

Protecting Consumers in the Digital Age: A Sri Lankan Perspective

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Consumers today tend to engage in commercial transactions using electronic medium. The rapid increase of online transactions demonstrates that it is advantageous than paper based commerce. Consumer Affairs Authority Act No.09 of 2003 (CAA Act) mainly deals with consumer protection in Sri Lanka. Consumers have an unequal bargaining power in both paper based transactions as well as e commerce transactions. Hence, it is essential to build up the necessary legal framework to provide adequate protection for consumers. This paper explores the adequacy of the provisions of the Consumer Affairs Authority Act to provide protection for e consumers. Further, this paper analyzes current trends and challenges in e commerce which e consumers face, having the objective of identifying where e- consumers need adequate protection in Sri Lanka. To achieve the said objective, provisions of the Electronic Transaction Act No. 19 of 2006 in Sri Lanka as well as international standards and best practices around the world were explored. Sri Lankan CAA Act does not have adequate provisions to deal with online transactions. Further lack of uniformity and uncertainty in prevailing legal framework are some of the other problems which Sri Lankan e consumers face, after engaging in online transactions. Therefore, to address the above challenges, ICT-related legislation in Sri Lanka should be developed incorporating international standards and best practices followed in other advanced jurisdictions.

Keywords: Consumer protection, online transaction, e commerce