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### **Current State and Prospects of Consumer Policy: An Introductory Essay**

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In recent years German and European consumer policy has taken on a new dynamism. However, both in Germany and the European Union consumer policy remains on the defensive. This situation will only change if consumer policy's current deficits in terms of theoretical input and enforceability can be overcome. Consumer policy needs to establish its own theoretical framework. It can no longer afford to define itself merely as a corrective for undesirable developments in the field of competition policy. The goal must be a preventive consumer policy, one that sets limits on the provider/production-oriented development of markets and makes a positive contribution to sustainable development on both a regional and global level. Such a goal requires a fundamental reform of the instruments of consumer policy and policy-makers' understanding of their role. Consumer research has important contributions to make to such a reform.

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