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CCPA Penalises Coaching Institute and Software Company for Dark Pattern Practices

Published On: 05-06-2026



The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed penalties on a coaching institute and a software company for engaging in dark pattern practices, which are deceptive digital design techniques used to manipulate consumer choices. The coaching institute was fined ₹5 lakh, while the software company was fined ₹1 lakh. Both entities have been directed to discontinue such unfair practices and ensure compliance with consumer protection norms.?

What are Dark Patterns?

Dark patterns are deceptive user-interface designs that manipulate users into making decisions they may not otherwise choose, such as unwanted purchases, subscriptions, or sharing personal data.

Common Types of Dark Patterns

False Urgency – Creating artificial scarcity or time pressure.

Basket Sneaking – Adding products/services to a cart without consent.

Confirm Shaming – Using guilt-inducing language to influence choices.

Forced Action – Requiring users to perform unrelated actions.

Subscription Trap – Making subscription cancellation difficult.

Interface Interference – Designing interfaces to favor a particular choice.

Bait and Switch – Promising one thing but delivering another.

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Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040
Phone: 044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833

Drip Pricing – Revealing additional charges only at the final stage.

Why is it Important?

Protects consumers from manipulative online practices.

Promotes transparency and fair competition in digital markets.

Strengthens consumer trust in online services and e-commerce platforms.

Demonstrates the government's increasing focus on digital consumer rights.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)

Established under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Came into effect in 2020.

Functions under the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

Headquarters: New Delhi.

Objective: Protect, promote, and enforce consumer rights.

Powers of CCPA

Investigate violations of consumer rights.

Order discontinuation of unfair trade practices.

Direct withdrawal of misleading advertisements.

Impose penalties on manufacturers, advertisers, endorsers, and service providers.

Order recall of unsafe goods and services.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019

Replaced the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Introduced provisions for:

E-commerce regulation

Product liability

Mediation mechanism

Establishment of CCPA

Action against misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices.

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Quick revision notes:

CCPA ? Central Consumer Protection Authority

Established ? 2020

Legal Basis ? Consumer Protection Act, 2019

Penalty in News ? ?5 lakh (coaching institute), ?1 lakh (software company)

Dark Patterns ? Deceptive digital design practices

Regulating Ministry ? Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

CCPA Guidelines on Dark Patterns ? Issued in 2023

13 Dark Patterns identified under the guidelines.