

Title: Quality of Information

Learning outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Evaluate the quality of information available to consumers to enable them to make informed and discerning buying decisions; and
- Identify different sources of consumer advice.

Curriculum links:

(GCSE) Wiser Buyer – evaluate the quality of information available to consumers from:

- The media – consumer programmes, magazines and newspapers
- Individuals – family, friends and experts; and
- The internet

Background information:

Regulatory Bodies Factsheet

<http://www.consumer council.org.uk/filestore/documents/Regulatory%20Bodies%20factsheet.pdf>

PowerPoint presentation about the Office of Fair Trading

<http://www.consumer council.org.uk/filestore/documents/The%20Office%20of%20Fair%20Trading%20presentation.pdf>

Activity 1. Where can you get consumer information?

Class discussion

Q. Where can you get information about **products** or **services**?

Record the answers on a flipchart or whiteboard

Possible answers:

Friends	Magazines reviews and promotions
Family	Newspaper articles
TV Advertising	Viral marketing
Customer reviews	TV programmes e.g. Watchdog
Radio programmes e.g. On Your Behalf	Consumer organisations e.g. Which, OFT
Company websites	Labelling
In-store promotions	The Consumer Council
Trading Standards Service/Consumerline	Online blogs and social networking

Q. How reliable do you think the information will be from each of these sources? Rate their reliability from 1 – 5, with 1 being the most reliable and 5 being the least.

Q. Justify the reliability ratings you've given to each of the sources of information.

Activity 2. Expert Consumer Advice

Watch a clip from a consumer programme e.g. Watchdog, Rogue Traders or Cowboy Builders.

Q. What do you think about the programme? What type of information does it provide to consumers?

Q. Do you think programmes like these empower consumers? If so how?

Visit the Consumerline website at <http://www.consumerline.org/about-us/>

Q. Consumerline is run in partnership by which organisations?

Q. How does Consumerline aim to help consumers?

Q. Give one example from the website of how Consumerline has helped a consumer.

Activity 3. Consumer Reviews

Look at the consumer reviews in Appendix A. They're taken from a website and they all relate to one mobile phone model. N.B these are real reviews and to maintain their authenticity misspellings and abbreviations remain unedited.

Q. What do you notice about the ratings given to the mobile phone?

The phone seems to divide opinion. People either rate it highly or hardly at all!

Q. If you were considering buying this mobile phone, what would you think now that you've read the reviews?

Answers might fall into three categories:

I would be able to judge whether the mobile phone suits my needs or not and base my decision on this.	I would be confused and would have to look elsewhere for more information.	I would be put off buying the phone and not look any further.
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Q. Do you think consumer reviews are helpful?

The reason we've used the reviews in Appendix A is to demonstrate that consumers' reviews, whether they're about a mobile phone, hotel, make of car or restaurant will not necessarily be saying the same thing, good or bad.

However, even if they don't point to one 'answer' e.g. buy or walk away, they can still be useful.

For example, if top of your criteria for a mobile phone was the picture quality, and enough consumers mentioned a gripe with it, regardless of how many positive reviews there were about other aspects of the phone, you'd probably think again.

Or, if you were thinking of placing an order with an online retailer you hadn't used before and enough reviews mentioned poor customer service, you'd probably reconsider.

A sensible approach would be to use consumer reviews in conjunction with other sources of information.

Q. Can consumer review websites and other forums be corrupted in anyway?

Yes, there have been instances where the trader has submitted positive reviews about their business or product, sometimes to counter negative reviews placed by consumers. Also, other traders have been known to place negative reviews about their competitors. This is another reason for using consumer reviews in conjunction with other sources of information.

Q. Would you ever submit a review about a product, trader or event? Explain why

Prompt: Find out students' views about being a good citizen and wanting to share their experiences with other consumers (*and* the trader).

Q. Would you be more likely to write a review if yours was a bad experience, rather than a good one? What are the implications of this?

Activity 4. Expert advice

Resources:

1. Photocopied product reviews from Which magazine or the Which website*. The products might be something students are familiar with e.g. MP3 players or mobile phones, or something they are unlikely to know much about, e.g. slow cookers or tumble dryers.

This activity can be repeated as many times as you choose, using a new product each time.

* To sign-up for a one month trial for £1 visit:

<https://www.which.co.uk/signup>

N.B. When registering for the one month trial you will be asked to submit payment details. This is for the £1 trial period. After one month, £9.75 will be deducted for your first month's subscription and every month thereafter. To avoid paying a monthly subscription, set yourself a reminder to cancel the payment after the one month trial.

2. Character scenario cards (i.e. Helen, Jean, Fiona, Ricky, Malachy, Caterina and Patrick). Hardcopies are included in the support materials from the teachers' conferences in 2010. They can also be downloaded from:

[http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/filestore/documents/CharacterCards\(Print\).pdf](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/filestore/documents/CharacterCards(Print).pdf)

Instructions:

Split the class into groups and give them the photocopied product reviews (same reviews per group). Give the groups a different character card each.

Ask the groups to read through the reviews and select the product they think would best suit the character they've been given.

N.B. Students will need to use their imagination and can be as creative as they like with their answers, as long as they can justify the decision taken and that it is based on their character's needs and likes.

Q. Which product would your character choose and why?

Q. Which product would they definitely not choose and why?

Activity 5. How do Which? test products?

Split the class into groups again and ask them to research how Which? test certain products. The web page link below provides a range of products to choose from.

N.B. You don't need to be registered as a Which? member to access this part of the website.

<http://www.which.co.uk/about-which/what-we-do/which-works-for-you/>

Ask the group to give a 2-5 minute presentation to the rest of the class about how the product is tested.

Q. Was there anything the group found surprising?

Q. Are there any tests of their own they would like to add? e.g. whether a washing machine could tackle the smell from their brother's dirty socks?

Class discussion

When all of the groups have given their presentation, have a discussion about when it might be important to research a product or company before buying.

Write the responses on a flipchart or whiteboard.

Possible answers:

- If you're not sure which make/model will suit you best or you're fairly certain what you want to buy but decide to double-check it first.
- If it's an expensive purchase.
- If it's a trader, restaurant, or product you've never used or bought from before.

Appendix A

These are real consumer reviews taken from a website about mobile phones. Every review is rating the same mobile phone model but look at how much they vary.

Reviewed by Mr Benge

I seriously would stay away from this phone - absolute rubbish. The touch screen went dead on my wife's phone and my Service Provider kindly offered a replacement - however, I cannot wipe the phone clean before the swap - so no master/factory reset can be done without the touch screen.

Rating: ★☆☆☆☆ Poor

Reviewed by Alex

Absolute rubbish? That's an absolutely unfair comment of a phone that I consider to be amongst the best ever made! The battery life is awesome and it's got all the features you want without the complications of a smart phone! The touch screen is amongst the best I have tried and is very responsive. Also, I was told that the first batch did have slight software problems but all is working excellent now inc Skype and YouTube. An overall excellent phone and fully recommended.

Rating: ★★★★★ Outstanding

Reviewed by Lucii

Mr Benge, No disrespect but i have gone through evry phone you can think of & this is the best by miles. the touch screen is realli good :) My last fone was good at 1st but after 1 month it broke got it repaired & broke again (after that should of just got a new phone) got it repaired and broke, so I got this fone for Christmas, & its the best!:) the only thing is I'm slightly worried about the bit you put the charger in because its the same as my last fone thats wat made my phone break but so far soo good :)

Rating: ★★★★★ Outstanding

Reviewed by Karan

Rubbish!! I wouldn't recommend this mobile for anyone to have fun with such as MP3s, games, pictures. etc... I bought this one and returned it as it provides rubbish picture quality and sound from mp3s!! Rubbish touch screen technology and it's very hard to scroll. Therefore this mobile is utter waste of money.

Rating: ★☆☆☆☆ Poor

Reviewed by Maz

Cant say any thing bad about it because its amazing not a thing wrong with it xx

Rating: ★★★★★ Outstanding