

## Centre to develop framework to check fake reviews on E-Commerce websites

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Department of Consumer Affairs holds meeting with stakeholders to discuss issues arising due to fake and deceptive online reviews.

The Centre will develop a framework to keep check over fake reviews on E-Commerce websites. The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) after studying the present mechanism being followed by the E-Commerce entities in India and best practices available globally, will develop these frameworks.

DoCA in association with the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) along with various stakeholders like E-Commerce entities, Consumer Forums, Law Universities, Lawyers, FICCI, CII, Consumer Rights Activists and others in a meeting discussed the magnitude and roadmap ahead for fake reviews on websites.

Since e-commerce involves a virtual shopping experience without any opportunity to physically view or examine the product, consumers heavily rely on reviews posted on e-commerce platforms to see the opinion and experience of users who have already purchased the good or service.

“Traceability by ensuring the authenticity of the reviewer and the associated liability of the platform are the two key issues here. Also e-com players must disclose as to how they choose the “most relevant reviews” for display in a fair and transparent manner,” said Secretary DoCA, Shri Rohit Kumar Singh said.

All stakeholders agreed that the issue deserves to be monitored closely and appropriate framework governing the fake reviews may be developed to address the issue for protection of consumer interest.

Stakeholders from e-commerce companies claimed that they have frameworks in place by which they monitor fake reviews and would be pleased to take part in developing a legal framework on the issue.

Along with Secretary DoCA, Ms Nidhi Khare, Additional Secretary and Mr. Anupam Mishra, Joint Secretary attended the meeting. Ms. Manisha Kapoor, CEO, ASCI highlighted the categories of fake and misleading reviews and their impact on consumer interest. Paid reviews, unverifiable reviews and absence of disclosure in case of incentivised reviews which make it challenging for consumers to recognize genuine reviews were among the issues discussed.