

Government of India
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Department of Consumer Affairs

RAJYA SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. *180

TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.08.2026

FAKE AND MANIPULATED REVIEWS ON E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

180. MS. SWATI MALIWAL

Will the MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has assessed the extent of fake, paid or bot-generated product reviews and manipulation of ratings on e-commerce platforms and if so, the findings thereof;
- (b) whether any audit or verification mechanism exists or is proposed to detect such manipulation on e-commerce platforms;
- (c) whether the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has received complaints or initiated action against platforms or sellers for misleading reviews and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether Government is considering measures such as algorithmic transparency, disclosure of incentivised reviews and stronger penal provisions to safeguard consumer trust and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI PRALHAD JOSHI)

(a) to (d) : A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.*180 FOR 04.08.2026 REGARDING FAKE AND MANIPULATED REVIEWS ON E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS ASKED BY MS. SWATI MALIWAL.

(a) to (d) : The Department of Consumer Affairs has strengthened the consumer protection framework through the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, to effectively address emerging challenges arising from globalization, technological advancements and e-commerce.

The Department of Consumer Affairs notified the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 on 23rd July, 2020 under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, to prevent unfair trade practices and protect consumers in the e-commerce sector. As per the provisions of these rules, every e-commerce entity shall endeavor to become the partner in the convergence process of the National Consumer Helpline and must appoint a grievance officer and prominently display the officer's name, designation, and contact details on its platform. The grievance officer shall acknowledge any consumer complaint within forty-eight hours and redress it within one month from the date of receipt. Consent of a consumer can be recorded only through explicit and affirmative action and not through pre-ticked checkboxes or automatic means. No e-commerce entity shall manipulate the price of goods or services to gain unreasonable profit or impose unjustified prices, nor shall it discriminate between consumers of the same class or make arbitrary classifications that affect consumer rights under the Act.

"Unfair trade practice" [Section 2(47) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019] encompasses deceptive methods such as misrepresenting product standards, falsely advertising old goods as new, claiming unverified sponsorship or benefits, offering misleading warranties, misrepresenting prices, or disparaging competitors goods or services. These provisions ensure accountability, transparency and fairness, safeguarding consumer interests in a dynamic marketplace.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has notified framework on 'Online Consumer Reviews-Principles and Requirements for their Collection, Moderation and Publication' (IS 19000:2022) on 23.11.2022 for safeguarding and protecting consumer interest from fake and deceptive reviews in e-commerce. It lays down the process which demonstrates the commitment of consumer review sites that they value their customers and provide reviews that can be trusted. The standards are voluntary and are applicable to every online platform which publishes consumer reviews. 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. The standard is for benefit of all stakeholders in the e-commerce ecosystem i.e., consumers, e-commerce platforms, sellers etc. It will help user in confidence among consumers to purchase goods online and help them take better purchase decisions.

Review administrators shall not knowingly publish reviews that have been purchased or written by individuals employed for that purpose. If a review about a product or service is proven to be fraudulent, the review administrator shall take timely and appropriate action to remove the same from the site.

On moderation, every review must be assessed against predetermined, publicly available criteria—before or after publication—through automated, manual or combined processes. This includes verifying compliance with terms and conditions and, where appropriate, reviewer identity; treating positive and negative reviews consistently; analysing content to identify fraudulent or misleading submissions and rejecting or removing non-compliant reviews; and maintaining documented procedures with periodic effectiveness checks through sampling and test reviews. Review administrators are prohibited from editing review content.

On publication, reviews must appear in their original, unaltered form, with submission dates, ratings and other relevant details clearly displayed. Overall ratings must be calculated transparently, treating incentivised reviews separately, and published within defined timelines regardless of sentiment. Platforms must allow users and sellers to flag inappropriate or fraudulent reviews, permit seller responses under the same moderation principles, and maintain transparent procedures for review removal and record retention—removing fraudulent reviews promptly while continuously strengthening anti-fraud safeguards. In the event that a review administrator publishes reviews from another review site that complies with the requirement of its terms and conditions, it can clearly distinguish the reviews coming from the other review site.
