



Building a Reliable Online Marketplace in Singapore

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SYNOPSIS

As Singapore's online retail market continues to grow, shoppers still encounter issues such as counterfeit products, fake "official" stores, and misleading promotions. With a comprehensive legal framework in place, building a safer and more trustworthy online shopping environment will require enhanced coordination among government authorities, retail platforms, and consumers.

COMMENTARY

In June 2026, police arrested [a 41-year-old woman](#) after seizing more than 700 suspected counterfeit luxury goods, allegedly sold on TikTok, and valued at over S\$34,000 (US\$26,180). As online shopping becomes more popular, cases like this remind us of the challenges that it brings.

Online shopping has become part of everyday life in Singapore. With just a few mouse clicks, consumers can buy groceries, electronics, personal care products, and many other everyday items. According to a [survey](#) published in March 2025, consumers in Singapore make an average of 7.9 online purchases each month, and the country's online retail market is expected to grow by 11 per cent from 2025 to 2029.

Common Issues in Singapore's Online Marketplace

The rapid expansion of online marketplaces has also facilitated the adoption of deceptive tactics. Consumers continue to encounter issues such as counterfeit products, fake "official" stores, and deceptive promotional features.

Although appealing to consumers with their attractive prices, counterfeit products can lead to significant revenue loss for legitimate brands and may pose serious health and safety risks to consumers. For example, [counterfeit cosmetics](#) and [health products](#) from illegal sources may be manufactured to poor standards and may even contain undeclared or illegal ingredients, causing irritation, poisoning or even death. [Counterfeit electronics](#) can pose cybersecurity risks and lead to system failures and may also pose hazards, such as fire and electric shock.

[Fake "official" stores](#) are also commonly found on online retail platforms. To mislead consumers, fraudsters misuse the logos or images of established companies or shopping malls, or even label their shops as "Official Store".

Moreover, online retailers were found to use [deceptive design features](#), such as fake visitor counts and fabricated countdown timers, to create a sense of urgency and pressure consumers into making hasty purchases without adequate consideration.

Singapore's Existing Legal and Regulatory Framework

Singapore has a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework to safeguard e-commerce. For example, the [Sale of Goods Act 1979](#) governs sales by clearly setting out the rights and obligations of buyers and sellers.

The [Trade Marks Act 1998](#) protects trademark owners' rights by providing legal remedies and imposing criminal penalties for infringement, counterfeiting, and the sale of counterfeit goods.

Under the [Consumer Protection \(Fair Trading\) Act 2003](#), consumers are protected from unfair business practices and have the right to seek remedies when goods or services do not match what was promised.

Furthermore, the [Electronic Transactions Act 2010](#) recognises electronic contracts and digital signatures as legally valid, thereby providing greater certainty for online transactions.

In addition to legislation, Singapore has introduced an industry standard. [Technical Reference 76](#) (TR 76), first published in 2020, sets out best-practice guidelines for e-commerce transactions. It was updated in 2022 to include anti-scam measures for online retailers and marketplaces, and further enhanced in 2025 to address emerging challenges, strengthen consumer trust, and support the continued growth of Singapore's e-commerce sector.

From Regulation to Implementation

Enforcement actions have been taken against the online sale of counterfeit products and deceptive e-commerce practices. For example, in 2015, authorities arrested [three men](#) for allegedly importing counterfeit electronics worth about S\$11 million (US\$8.47 million) and seized more than 243,000 suspected trademark-infringing items.

More recently, police carried out [several operations](#) against online sellers of counterfeit luxury goods. In 2025, the Health Sciences Authority (HAS) seized [more than 1.06 million](#) illegal health products and removed 2,358 online listings.

[Action](#) has also been taken against online retailers using deceptive practices to mislead consumers, including requirements to provide formal undertakings to stop such practices and to remove or discontinue misleading website features.

These enforcement actions demonstrate the authorities' ongoing countermeasures, but they also show that the problems persist. A combined effort from the government, online platforms, and consumers is needed to address these issues.

Regulatory enforcement remains essential and can be strengthened through regular compliance checks of platforms, prompt investigation of complaints, and swift action against offenders.

Instead of relying mainly on consumers or brand owners to report suspicious listings, platforms should proactively detect potential counterfeits using [AI-powered tools](#) and by conducting regular checks on high-risk products and sellers. Early detection and removal of suspicious listings can prevent harm to consumers.

Merchant verification should be made mandatory. Before allowing stores to register under brands or shopping malls, platforms should verify the merchant's identity and licensing. Stores falsely claiming to be official or authorised should be suspended promptly.

Consumers can also play an important role. Before making a purchase, they should verify the seller's credentials, read reviews critically, and question prices that seem too good to be true. Timely reporting of suspicious listings also helps platforms and regulators identify cases of misconduct.

Given the large volume of goods sold online, including cross-border transactions, it is unrealistic to prevent every instance of fraud. A more achievable goal is to ensure that every stakeholder plays its part in minimising risks and harms, and in maintaining consumers' confidence in Singapore's digital marketplace.

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