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

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2335
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.12.2022

GUIDELINES TO COUNTER FAKE REVIEWS

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2335. DR. SHASHI THAROOR:

Will the Minister of **CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION** उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण राज्य मंत्री be pleased to state:

(a)   whether the Government has issued or is considering to lay down any guidelines to counter fake reviews on e-commerce websites, if so, the details thereof;
(b)   whether online platforms can seek personal data of consumer/individuals to verify the authenticity of the reviews; and
(c)   if so, the details of the personal data that may be requested for in this regard?

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ANSWER

उपभोक्ता मामले, खाद्य और सार्वजनिक वितरण राज्य मंत्री
(श्री अश्विनी कुमार चौबे)

THE MINISTER OF STATE
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

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(a) to (c): The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has notified framework on 'Online Consumer Reviews — Principles and Requirements for their Collection, Moderation and Publication' on 23.11.2022 for safeguarding and protecting consumer interest from fake and deceptive reviews in e-commerce. 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 multiple methods to verify whether the review author is a real person and confirm the identity of the review author. These include –

1)   Verifying the email address by sending one or more emails and awaiting a response;
2)   Verifying the review author's domain name and email address extension in comparison with the online review subject and/or the name of the evaluated product or service;
3)   Sending an email that asks the review author to confirm their registration by clicking on a link;
4)   Verification by a programme that protects websites;
5)   Verification by telephone call or SMS;
6)   Verification of identification by Single Sign-On (SSO);
7)   Verification of identification by geolocation or IP address;
8)   Verification by the review administrator that the review author's email address is valid prior to publishing a first review; and
9)   Verification by using a single user per email address; and
10)   Verification using the captcha system.

The organization is required to develop a written code of practice, communicated and made available to all management and staff, which outlines how the standard and the guiding principles in it will be met and maintained.

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