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**IMPROVING CONSUMER PROTECTION
POLICY IN VIET NAM**

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SUMMARY OF THE PhD THESIS IN ECONOMY

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PREAMBLE

1. Rationale for the Study

Consumer protection plays an essential role in the sustainable development of a country. The Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam regard consumer protection as one of the key pillars in the national agenda for international economic integration and sustainable development. Vietnam is among the first three countries in Southeast Asia to adopt and enforce a consumer protection policy. The formulation and implementation of this policy have consistently been directed and supported by the leadership of the Party and the Government.

Since 1997, Vietnam has introduced and implemented policies for consumer protection. These policies have been continuously improved and adapted over time (1997–2024). They have had several positive impacts: providing a legal framework for consumer protection activities; creating favourable conditions for enterprises, organisations, and individuals to proactively engage in consumer protection; encouraging the adoption of advanced technologies to ensure product safety and quality; promoting sustainable production, business, and consumption practices; establishing a network of consumer protection authorities from central to local levels and a system of consumer associations; and contributing to a healthier environment for both consumers and business entities in Vietnam.

Despite these achievements, the consumer protection policy still reveals certain limitations. Some regulatory documents have been issued or enforced with delays; enforcement remains weak and effectiveness is limited. These challenges necessitate further improvement of the consumer protection policy to enhance its effectiveness and impact.

As Vietnam integrates more deeply into regional and global economies, its participation in new-generation free trade agreements (FTAs) entails various commitments related to consumer protection. For instance, Article 16.6 of Chapter 16 on “Competition Policy” in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) sets forth obligations to improve institutional frameworks, enhance cooperation, and promote information exchange among agencies and organisations involved in consumer protection. Accordingly, Vietnam’s consumer protection policy must be revised to align with international commitments and to maximise the opportunities these FTAs bring.

Improving the policy is not only critical for addressing implementation gaps but also necessary to fulfil the Party’s and Government’s directives on institutional reform in consumer protection. It

must be harmonised with the broader legal system—particularly with the Civil Code and sector-specific regulations—and support Vietnam’s compliance with international agreements to which it is a signatory or is in the process of accession.

From 1997 to 2024, Vietnam’s consumer protection policy has been steadily reformed to suit the dynamics of a market economy and international integration. While the policy has had a generally positive impact, it continues to face limitations due to both objective and subjective factors. These limitations affect the ability of the policy to effectively protect consumers, especially amid deeper international integration and rapid changes in commercial practices driven by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

In practice, consumer protection in Vietnam still faces serious challenges: counterfeit products, unsafe food, and items of unknown origin continue to threaten public health; many businesses fail to provide sufficient product and service information, resulting in fraud and misleading advertisements; the legal system and complaint resolution mechanisms are complex, discouraging consumers from defending their rights; and while e-commerce is growing rapidly, product quality control on digital platforms remains inadequate. Strengthening consumer protection policy is essential to address these issues. This includes ensuring socio-economic development, fostering trust among citizens and international partners, building a fair and competitive market, safeguarding consumers’ health and interests, enhancing complaints and enforcement mechanisms, and strengthening regulation in e-commerce. In this context, improving the consumer protection policy is a matter of pressing urgency.

Although there have been international and domestic studies on consumer protection, the issue of policy improvement has received relatively little scholarly attention. In particular, few studies explore the theoretical underpinnings of consumer protection policy improvement—such as definitions of “consumer”, “consumer rights”, “consumer protection”, “corporate social responsibility”, and “responsible business conduct”; clarification of the concept, tools, instruments, and policy content; the development of criteria for assessing consumer protection policies (including those related to e-commerce and cross-border digital trade); and comparative analyses of international experiences. The lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework remains a significant gap. Improving the consumer protection policy is not only an urgent practical need but also a critical step toward strengthening policy effectiveness, building trust in the marketplace, promoting a healthy consumer environment, meeting international integration demands, and ensuring sustainable economic development. Therefore, a systematic study, informed by international best practices, is

needed to build a sound theoretical foundation for consumer protection policy reform in Vietnam.

Consumer protection is a cross-sectoral issue that spans numerous industries and fields. Consumer protection policy serves as the legal corridor for safeguarding consumer rights. If developed and implemented effectively, this policy framework will yield substantial benefits—not only for consumers (including the entire population of Vietnam and foreign nationals living and working in the country) but also for the broader economy, by promoting production, circulation, and sustainable development. Despite notable progress in aligning consumer protection policy with the demands of a market economy and international commitments, the above limitations remain. Moreover, there has not yet been a comprehensive study that provides an overview of Vietnam’s international commitments in this field; an assessment of the policy’s development since 1997; an evaluation of its improvement process (1997–2024) based on both substantive content and empirical criteria; or an analysis of achievements, shortcomings, and their root causes to inform future policy solutions.

The rise of digital technology, digital transformation, and e-commerce has made transactions more convenient for both businesses and consumers. However, consumers are now more vulnerable to risks such as identity theft, fraud, and the purchase of counterfeit or substandard goods. Therefore, improving consumer protection policy is crucial to safeguard legitimate consumer interests in the context of accelerating digital transformation and the growth of e-commerce.

From now until 2030—with a long-term vision to 2045—global economic and trade activities are expected to recover amidst rapid and unpredictable changes, intensifying strategic competition among major powers, rising protectionism, and ongoing trade conflicts. Globalisation and trade liberalisation continue to evolve in scale and complexity, generating both opportunities and challenges. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is transforming production structures and enabling the development of smart manufacturing, smart products, and intelligent supply chains—making production and service systems more agile and customer-responsive.

Vietnam’s deepening integration into regional and global markets opens opportunities for market expansion and increased trade activity. However, it also obliges the country to fulfil market access commitments, uphold consumer protection obligations, and promote responsible business conduct. CPTPP, EVFTA, and RCEP member countries are likely to introduce stricter measures related to consumer protection, including improvements to the legal framework, enforcement capabilities, and data privacy in the context of rising digital trade. The rapid expansion of platform-based business models presents new challenges for consumer

protection, while Vietnamese law and policy have not yet been updated accordingly. Domestically, smuggling, trade fraud, and the production and sale of counterfeit or substandard goods are becoming more complex and sophisticated, making enforcement increasingly difficult.

This mixture of international and domestic opportunities and challenges will have a major impact on consumer protection policy reform in Vietnam in the years to come.

Against this backdrop, there is an urgent need for research that systematises and strengthens the theoretical framework for consumer protection policy reform—laying the foundation for evaluating current conditions and proposing solutions toward 2030. Such efforts are essential from both theoretical and practical perspectives. To contribute to the improvement of consumer protection in Vietnam—especially in the context of global integration, rapid e-commerce growth, and digital transformation—the author has chosen the topic: **"Improving Consumer Protection Policy in Viet Nam"** as the subject of this doctoral dissertation in economics.

2. Research Questions of the Dissertation

1) Why is it necessary to formulate and implement consumer protection policy? What are its key components and impacts? Why should this policy be improved, and what does such improvement entail? What are the international experiences in this area?

2) What is the current state of consumer protection policy improvement in Vietnam from 1997 to 2024? What limitations remain, and what are the underlying causes?

3) How do domestic and international contexts influence policy improvement towards 2030 and beyond? What are the key perspectives, orientations, and solutions to improve Vietnam's consumer protection policy accordingly?

3. Research Objectives and Tasks

3.1. Research Objective

To study and propose solutions to improve consumer protection policies in Vietnam.

3.2. Research Tasks

To achieve the above objective, the dissertation sets out four main research tasks:

- Review of the literature and identification of research **gaps**: This involves conducting a comprehensive review of relevant academic works to determine the contributions that can be inherited, as well as identifying gaps

in existing research. Based on this review, the dissertation defines its research objectives, subject, scope, methodology, and content.

- **Systematisation of the theoretical foundations for improving consumer protection policy:** The dissertation further clarifies the general theoretical issues related to consumer protection policy and its improvement. It reviews and synthesises relevant literature to identify theoretical and practical gaps that warrant further investigation. In addition, it analyses international experience in consumer protection policy improvement in selected countries.

- **Application of research methods and formulation of new findings in the assessment of the current state of policy improvement in Vietnam (1997–2024):** The study applies appropriate research methods to analyse the development and reform of consumer protection policy during this period. It identifies the achievements, limitations, and underlying causes, thereby determining the necessary requirements for further improvement of Vietnam’s consumer protection policy.

- **Proposing viewpoints, strategic orientations, and solutions for improving consumer protection policy in Vietnam through to 2030, with a vision to 2045.**

4. Research Objects and Scopes

4.1. Research Object

The subject of this dissertation is the consumer protection policy and its improvement in Vietnam.

4.2. Research Scope

- **Content-wise:** The dissertation focuses on improving consumer protection policy in Vietnam.

- **Time-wise:** The study examines the current state of consumer protection policy improvement in Vietnam during the period 1997–2024, and sets out viewpoints, strategic orientations, and proposed solutions for further policy enhancement up to 2030, with a vision to 2045.

- **Geographical scope:** The research is confined to the territory of Vietnam. It also draws upon the experiences of three countries—France, the United States, and South Korea—in order to extract relevant lessons that may be applied to Vietnam in the process of improving consumer protection policy.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Research Philosophy

The dissertation adopts the philosophical foundations of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to formulate a comprehensive

theoretical framework for improving consumer protection policy. Based on this philosophical approach, the study introduces relevant conceptual definitions and constructs an analytical framework for evaluating and developing consumer protection policy.

5.2. Research Methods

To undertake this dissertation, the doctoral researcher employed a combination of the following research methods:

- Secondary Data Collection: This method was applied throughout the research process. Secondary data related to consumer protection policy and its improvement in Vietnam were collected from diverse sources, including previous academic studies, regulatory authorities, and consumer protection organisations. The data were critically examined against criteria of accuracy, relevance, and timeliness. Cross-referencing and consistency checks were conducted to ensure reliability, forming a robust empirical foundation for analysing the current state of consumer protection policy improvement.

-Primary Data Collection: To complement and update information for the analysis of the current state of policy improvement between 1997 and 2024, the researcher conducted surveys and interviews. Questionnaires were distributed, and direct interviews were conducted with consumers, business representatives, and experts to gather data for clarifying the research problem and supporting the empirical analysis.

-The survey participants included consumers across all regions of Vietnam (e.g. students, civil servants, retirees, and self-employed individuals), enterprises (including manufacturers and retailers), business owners, and experts (including officials from the National Competition Commission, provincial Departments of Industry and Trade, consumer associations, researchers, and lecturers in relevant academic institutions). A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, 327 were returned, and 315 met the criteria for valid responses.

The questionnaire comprised two sections: Part I – General information about the respondent; Part II – Respondents’ evaluations of the state of consumer protection policy improvement during the 1997–2024 period. The survey was designed and conducted by the doctoral researcher.

This method was employed specifically to examine the real-world state of policy improvement during the aforementioned period. The results were analysed and presented in Section 2.3, “Assessment of Consumer Protection Policy Improvement in Vietnam during the 1997–2024 Period”. The findings from the survey provide an objective basis for evaluating the effectiveness and completeness of the policy reforms during this timeframe.

- **Synthesis, Statistical, and Economic Analysis Methods:** These methods were used to process and interpret statistical data related to the improvement of consumer protection policy in Vietnam between 1997 and 2024. Data were aggregated into tables and charts to support analysis and inform key findings and conclusions.

- **Comparative Legal Analysis:** This method was employed to compare Vietnam's consumer protection policies and legislation with those of other countries, as well as with Vietnam's international commitments and its existing legal system. The objective was to assess whether the current consumer protection framework in Vietnam is comprehensive, coherent, and aligned with both international standards and domestic legal requirements. This comparative analysis also served to identify gaps, overlaps, or deficiencies in the existing laws and policies—thereby informing recommendations for amendments, revisions, or new legal instruments.

- **Expert Consultation:** This method involved soliciting input from subject-matter experts and scholars concerning the theoretical foundations, the current state, and future solutions for improving consumer protection policy in Vietnam. Throughout the research process—from the development of three thematic reports to the drafting of the dissertation—the researcher shared interim findings and chapter drafts with professionals who possess expertise relevant to the topic. Their feedback was used to refine and enhance the quality and rigour of the dissertation.

6. New Contributions of the Dissertation

This dissertation presents several novel contributions in both theoretical and practical dimensions.

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical innovations of the dissertation can be summarised as follows:

- **First**, it systematises and clarifies the theoretical foundations concerning the improvement of consumer protection policy. Specifically, it develops conceptual definitions for key terms including "consumer", "consumer rights", "consumer protection", "corporate social responsibility", and "responsible business conduct". It also examines the role of consumer protection and the responsibilities of relevant stakeholders—including the state, business entities, consumers, and social organisations. Furthermore, it analyses the concept of public policy, consumer protection policy, the instruments and influencing factors of such policy, and the policy cycle (including formulation, implementation, evaluation, and its impact on consumer protection).

- **Second**, the dissertation proposes a theoretical framework to serve as the basis for analysing and evaluating the current state of consumer protection policy reform in Vietnam (as examined in the subsequent chapter). This includes clarifying the notion of "policy improvement" in general, and specifically the improvement of consumer protection policy, outlining its substantive content and criteria for evaluation.

- **Third**, the study investigates international experience in consumer protection policy development from three countries—France, the United States, and South Korea—and draws out eight practical lessons for Vietnam:

1. Regularly reviewing and revising legal documents on consumer protection to ensure alignment with commercial realities and coherence with sectoral legislation;

2. Developing and promulgating specific legal documents to concretise consumer protection policy;

3. Amending relevant laws when they become outdated in light of evolving commercial practices;

4. Ensuring that consumer protection laws and policies are kept up to date;

5. Actively disseminating and raising public awareness of consumer protection policies and laws;

6. Establishing a strong and competent consumer protection authority;

7. Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of consumer associations in relevant policy and legal documents;

8. Consulting consumer associations and enterprises during the formulation and revision of consumer protection policy.

6.2. Practical Contributions

The dissertation also offers several new insights and contributions from a practical standpoint:

- **First**, it provides a comprehensive analysis of the status of consumer protection policy in Vietnam between 1997 and 2024. This includes an examination of Vietnam's international commitments under agreements such as AANZFTA, CPTPP, and RCEP, as well as a detailed review of policy formulation and implementation throughout the period.

- **Second**, it evaluates the process of improving consumer protection policy in two phases: 1997–2010 and 2011–2024, highlighting the progress made and issues encountered during each period.

- **Third**, based on this evaluation, the dissertation identifies and assesses both achievements and limitations in the development of consumer protection policy. It also explains the underlying causes behind these outcomes.

The study identifies five key achievements: (1) The gradual refinement of consumer protection policy; (2) A relatively comprehensive, coherent, and feasible policy framework; (3) A focus on fairness and protection of vulnerable consumers; (4) Timely promulgation of legal instruments that provide a foundation for enforcement; (5) The promotion of sustainable production and consumption. Nine factors contributing to these achievements are also identified.

In contrast, the dissertation outlines five key shortcomings: (1) Absence of certain necessary regulations; (2) Lack of clarity in some existing provisions; (3) Weak punitive measures that fail to deter violations; (4) Limited effectiveness in policy enforcement; (5) Low efficiency in policy implementation. Additionally, it identifies ten root causes for these limitations.

- **Fourth**, the study forecasts international and domestic contextual factors likely to affect the improvement of consumer protection policy in Vietnam. It outlines six key international trends and six major domestic developments.

- **Fifth**, it proposes five guiding principles, five strategic orientations, and five groups of solutions for improving Vietnam's consumer protection policy towards 2030, with a vision to 2045. These proposals are grounded in rigorous theoretical reasoning and supported by empirical evidence.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

Besides the acknowledgments, table of contents, list of abbreviations, list of figures, introduction, conclusion, references, and appendices, the main content of the dissertation is organized into the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Theoretical foundations for improving consumer protection policies;**

- **Chapter 2: Current status of consumer protection policy improvement in Vietnam during 1997 - 2024;**

- **Chapter 3: Perspectives, orientations, and solutions for consumer protection policy improvement in Vietnam up to 2030, with a vision to 2045.**

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR IMPROVING CONSUMER PROTECTION POLICIES

1.1. Theoretical Issues Regarding Consumer Protection

1.1.1. Relevant Concepts

1.1.1.1. Definition of Consumer

A consumer is an individual who purchases or uses goods or services for consumption purposes. Households and organizations are also considered consumers when purchasing or using goods or services not for business purposes.

1.1.1.2. Definition of Consumer Rights

Consumer rights refer to the legitimate rights and benefits enjoyed by consumers as stipulated by consumer protection policies and laws.

1.1.1.3. Definition of Consumer Protection

Consumer protection is the assurance of the legitimate rights and interests of individuals and organizations who buy and use goods and services for daily consumption.

1.1.1.4. Definition of Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a firm's commitment to sustainable development through activities that protect the environment, contribute to the community, ensure safety and benefits for consumers, and improve the quality of life for workers, communities, and society in a way that benefits both the company and social development.

1.1.1.5. Definition of Responsible Business Conduct**

Responsible business conduct refers to business activities that comply with the law and undertake measures to assess, prevent, mitigate, and remedy adverse impacts on people, the environment, and society.

1.1.2. Roles of Consumer Protection

Consumer protection plays vital roles in: safeguarding consumers' legal rights and interests; contributing to the development of a healthy and fair business environment; fostering economic growth and international integration; promoting sustainable consumption and social responsibility; raising awareness among consumers and society; stimulating the healthy development of the market; stabilizing society and preventing legal violations.

1.1.3. Responsibilities of Relevant Stakeholders

1.1.3.1. Responsibilities of the State and Competent Authorities

The responsibilities of the State and relevant authorities in consumer protection include: formulating and improving consumer protection policies; organizing the implementation of consumer protection laws and regulations and monitoring the market; resolving consumer protection issues through a dispute resolution system; conducting public awareness campaigns, education, and enhancing societal awareness; encouraging and supporting social organizations to participate in consumer protection efforts; and promoting sustainable production and consumption towards a green and circular economy.

1.1.3.2. Responsibilities of Business Organizations and Individuals

Business organizations and individuals (including manufacturing enterprises, import enterprises, trading companies, and sole proprietorships) that are affected by consumer protection policies are responsible for: providing complete, honest, and clear information; ensuring the quality and safety of goods and services; respecting and protecting the legal rights of consumers; establishing mechanisms for receiving and resolving complaints; and conducting business ethically and with social responsibility.

1.1.3.3. Responsibilities of Social Organizations

The responsibilities of social organizations in consumer protection include: raising awareness among consumers through education and advocacy; monitoring and reporting consumer-related issues; advising and supporting consumers; participating in the formulation of consumer protection policies and laws; overseeing the market and warning of risks; engaging in dispute resolution; and cooperating and coordinating with authorities, organizations, and businesses.

1.1.3.4. Responsibilities of Consumers

Consumers are the beneficiaries of consumer protection policies. Their responsibilities in safeguarding their rights include: complying with consumer protection policy regulations; seeking information about goods and services; sharing information and experiences regarding the use of products and services; consuming responsibly; thoroughly reviewing contract terms; taking action to protect their rights and the rights of the community; demanding legal protection of their rights; and warning and reporting legal violations.

1.2. Consumer Protection Policy

1.2.1. Concepts, Policy Instruments, and Influencing Factors

1.2.1.1. Definition of Policy

Policy is a system of guidelines, principles, regulations, tools, and appropriate measures applied by the state to achieve specific objectives within defined conditions and timeframes.

1.2.1.2. Definition of Consumer Protection Policy

Consumer protection policy comprises the system of guidelines, principles, regulations, tools, and measures applied by the state to protect consumers against infringements of their rights by business organizations and individuals.

1.2.1.3. Policy Instruments

These include a range of tools to safeguard consumers' legal rights and interests such as economic management measures; preferential tax and credit policies; subsidies, price supports, and guarantees; supportive measures to achieve policy objectives; communication, information technology management and development; administrative measures; and direct government actions.

1.2.1.4. Influencing Factors

Consumer protection policies are influenced by diverse factors grouped into five categories: (i) Economic factors (economic development, market competition, consumer income, and purchasing power); (ii) Social factors (consumer awareness and education, consumer culture, development of consumer protection organizations); (iii) Legal factors (current legal framework, enforcement mechanisms); (iv) Technological factors (development of information technology, production technology, and quality control); (v) International factors (international economic integration, pressure from international organizations).

1.2.2. Policy Process

1.2.2.1. Policy Formulation (Policy Planning)

Includes developing programs and drafting policy documents, and promulgating and publicizing policies.

1.2.2.2. Policy Implementation

Policy implementation realizes policy objectives, tests policies in practice, and provides evidence for future policy planning. It involves creating and issuing implementation programs, organizing enforcement and control, and summarizing and reviewing policy implementation.

1.2.2.3. Policy Evaluation

In essence, this assesses the effectiveness and achievement level of policy objectives and examines policy impacts on stakeholders.

1.2.3. Policy Impact on Consumer Protection

1.2.3.1. Impact on Consumer Protection Activities

Policies create a legal framework enabling consumer protection activities; facilitate agencies, organizations, and individuals to fulfill rights and obligations, and encourage businesses to research, apply, and innovate with advanced technologies in consumer protection.

1.2.3.2. Impact on Consumers and their Protection

Policies protect consumer rights; facilitate consumers in exercising their rights and responsibilities; protect consumers from smuggling, counterfeit, and substandard goods; protect consumers online and in increasingly diverse commercial forms.

1.3. Contents and Criteria for Evaluating Consumer Protection Policy Improvement

1.3.1. Definition of Policy Improvement

Improving consumer protection policies involves reviewing, revising, and supplementing existing policy documents to reflect practical needs and development demands to ensure policy completeness, coherence, and enhanced effectiveness.

1.3.2. Contents of Policy Improvement

1.3.2.1. Reviewing Policy Documents

Based on policy evaluation results, ministries and agencies review current policies to identify necessary amendments or supplements, whether to pursue new objectives, and to enhance policy effectiveness. If necessary, proposed changes are submitted to higher authorities (e.g., Government) for guidance.

1.3.2.2. Amending and Supplementing Policy Documents

Upon evaluation reports, top-level authorities identify necessary amendments. Where laws are involved, guidance from legislative bodies (National Assembly) is required; guiding documents issued by government and ministries may also be amended and supplemented.

1.3.3. Criteria for Evaluating Policy Improvement

Evaluation is based on the number of revisions and supplements to policy documents and assesses modified or new documents against criteria such as completeness, coherence, feasibility, fairness, effectiveness, and efficiency.

1.4. International experiences in Consumer protection policy improvement and lessons for Vietnam

1.4.1. International Experiences

1.4.1.1. France

France places great emphasis on consumer protection, focusing on: (i) regular review and adjustment of consumer protection laws and policies to reflect commercial realities; (ii) development of a Consumer Protection Code with annual updates; (iii) active promotion of consumer protection policy and laws; (iv) consultation with consumer organizations and businesses in policy development.

1.4.1.2. United States

The US prioritizes consumer protection policy improvement through: (i) continual updates and amendments of related policies and laws; (ii) annual updates of consumer protection laws with adjustments as needed; (iii) clear delineation of responsibilities for government, protection agencies, businesses, and consumers; (iv) widespread dissemination of policy and legal frameworks.

1.4.1.3. South Korea

South Korea is recognized internationally for experience in consumer protection policy improvement by: regularly reviewing laws and policies to amend, supplement, or introduce new documents consistent with trade realities; timely addressing new infringements on consumer rights; developing comprehensive consumer protection codes delineating rights and responsibilities; consulting consumer organizations and businesses during policy drafting.

1.4.2. Lessons applicable to Vietnam

From these experiences, Vietnam can learn to: regularly review consumer protection policies to adapt to trade realities and align with sector-specific laws; develop and enact legislative documents concretizing consumer protection policies; amend and supplement consumer protection laws as commercial realities evolve; update legal frameworks consistently and intensively; and actively publicize consumer protection policies and laws.

CHAPTER 2: CURRENT STATUS OF CONSUMER PROTECTION POLICY IMPROVEMENT IN VIETNAM DURING 1997–2024

2.1. Analysis of Consumer Protection Policy Improvement in Vietnam (1997–2024)

2.1.1. Policy Improvement from 1997 to 2010

2.1.1.1. Review of Consumer Protection Policies (1997–2010)

The review of policies including the 1997 Commercial Law, 1999 Ordinance on Consumer Protection, 2004 Competition Law, and 2005 Commercial Law reveals the 1999 Consumer Protection Ordinance had significant shortcomings. It was necessary to replace this ordinance with a Consumer Protection Law and related guiding documents (decrees, decisions, circulars) to address these limitations and incorporate new provisions that reflect practical realities.

2.1.1.2. Amendments and supplements

To improve policy in this period, Vietnam enacted the 2010 Consumer Protection Law replacing the 1999 Ordinance, establishing a more comprehensive, coherent, and commerce-appropriate legal framework, complemented by implementing regulations.

2.1.2. Policy Improvement from 2011 to 2024

2.1.2.1. Review of Consumer protection policies (2011–2024)

Evaluating policies during 2011–2024 including the 2005 Commercial Law, 2007 Product Quality Law, 2010 Food Safety Law, 2010 Consumer Protection Law, and 2017 Foreign Trade Management Law reveals that despite improvements, the 2010 Consumer Protection Law still had limitations. Some provisions became inconsistent with commercial practices and specialized laws, necessitating amendments to the 2010 Law and its implementation guidelines.

2.1.2.2. Amendments and supplements

Accordingly, the 2010 Consumer Protection Law was amended to enhance comprehensiveness, coherence, practical alignment, and compliance with international integration. The 2023 Consumer protection Law introduced significant innovations, including expanding scope of application, defining consumer rights and obligations more clearly, addressing sustainable production and consumption, protecting vulnerable consumers, prohibiting illicit acts, and clarifying business responsibilities towards consumers.

2.2. Evaluation of Consumer protection policy improvement status in Vietnam (1997–2024)

2.2.1. Achievements and their causes

2.2.1.1. Achievements

Over 27 years of policy development and implementation, consumer protection provisions have led to substantial positive changes and established a solid foundation fostering ongoing development of consumer protection in Vietnam. Notable achievements include a gradually perfected consumer protection policy that is relatively complete, coherent, and feasible; equitable policies that protect vulnerable consumers; timely promulgation of policies providing a legal environment conducive to consumer protection; and policy contributions towards sustainable production and consumption.

2.2.1.2. Causes of achievements

These results stem from the continuous attention of the Party and State to consumer protection and the development of relevant legislation; establishment of a system of state management agencies from central to local levels dedicated to policy enforcement; strengthened inspection and supervision activities; and active participation of social organizations contributing to consumer protection and policy improvement in Vietnam.

2.2.2. Limitations and causes

2.2.2.1. Limitations

Despite progress, policy improvement during 1997–2024 exhibits constraints such as lack of certain consumer protection provisions; unclear regulations; insufficient penalties lacking deterrence; limited enforcement effectiveness; and suboptimal policy implementation results.

2.2.2.2. Causes of limitations

These shortcomings arise from weaknesses in coordination mechanisms among ministries, sectors, and localities during policy development; ineffective cooperation among enforcement agencies; inadequate communication and dissemination of consumer protection policies, resulting in limited awareness among both businesses and consumers regarding their rights and obligations; and scarce resources and funding for consumer protection work.

CHAPTER 3: VIEWPOINTS, ORIENTATIONS, AND SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVING CONSUMER PROTECTION POLICY IN VIETNAM UNTIL 2030, WITH A VISION TOWARDS 2045

3.1. International and domestic contexts influencing the improvement of Consumer protection policy in Vietnam until 2030, vision 2045

3.1.1. International context

First, in the period leading up to 2030, the global economy and trade are expected to recover and demonstrate growth potential. However, this recovery will take place in a context marked by rapid and unpredictable global changes, intensifying strategic competition among major powers, rising protectionism, and escalating trade conflicts.

Second, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is fundamentally transforming global production structures and supply chains, while accelerating the development of digital trade.

Third, consumer protection policies and legislation around the world are being continuously refined to meet the demands of rapid development—both at the national and global levels.

3.1.2. Domestic context

First, Vietnam is actively advancing the development of a fully-fledged and modern market economy institution, aligned with the country's evolving development trajectory in the new era. This institutional reform aims to establish equal market conditions for all economic actors.

Second, e-commerce is growing rapidly and has become a major global trend in trade. In Vietnam, e-commerce has expanded significantly and now serves as a crucial distribution channel—supporting businesses in bringing products to market, meeting consumer demand, and fostering the development of modern financial and payment services.

Third, after more than 25 years of implementing consumer protection policy and over 12 years of enforcing the Law on Consumer Protection, most Vietnamese enterprises have become increasingly aware of the law and have begun to apply its provisions—albeit to varying degrees—in their business practices.

3.2. Viewpoints and Orientations for Improving Consumer Protection Policy in Vietnam Until 2030, Vision 2045

3.2.1. Viewpoints

First, the improvement of consumer protection policy must be aligned with the viewpoints, guidelines, and policies of the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam regarding human rights.

Second, the enhancement of consumer protection policy must be closely linked to the goals of sustainable economic development.

Third, consumer protection policy improvement must ensure consistency and coherence with the national legal system, while also guaranteeing legal feasibility and enforceability.

Fourth, improving consumer protection policy must place strong emphasis on reviewing and consolidating practical experiences, conducting systematic legal reviews, and promoting public dissemination of relevant laws and policies.

Fifth, consumer protection policy reform must comply with international treaties and commitments under the free trade agreements (FTAs) to which Vietnam is a signatory.

3.2.2. Orientations

First, the improvement of consumer protection policy should be oriented toward practical applicability and compatibility with international treaties and relevant domestic legislation.

Second, the improvement of consumer protection policy should aim to ensure fairness in civil transactions between consumers and business entities.

Third, the development of consumer protection policy should seek to protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers while also safeguarding the lawful rights and interests of enterprises and individual business actors.

Fourth, consumer protection policy reform should focus on enhancing the responsibility of state management agencies and encouraging the active participation of businesses and individuals in consumer protection efforts.

Fifth, the policy should promote the establishment of mechanisms for international cooperation to provide a legal basis for resolving cross-border consumer disputes.

3.3. Key Solutions for Improving Consumer Protection Policy in Vietnam

3.3.1. Innovating the Process of Policy Formulation and Improvement

Reform the mindset and approach to consumer protection policy; enhance the quality of research and forecasting; improve the procedures for policy formulation and promulgation; strengthen policy evaluation mechanisms; build the capacity of personnel involved in policy development; and ensure the wide dissemination of consumer protection policy and legal documents prior to their entry into force, enabling regulatory authorities and businesses to understand and proactively adapt in both state management and commercial operations..

3.3.2. Reviewing Policy Documents

Review consumer protection policy documents to identify those needing amendment, supplementation, or new development to complete a comprehensive, consistent, clear, and transparent legal framework aligned with international commitments and consumer habits amid international integration, Industry 4.0, digital transformation, green transformation, and e-commerce development.

3.3.3. Amending and Supplementing Policy Documents

3.3.3.1. Amendments and Supplements

Revise and supplement certain consumer protection policy documents and implementing regulations, such as: Amended Decision No. 659/QĐ-BCT dated 15 February 2012 on the issuance of contract registration forms, standard contracts, and general transaction conditions; Amended Circular No. 10/2013/TT-BCT dated 30 May 2013 issuing contract registration forms, standard contracts, and general transaction conditions.

3.3.3.2. Elimination of Repealed Consumer Protection Policy Documents

Consumer protection policy documents that have been repealed and are no longer legally valid should be removed. These include: the 1999 Ordinance on Consumer Protection; the 2010 Law on Consumer Protection (with the exception of Point a, Clause 1 and Clause 2 of Article 80); and a number of implementing regulations such as Decree No. 69/2001/NĐ-CP, Decree No. 55/2008/NĐ-CP, Decree No. 99/2011/NĐ-CP, Decree No. 185/2013/NĐ-CP, Decree No. 124/2015/NĐ-CP, and Decree No. 141/2018/NĐ-CP.

3.3.3.3. Improving Regulations on Consumer Protection

- Improve regulations concerning the responsibilities of manufacturers, organisations, and individual business operators. Stricter provisions are needed regarding the liability of manufacturers and business entities when placing goods on the market.
- Enhance regulations on contracts concluded with consumers, including standard form contracts and general terms and conditions, in order to strengthen consumer protection in contractual transactions.
- Refine sanctions to ensure they are sufficiently deterrent against violations that compromise consumers' rights, health, or safety—particularly in relation to essential goods and services, and in the protection of vulnerable consumer groups.

3.3.4. Integrating Consumer Protection Regulations into Related Specialized Legal Documents

To ensure comprehensive consumer protection, embed consumer protection provisions within specialized legal documents related to e-commerce, market management, etc. For example:

- In market management, government decrees regulating administrative sanctions for commercial activities, counterfeit goods, substandard products, and fuel trade must incorporate consumer protection provisions.
- In e-commerce, government decrees should integrate consumer protection rules, clearly defining prohibited acts, responsibilities of traders and e-commerce platform operators, information transparency regarding goods/services, pricing, transaction conditions, shipping, payment methods, and data privacy protection.

3.3.5. Enhancing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Consumer Protection Policy Implementation

3.3.5.1. Issuing Consolidated Legislation on Consumer Protection Law

To enhance the effectiveness and enforceability of consumer protection policy, it is recommended that, within 3 to 5 years following the implementation of the Law on Consumer Protection, the Office of the National Assembly issue a consolidated legal document (Văn bản hợp nhất) on the Law on Consumer Protection. This would serve to address existing shortcomings in the 2023 Law and its guiding decrees, by revising and supplementing the following aspects:

- Regulations on defective goods: The Law on Consumer Protection should provide clear definitions and guidance to distinguish between and

apply different categories of defective goods, in order to avoid overlaps and inconsistencies in enforcement.

- Regulations on distance transactions: The law should specify the types of distance transactions to which the provisions under Article 38 must apply, while also identifying exceptions to which these regulations would not be applicable.

3.3.5.2. Strengthening State Management Capacities

- Develop the system of state management agencies, enhance their capacity, and strengthen accountability in consumer protection activities.

- Promote inter-agency coordination and enforcement in combating counterfeit goods, products of unknown origin, and intellectual property infringements in the digital environment.

- Improve the effectiveness of inspection, supervision, detection, and sanctioning of violations against consumer rights.

3.3.5.3. Building a Healthy Business Environment

Foster a healthy business environment by linking corporate responsibility in the implementation of consumer protection policies and legislation to the enhancement of the competitiveness of products, goods, and services. This approach serves as a driving force for improving both enterprise-level and national competitiveness. Organisations and individuals engaged in the production and trading of goods and services should strictly comply with their obligations towards consumers, viewing such compliance as a competitive advantage and a foundation for sustainable business development.

3.3.5.4. Promoting Responsible Business Practices

Finalize policies and laws on responsible business conduct, internalizing international commitments, and creating incentives and priority measures for businesses practicing responsible conduct, highlighting benefits derived from such practices.

3.3.5.5. Strengthening Awareness and Skills via Consumer Protection Promotion

- Intensify communication and dissemination of consumer protection policies and laws to various social groups (consumers, enterprises, consumer associations).

- Diversify and innovate communication methods and content, elevate societal knowledge and skills, and facilitate effective exercise of consumer rights, particularly for vulnerable consumers.

3.3.5.6. Solutions from Consumer Protection Associations

Engage actively in policy development, increase dissemination of consumer protection legal documents, enhance operational effectiveness, and expand networks of social organizations participating in consumer protection.

3.3.5.7. Solutions from Businesses

Participate in policy development, improve understanding of consumer protection laws, propose amendments, implement consumer protection standards and policies, emphasize corporate social responsibility, and proactively practice responsible business behavior.

3.3.5.8. Solutions for Consumers

Enhance knowledge of consumer protection policies and laws, improve consumption skills, participate in policy development, comply with relevant laws, and actively protect their rights.

CONCLUSION

Consumer protection holds a vital position and plays a crucial role in the sustainable development of the country. The Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam have consistently placed particular emphasis on consumer protection. Since 1997, Vietnam has promulgated and implemented a series of consumer protection policies. These policies have been institutionalised through the 1999 Ordinance on Consumer Protection, the 2010 Law on Consumer Protection, the 2023 Law on Consumer Protection, relevant sectoral laws (such as the Law on Commerce and the Law on Competition), and a number of guiding legal documents.

Between 1997 and 2024, Vietnam's consumer protection policy has undergone continual reform and improvement, aligning with the market economy framework and international integration commitments. The policy has had a range of positive effects on the protection of consumer rights and interests in Vietnam. However, due to both objective and subjective factors, several limitations remain. These limitations have significantly affected the policy's effectiveness, especially in the context of Vietnam's deepening global economic integration and the rapidly evolving nature of trade practices under the influence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Looking ahead to 2030, with a vision to 2045, both international and domestic contexts are undergoing substantial transformation. These changes will significantly influence the development and improvement of consumer protection policy in Vietnam. Vietnam's further integration into the global economy, coupled with changes in trading methods driven by technological advancement, necessitates a reconsideration of the guiding principles, strategic orientations, and practical solutions for policy improvement.

For these reasons, this dissertation undertakes a comprehensive study on the theoretical foundations, analysis, and evaluation of the current state of consumer protection policy improvement in Vietnam between 1997 and 2024. It proposes viewpoints, orientations, and solutions for improving the policy through to 2030, with a vision to 2045. The dissertation entitled **"Improving Consumer Protection Policy in Vietnam"** is an effort to address these pressing needs.

Consumer protection not only benefits consumers but also contributes to the creation of a healthy business environment for enterprises and entrepreneurs, thereby serving as a driving force for stable economic development. It is now an opportune time for Vietnam to adopt more robust and practical consumer protection policies. In pursuing this objective, the dissertation has achieved the following main results:

First, the dissertation supplements and clarifies the theoretical foundations for policy improvement in general, and consumer protection policy improvement in particular. It identifies core components of policy improvement and establishes criteria for evaluating progress. Moreover, the study reviews international experiences from France, the United States, and South Korea, drawing relevant lessons for application in Vietnam.

Second, it summarises Vietnam's international commitments on consumer protection, systematises and analyses the current policy framework from 1997 to 2024, and evaluates the process of policy improvement based on theoretical criteria and the results of surveys involving consumers, enterprises, and experts. The study identifies five key achievements, five limitations, and the underlying causes of both.

Third, based on forecasts of the domestic and international context affecting policy reform through 2030 and towards 2045, the dissertation proposes five guiding principles, five strategic orientations, and five key solutions or solution groups for policy improvement. A particular emphasis is placed on legal and policy reform, specifying which policy documents should be revised or supplemented and detailing the content of each proposed revision.

Through the findings and recommendations presented, the researcher hopes to contribute to the development of theoretical foundations for consumer protection policy improvement, as well as to the practical process of formulating and implementing such policy in Vietnam.

Given the broad scope of the research, and despite the care taken in conducting the analysis, certain limitations are inevitable due to restricted access to information sources. The researcher sincerely welcomes feedback and comments from respected professors, scholars, experts, and colleagues to further refine and improve this research.

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