Development to Date	137
CI systems defined	137
CI systems are open systems	138
Systems experience to date	138

Chapter Five	
Consumer Information Program Impact	143
Impact on Society Sectors	144
Consumers	144
Manufacturers and distributors	150
Government policies and agencies	156
Socioeconomic Impact	158
Open market system and consumer democracy	158
International trade	159 161
Inflation Becourses and physical environment	161
Resources and physical environment Dysfunctional Impact	162
Costs and Benefits	162
Performance Planning and Evaluation	164
A Key to Impact: Credibility	166
They to impact. Creatonity	100
Part III	
The Ecology of CI Systems	171
Chapter Six	
Theoretical Considerations	173
The Ecologic View: A Primer	173
CI Systems Ecology: An Introduction	178
Ecologic Model of Consumer Information Systems	180
The variables	181
Sample propositions	185
The dynamics of interaction	185
Chapter Seven	
Dynamic Analysis: The Case of Sweden since 1940	189
Enduring Environmental Characteristics	190
The World War II Years: Genesis of CI	192
Era of the Affluential, 1948-65: Pluralism in CI	193
The Current Left Twist: Governmentalism in CI	196
Ecosummary	200
Central Consumer Agencies in 1975	203
Konsumentverket (KOV): general	203
Konsumentverket: informative labeling	210
Allmänna Reklamationsnämnden (ARN, The Central	01.4
Consumer Complaints Board)	214
Konsumentombudsmannen (KO)	217

ł

.

The Market Court and Freedom of Commerce Ombuds-	
man (NO) Statens pris- och kartellnämnd (SPK)	220 220
Postscript 1976: Consumer Policy Centralization; End of	220
Voluntary CI	222
Chapter Eight	
Cross-Cultural Ecology of CI Systems	233
Panorama of CI Programs in the North Atlantic Community	233
Ecology of Comparative Testing Programs	237
Size	237
Subscribers	241
The role of leadership	246
Ecolore	249
The Information Seekers	250
Internation Transfer of CI Technology and Experience	255
Part IV	
CI Systems of the Future	261
Čhapter Nine	
Surging CI Systems	263
By Way of Introduction	263
Futurology	264
Environmental Trends and CI Aspiration Levels	. 264
Future of Commercial, Personal and Independent	
Information Sources	270
Technology Assessment, Computerized CI Utility,	
Localized CI	273
Programmatics	277
Attending to the Information Seeker	277
The Challenge of Underprivileged Consumers What Business Can Do	279 281
What Business Can Do CI International	281
Wanted: Decentralized Pluralist CI Systems	284 286
numea. Decentralizea i taralisi of Systems	200
Appendix	299
A. List of Organizations and Abbreviations	301
B. Product Categories Used in Statistics of Comparative Test-	
ing Journals	305

.

x Contents

D. Ancillary Ecologic Data Analysis32E. CI Programs in the North Atlantic Community: A Selective Update32F. Consumer Enquirer Program36	
Update 32	7
- 4	7
F. Consumer Enquirer Program 36	
	7
G. Condemner Reports o 37	5
Selected Bibliography 38	3
Country, Journal, Organization and Person Index 38	9
Subject Index 39	3
About the Authors 39	9

ſ