

SECTION F

The global consumer

Aims and overview

The aim of this unit is to increase awareness of the global consequences of consumption; and ways in which young people can become active and involved global citizens will be outlined.

Key concepts

Globalisation, global citizenship, free trade, ethical consumerism, responsible consumerism, pressure groups, sustainable development.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, students should be able to:

- discuss arguments for and against globalisation and form their own opinion
- explain the global consequences of consumer behaviour
- identify a range of ethical issues that might concern consumers
- design a strategy for a consumer awareness campaign.

Background information

There is no doubt that the world is now a global marketplace but opinion is divided on whether or not globalisation is a positive or negative trend.

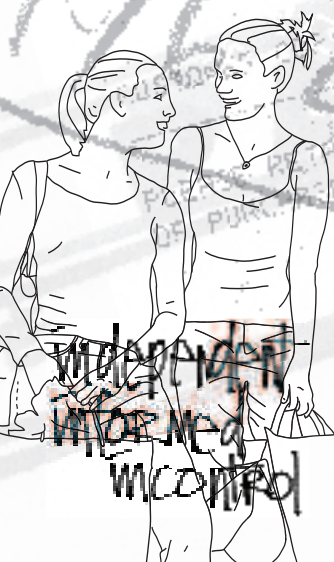
According to Consumers International, (an organisation that links, supports and represents consumer groups around the world), consumers have a responsibility to use their power in the marketplace to "drive out abuses, encourage ethical practices and support sustainable consumption and production". This, they believe, will help achieve good government, fair and effective markets and protection for the environment. Active and concerned consumers are an important part of a civil society. Though young consumers cannot vote, their decisions about what to buy, and what not to buy, are a way of expressing their views on a range of consumer issues, including global and ethical ones.

Global issues and problems

There are a whole range of global issues and problems that are of concern to consumers, for example, the production of genetically modified foods and the destruction of rainforests.

There can be conflict between economic and environmental needs and a range of different views on an issue. For example, the world is losing about 2% of rainforest each year. In developing nations, the land may be seen as more valuable as farm land, or it may be cleared for mining. Consumers in developed nations, who are concerned about the loss, may look for alternatives to rainforest products, and also campaign against the destruction of the rainforests.

Every year 664 000 hectares of native vegetation are cleared in Australia. Land clearance and irrigation increase Australia's salinity problems. Australians use 6.9 billion plastic bags each year and dump 230 000 recyclable plastic bags in landfills every hour. These are just two examples of our environmental problems.



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What can consumers do?

Consumers are reducing their use of plastic bags in supermarkets and switching to alternatives. Consumers can also buy environmentally friendly household appliances, as well, they can recycle paper and other products.

The 'Fair trade' movement

This is an international movement which aims to give producers in poorer countries a 'fair deal', that is, better prices for their commodities such as coffee and cocoa and long term contracts that will provide some security for farmers who often barely make a living out of their products. Millions of small scale coffee and cocoa producers live in extreme poverty.

Additional resources

Newspaper/magazine articles on global consumer issues, examples of specific campaigns organised by environmental organisations or international aid agencies, for example, Oxfam's campaign on behalf of coffee growers.

See the list of websites at the end of the Unit.

Introductory activities

Discuss the students' consumption of global brands - choose a well-known sporting goods manufacturer as an example. Why do we buy overseas products? What are the consequences for the Australian economy and our trading partners?

Brainstorm the various ways in which people can get involved in consumer campaigns, for example:

- organising or signing a petition
- designing, producing or distributing leaflets or posters
- writing to newspapers
- speaking on talkback radio
- wearing a campaign badge, ribbon or t-shirt.



What is globalisation?

Exercise 1 - Defining key terms

Working in small groups, and using internet searches, textbooks and dictionaries, find definitions of globalisation, consumerism, ethical consumerism, sustainable consumption, fair trade and free trade (or develop your own definitions). Compare your definitions with the rest of the class.

Exercise 2 - Where in the world did that come from?

Select one room in your home and complete a table showing which countries the various products come from.

Category	Product	Country of origin
furniture	desk	China

Exercise 3 - How dependent are we?

- Interview members of your family and write a report on the reasons why these choices were made eg. 'because there was no Australian alternative', or 'it was cheaper than the locally made product'.
- Draw conclusions on how dependent your family is on overseas products.
- Identify on a world map the countries that supply most of your imported goods. The data collected can also be displayed in pie charts or bar graphs.
- Compare your results with the rest of the class. Summarise the findings. How dependent are Australians on the rest of the world?



Ethical consumerism

Exercise - Consumer survey

Design and construct a survey to test consumers knowledge of, and interest in, ethical consumerism.

Questions to consider asking include:

- 'What does the term 'ethical consumerism' mean to you?'
- 'Would you buy a product if you knew it was produced by workers who received extremely low pay and/or worked in very poor conditions?'
- 'Should consumers be concerned about the impact their consumption has on other people, for example, the environmental costs of tourism in developing nations?'

Other possible questions



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Select one of the following options as a research task:

- 1. Following the food chain**
Working in groups, study a global market, such as coffee, cocoa/chocolate, or fashion. Each group studies a different stage in the production/supply chain eg. coffee farmers, coffee shops.
Explore how production affects the people and organisations involved: producers, employees and customers. Who are the 'winners' and the 'losers'?
- 2. Arguments for and against globalisation**
Using the websites listed as a starting point, research and then summarise some of the arguments for and against globalisation. Prepare a report on your findings.
- 3. Eco-tourism holidays**
Get information about these holidays from the Internet and travel agents: examples include the Daintree rainforest in far north Queensland and Wilsons Promontory in Victoria. Summarise the benefits to the region. Prepare a brochure, poster or webpage encouraging consumers to take an eco-tourism holiday.
- 4. 'Fair trade'**
Investigate various 'fair trade' schemes to help farmers and other producers in low income countries. Why should consumers be encouraged to purchase their products, how can they be encouraged to do so?
Develop an advertising campaign that educates consumers about fair trade issues. You may choose to design a leaflet, poster, website, article for the school magazine or local newspaper, or a display for school open day.
- 5. Is our school an informed and responsible consumer?**
Investigate the different goods and services the school consumes. Who makes the purchasing decisions? Does the school have an environmental policy? Does it purchase sustainable and environmentally friendly products?
Write a guide/checklist for the school community on being an informed and responsible consumer.
- 6. How effective are consumer campaigns?**
Investigate a number of local and national organisations that campaign on consumer issues and discuss the various ways organisations might campaign. Debate what sort of action might be appropriate.
Identify some recent changes that reflect consumer-led campaigning and describe the key elements of the action and who was involved. In conclusion, summarise how organised campaigns may affect public opinion and lead to greater consumer participation.
- 7. Organise a class forum on globalisation with everyone in the class representing a different organisation or group**
For example, a government agency such as AusAID, an international charity such as World Vision, and traders such as coffee or cocoa farmers.



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Useful Websites

Globalisation

Globalisation Guide www.globalisationguide.org
 Austrade www.austrade.gov.au
 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade www.dfat.gov.au/trade
 World Trade Organisation www.wto.org
 WTO Watch www.wtowatch.org
 Trade Observatory www.tradeobservatory.org
 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development www.oecd.org
 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
www.acci.asn.au/index_issuespapers.htm > globalisation

Global inequality and aid issues

United Nations www.un.org and www.cyberschoolbus.org
 Global Education www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au
 The World Bank www.worldbank.org

Environmental issues and sustainable development

Earthday (Ecological footprint quiz) www.ecofoot.org
 Sustainability Victoria www.sustainability.vic.gov.au
 United Nations Environmental Programme www.unep.org
 Disposable Planet www.bbc.net.uk >In Depth>Disposable Planet
 Victorian Greenhouse Strategy www.greenhouse.vic.gov.au
 EPA Victoria www.epa.vic.gov.au
 Energy Education www.ergon.com.au/energyed/education
 Australian Government's Environmental Portal www.environment.gov.au
 UNESCO www.unesco.org > Education > Education for Sustainable Development

Global consumer campaigns and issues such as 'Fair trade'

Consumers International www.consumersinternational.org
 Oxfam www.oxfam.org.uk and www.oxfam.org.au
 World Vision www.worldvision.com.au
 Just Business www.justbiz.org
 Ethical Trading Initiative www.ethicaltrade.org
 Fairtrade Foundation www.fairtrade.org
 Labour Behind the Label www.labourbehindthelabel.org
 Sweatshop Watch www.sweatshopwatch.org
 The Clean Clothes Campaign www.cleanclothes.org
 Ethical Consumer www.ethicalconsumer.org and www.maketrade-fair.com

Active citizenship

Australian Broadcasting Corporation www.abc.net.au/civics
 Curriculum Corporation www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy



Additional Resources

Further support material for teachers and students is available from Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and can be viewed and downloaded at www.consumer.vic.gov.au under 'Publications'.

Alternatively, an order may be placed by fax on (03) 8684 6333 using a general order form and/or the teacher order form provided on the website.

Following is a list of useful fact sheets and other publications which CAV is continually updating and adding to. Check regularly to see what is new.

IMPORTANT: *If you have visited our website previously, please click the 'refresh' button on your toolbar. This will make sure that any new information added or updated since your last visit, becomes available to you.*

Fact sheets

A range of fact sheets provide detailed information on many consumer issues including:

- Your basic consumer rights
- Shopping tips
- Bag searches
- Lay-by
- Credit and finance
- Renting
- E-commerce
- Product safety

Booklets and brochures

Stuff magazine

'Stuff' contains advice for school leavers on many topics including: mobile phone contracts, managing money, consumer rights, car maintenance, careers and lifestyle.

Better Car Deals - your guide for buying a new or used car

Renting a Home

A guide for tenants and landlords.

Little black book of scams

How to recognise scams and scammers and avoid being ripped-off.

Additional Resources

Websites

Victoria

Consumer Affairs Victoria www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Maths Association of Victoria www.mav.vic.edu.au

Victorian Commercial Teachers Association www.vcta.asn.au

Victorian Association for the Teaching of English www.vate.org.au

youthcentral www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au

Department of Sustainability and Environment www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse

The Consumer Credit Legal Service www.ccls.org.au

Victorian Legal Aid (What's the Deal?) www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal www.vcat.vic.gov.au

New South Wales

www.moneystuff.net.au

South Australia

www.b4usplashcash.ocba.sa.gov.au

Queensland

www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au

Western Australia

www.docep.wa.gov.au

ACT

www.fairtrading.act.gov.au

Northern Territory

www.nt.gov.au/justice

Commonwealth

Financial Literacy Foundation www.understandingmoney.gov.au

Australian Consumers Association (Choice Magazine) www.choice.com.au

Australian Communications and Media Authority www.acma.gov.au

Australian Securities and Investment Commission (Fido) www.fido.asic.gov.au/fido

Other resources

Shopsafe CD-ROM

Advice about shopping safely online.

Your feedback

Consumer Affairs Victoria welcomes your comments and suggestions regarding the 'Consumer Stuff' resources.

Email consumerstuff@justice.vic.gov.au

Please complete the evaluation form at the back of this handbook and forward to the address shown.