

Framework for safeguarding consumer interest from fake reviews in e-commerce

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In news– Union government has recently launched the framework for safeguarding and protecting consumer interest from fake and deceptive reviews in e-commerce.

Key highlights of the framework-

- The framework is titled Indian Standard (IS) 19000:2022 'Online Consumer Reviews – Principles and Requirements for their Collection, Moderation and Publication.
- **The standards will be applicable to every online platform which publishes consumer reviews.**
- The standard will **initially be voluntary for compliance** by all e-commerce platform. BIS will also develop a Conformity Assessment Scheme for the standard to assess compliance.
- **The guiding principles of the standard are integrity, accuracy, privacy, security,** transparency, accessibility and responsiveness.
- The standard prescribes **specific responsibilities for the review author and the review administrator.**
- For review author, these include confirming acceptance of terms and conditions, providing contact information and for review administrator, these include safeguarding personal information and training of staff.
- **Once made mandatory, if required, the violation of the standards by any entity may be considered as an unfair trade practice** or violation of consumer rights and a consumer may submit such grievances to the National Consumer Helpline, Consumer Commissions or the CCPA.
- The standard provides for **responsibilities of**

organization including developing a code of practice, and necessary stipulations for terms and conditions like accessibility, criteria, and ensuring content does not contain financial information etc.

- The standard also **provides for methods for verification of review author through email address,** identification by telephone call or SMS, confirming registration by clicking on a link, using captcha system etc. to check traceability and genuineness of the review author.
- **With respect to moderation, the standard provides for both automated and manual moderation** and provides checks for analyzing the review content.
- As regards to publication, the standard includes considerations for the review administrator at the time of publication process and after the publication process. **The accuracy of the review, default display and weightage of ratings are defined in the publication process.**
- The standard is expected to benefit all stakeholders in the e-commerce ecosystem i.e., consumers, e-commerce platforms, sellers etc.
- Taking cognizance of the impact of fake and deceptive reviews and protection of consumer interest in e-commerce, the Department of Consumer Affairs constituted a committee to develop framework on checking fake and deceptive reviews in e-commerce on 10th June, 2022.