

GUIDELINES ON CONSUMER EVALUATIONS HAS BEEN PUBLISHED

A. INTRODUCTION

Guideline on Consumer Evaluations ("Guideline") was accepted as a principle decision by the Advertising Board at its meeting dated 12.09.2023 and numbered 337. The purpose of the Guidelines is to provide guidance to advertisers, advertising agencies, media organizations and all persons, institutions and organizations related to advertising regarding the basic principles, information, control process, situations deemed deceptive and obligations regarding consumer evaluations.

This note discusses the principles and provisions adopted by the guidelines.

B. SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITY

- In the Guidelines, consumer evaluations are defined as *"statements, approvals and rating practices indicating all kinds of consumer experiences made by consumers on the internet regarding a purchased good or service or a seller or provider and intermediary service provider"*.
- The provisions of the Guidelines **apply** in the following cases:
 - In consumer evaluations made on the internet regarding the goods or services offered and their ancillary agreements
 - In the evaluations published on complaint platforms whose main activity is to enable the publication of consumer complaints
- The provisions of the Guidelines **do not apply** in the following cases:
 - In the consumer evaluations of natural and legal persons who do not act on behalf of a seller or provider, which are in the nature of providing information regarding the experiences they have gained on their own internet environment
 - In evaluations regarding purchases and applications that are not within the scope of consumer transactions
- Advertisers, advertising agencies and media organizations are individually responsible for compliance with the provisions of these Guidelines.
- Even if the non-compliant advertisement or commercial practice is later corrected, the responsibility for the detected non-compliance does not disappear.

C. PRINCIPLES

- Consumer reviews may relate to the **goods or services purchased, aspects of the seller, provider or intermediary service provider**, or **ancillary contracts** such as delivery, credit and insurance services.
- Written comments, rating practices such as points or stars are also within the scope of consumer evaluations. These can be presented to the consumer together or separately.

- Online evaluations can only be made by purchasers of the relevant goods or services.
- It is possible to make an evaluation on the internet in relation to physically purchased goods.
- All consumer evaluations are published for at least one year.
- The use of health claims in consumer evaluations should not be allowed.
- No services may be obtained from third parties to make evaluations that do not reflect the truth, and no agreement or cooperation may be made for this purpose.

D. INFORMING CONSUMERS

- The terms and conditions for the publication of evaluations ("**terms and conditions**") must not be of such a nature as to prevent evaluations of the goods or services or related ancillary contracts or to allow evaluations only on certain topics. The terms and conditions shall be available in the area where the evaluations are published or on a pop-up screen to which consumers are directed.
- Information should be provided on whether all consumer evaluations are published, how the average evaluation score is calculated and how evaluations are ranked.
- It should indicate that the consumer has actually purchased the good or service with phrases such as "Purchased from seller X" or "Verified user" and consumers should be informed about the process.
- The reason for not publishing the evaluations that are not published due to violation of the terms and conditions is notified to the owner without delay and the right to correct the evaluation is granted.

E. CONTROL PROCESS OF EVALUATIONS

- All evaluations should be subject to the same control process and time limits.
- Evaluations of sellers or providers that have terminated their operations for any reason and the goods or services offered for sale by such persons may be deleted by the intermediary service provider during the control phase.

F. MISLEADING CONSUMER EVALUATIONS

Assessments made in the following cases are considered misleading consumer evaluations and will be removed immediately:

- If the likes or similar expressions made to the posts shared on the social media account of the seller or provider are made in return for a benefit

- Evaluations made about a different seller or provider than the seller or provider from which the purchase was made
- Evaluations of a good or service different from the one purchased
- Actions to increase the visibility of positive consumer evaluations or change the objective ranking results of evaluations
- Actions to prevent the publication of negative evaluations
- Actions to misleadingly increase the visibility of businesses through manipulation of relevant data
- Directing people who do not purchase goods or services to make evaluations
- Engaging in practices that may manipulate consumer evaluations, such as providing consumers with pre-filled positive evaluation templates, communicating with consumers during the control process to encourage consumers to change their evaluations, providing gift vouchers/discounts to encourage positive evaluations