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Information Asymmetry Due to Digital Review Manipulation in E-Commerce: A Reconstruction of Consumer Protection Law Based on *Sadd al-Dharā'i*

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Abstract:
The increasing reliance on digital reviews in e-commerce has turned consumer reviews into one of the primary sources of information for purchasing decisions. Digital reviews are expected to reduce information asymmetry by providing consumers with knowledge regarding product quality and seller credibility. However, the rise of review manipulation practices, including fictitious transactions, paid reviews, and automated accounts, has shifted the function of reviews from reducing information asymmetry to reproducing and expanding it. Such practices create distorted information environments in which consumers encounter not only limited information but also misleading information generated through manipulated digital reputation systems This study aims to analyze information asymmetry arising from digital review manipulation, evaluate Indonesia's consumer protection legal framework based on Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory, and formulate a preventive legal reconstruction based on the principle of sadd al-dharā'i. This study employs normative juridical methods using statutory, conceptual, and comparative approaches. The findings reveal that review manipulation generates three forms of information distortion, namely hidden information, misleading information, and algorithmic amplification, which collectively affect consumer rationality in making transaction decisions. Furthermore, Indonesia's positive legal framework remains ineffective due to weaknesses in legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture in addressing digital review manipulation. Based on the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i*, this study proposes legal reconstruction through mandatory review verification (*verified purchase*), transparency of recommendation systems, periodic algorithmic audits, explicit prohibition of digital review manipulation, and strengthening of institutional supervision. These measures are intended to protect consumers' rational decision-making (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and economic interests (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) while preventing the reproduction of information asymmetry in digital commerce.

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Introduction

Digital commerce has become increasingly important to Indonesia's economy, supported by expanding internet access and the growing use of online platforms. Bank Indonesia projected that the value of e-commerce transactions would increase from IDR 454 trillion in 2023 to IDR 487 trillion in 2024, while the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) estimated that internet penetration reached 79.5% in 2024 (Bank Indonesia, 2023; APJII, 2024). In digital commerce, e-commerce platforms use algorithmic recommendation systems to help consumers find products among the various options available. These systems also play a role in determining which products are displayed to consumers and their visibility on the platform. Yi et al. found that recommendation systems broadened the range of products consumers considered but reduced the diversity of products ultimately selected (Sangyoon Yi et al., 2022). Similarly, Chen and Tsai (2024) found that products sold directly by Amazon received more "Frequently Bought Together" recommendations than products sold by third-party sellers, indicating that a platform's commercial incentives can influence product visibility through recommendation systems (Nan Chen & Hsin-Tien Tsai, 2024). Together, these findings indicate that recommendation systems can shape both the range of products consumers consider and the visibility of products presented to them, potentially influencing their final purchasing choices in digital commerce.

This issue becomes increasingly significant when sellers manipulate reviews that are subsequently processed by recommendation systems to determine which products are displayed to consumers. In this context, fake reviews can affect product visibility and shape consumer perceptions in ways that do not reflect the actual quality of the products. He et al. found that the purchase of fake reviews on Amazon was associated with short-term increases in product ratings and review volumes. Their analysis also indicated that rating manipulation could affect sales (Sherry He et al., 2022). Adamopoulos further found that the effects of fake reviews on recommendation systems could persist even after the reviews had been detected and removed (Panagiotis (Panos) Adamopoulos, 2024). In addition to affecting product visibility and consumer perceptions, review manipulation can also exacerbate information asymmetry between business actors and consumers. Business actors possess information about the actual quality of their products, whereas consumers cannot easily verify that information. As a result, consumers risk making purchasing decisions based on information that does not reflect the actual quality of the products (Besong et al., 2022; Frida Nurrahma Masturi et al., 2023). Thus, review manipulation is not merely an individual act of deception but also has the potential to create broader information distortion in e-commerce.

Normatively, Indonesian law has established a legal basis for consumer protection through Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection, Law Number 1 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, and Minister of Trade Regulation Number 31 of 2023 concerning Business Licensing, Advertising, Guidance, and Supervision of Business Actors in Electronic Commerce. However, the adequacy of these provisions in addressing the specific mechanisms of digital review manipulation requires further examination. In particular, it is necessary to examine the extent to which existing regulations establish clear obligations regarding review authenticity verification, recommendation system transparency, and algorithmic oversight. Therefore, this study examines consumer protection not only in terms of prohibitions against misleading conduct but also in terms of preventive mechanisms to limit the potential for information distortion before it causes harm to consumers.

From the perspective of Islamic economic law, digital review manipulation resembles the practices of tadlīs, which involves deception in transactions, and najsh, which involves artificially shaping perceptions of demand or a product's value. However, this study does not focus on analyzing these two concepts. Instead, it uses the principle of sadd al-dharā'i and the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as normative foundations for examining preventive measures against digital review manipulation. The perspective of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, particularly the protection of reason (ḥifẓ al-'aql) and property (ḥifẓ al-māl), is relevant to explaining the importance of preserving consumers' ability to evaluate information accurately and protecting them from potential financial losses resulting from misleading information. Meanwhile, the principle of sadd al-dharā'i is used to examine measures to restrict means that may lead to harm, including mechanisms through which review manipulation can distort information and influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

Previous Indonesian studies have examined consumer information rights and the implementation of consumer protection law in digital transactions. Anggraini and Hartantien (2024) identified shortcomings in the provision of accurate, clear, and honest information by business actors (Rizkita Dinar Anggraini, 2024). Similarly, Muntazhira et al. (2025) highlighted weaknesses in law enforcement and consumer awareness despite the existence of relevant legal regulations (Radifa Nazhma Muntazhira, Shopia Al-Khairina Fitri, 2024). Although these studies demonstrate continuing challenges in digital consumer protection, they do not specifically examine how manipulated reviews exploit algorithmic ranking and recommendation mechanisms to intensify information asymmetry or how preventive legal reconstruction could address this problem through *sadd al-dharā'i*.

International research has approached fake online reviews from technological, platform governance, and legal perspectives. Liu et al. examined factors associated with multimodal fake review generation on e-commerce platforms, while Salminen et al. investigated linguistic characteristics and machine learning approaches for detecting deceptive reviews (Liu et al., 2024; Salminen et al., 2025). Wang et al. examined platform governance using data on manipulated Amazon reviews and found that measures addressing manipulation intensity and duration could reduce the likelihood of subsequent manipulation (Wang et al., 2024). From a legal perspective, Martínez Otero compared the regulation of fake reviews in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, including their enforcement mechanisms and consumer protection approaches (Otero, 2021). Nevertheless, these studies do not fully integrate the mechanisms of algorithmic review manipulation, information asymmetry, and the adequacy of Indonesia's consumer protection framework within a preventive Islamic legal approach. This study addresses that gap by combining doctrinal legal analysis, comparative regulatory perspectives, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* to develop a preventive framework for digital consumer protection.

Based on this research gap, the study aims to:

1. Analyze the forms of information asymmetry arising from review manipulation practices in *e-commerce*.
2. Evaluate the adequacy of existing Indonesian legal instruments in addressing digital review manipulation.
3. Formulate a preventive reconstruction of consumer protection law based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i*.

This study contributes theoretically to Islamic economic law and digital consumer protection scholarship by integrating *sadd al-dharā'i* with the analysis of information asymmetry arising from algorithmic review manipulation. Rather than focusing exclusively on the prohibition and detection of fraudulent reviews, it emphasizes preventive legal measures addressing the mechanisms through which manipulated reviews distort product visibility and consumer decision-making. Practically, the findings may inform the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi), and e-commerce platform providers in developing consumer protection measures concerning review authenticity verification, recommendation-system transparency, and preventive oversight. These measures are intended to support the protection of consumers' reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) while strengthening fairness and trust in digital commerce.

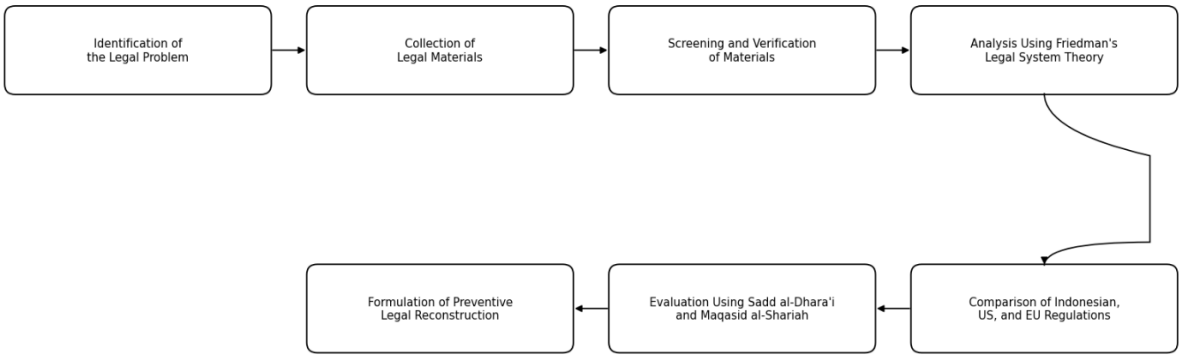
Methodology

This study employs doctrinal legal research using statutory, conceptual, and comparative approaches. The statutory approach examines Indonesian legal instruments relevant to consumer protection and electronic commerce, including Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection, Law Number 1 of 2024 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, and Minister of Trade Regulation Number 31 of 2023 concerning Trade Through Electronic Systems. The conceptual approach applies information asymmetry theory, Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and *sadd al-dharā'i*. The comparative approach examines relevant United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulations and European Union directives, focusing on prohibitions against fake reviews, review verification, platform responsibilities, and enforcement mechanisms.

Primary legal materials consist of relevant legislation and official regulatory instruments selected according to their legal authority and relevance to digital consumer protection and review manipulation. Secondary materials include books, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic publications, and regulatory reports addressing information asymmetry, review manipulation, consumer protection, and Islamic legal principles. Materials are collected through library research and screened for relevance, source authority, and verifiable publication information. Legal provisions are checked against official sources, while secondary publications and regulatory reports are assessed based on their original publications, institutional authorship, publication dates, and supporting evidence. Sources that are irrelevant or whose essential information cannot be verified are excluded.

The materials are analyzed qualitatively using a prescriptive approach (Abdussamad, 2018). First, relevant legal provisions and legal issues arising from digital review manipulation are identified. Second, Indonesia's legal framework is evaluated using Friedman's three components: legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture. Third, the findings are compared with relevant FTC regulations and European Union directives to identify regulatory differences and gaps. An analytical matrix organizes the findings according to Friedman's framework and evaluates their implications through *sadd al-dharā'i* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the protection of reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). The findings are then synthesized to formulate a preventive legal reconstruction model for strengthening consumer protection against digital review manipulation.

Figure 1. Research Flowchart.



Results and Discussion

Anatomy of Information Asymmetry due to Review Manipulation Practices on E-Commerce

Akerlof's information asymmetry theory explains how unequal access to product-quality information can undermine market efficiency. In "The Market for 'Lemons'" (1970), he shows that when buyers cannot distinguish high- from low-quality used cars, they may refuse to pay prices reflecting actual quality, discouraging high-quality sellers and producing adverse selection (Akerlof, 1970). In e-commerce, consumers often cannot inspect products directly and therefore rely on reviews and ratings. When sellers manipulate these signals, reviews may no longer reflect actual product quality, increasing information gaps and misleading consumers. Akerlof's theory provides the economic basis for this study, while Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory supports the evaluation of Indonesia's legal substance, institutional structure, and legal culture.

Fake-review manipulation may involve purchased positive reviews, inauthentic reviews, or fictitious accounts that artificially improve product reputations (Yuanyuan Wu et al., 2020). On Amazon, purchasing fake reviews has been associated with short-term increases in ratings and review volumes, while rating manipulation may affect sales (He et al., 2022). Experimental research also indicates that fake reviews can influence purchase intentions, although the effects vary by product type, manipulation level, and brand awareness (Yang Song et al., 2023). Because consumers rely on reviews to assess products, manipulated signals can misrepresent product quality and intensify information asymmetry. When these signals influence product rankings or recommendation systems, their effects may extend beyond individual reviews to the wider distribution of product information across a platform.

This study identifies three interconnected dimensions of information distortion caused by review manipulation. First, hidden information arises when sellers know the actual quality of their products but consumers cannot independently verify it before purchase. Second, misleading information occurs when manipulated reviews and ratings create a false impression of product quality. Third, algorithmic amplification may occur when manipulated reviews influence rankings or recommendations, increasing the visibility of products with artificially enhanced reputations. Evidence shows that fake reviews can raise ratings and affect sales (He et al., 2022), while fraudulent reviews may continue to affect recommendation systems even after detection and removal (Adamopoulos, 2024). Review manipulation can therefore create and amplify misleading signals, weakening consumers' ability to make informed decisions.

Tabel 1. The Flow of Information Asymmetry Formed Due to Review Manipulation



Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

The economic implications of fake reviews have also been highlighted internationally. A 2021 World Economic Forum article estimated that approximately 4% of online reviews were fake and influenced around US$152 billion in global online spending (Wood, 2021). These figures represent estimates of spending influenced by fake reviews rather than direct financial losses. The OECD similarly notes that fake and misleading reviews can impair consumers' ability to evaluate products, weakening the role of online reviews in reducing information asymmetry in digital markets (OECD, 2019). When consumers cannot distinguish reliable information from manipulated signals, purchasing decisions may be based on inaccurate assessments of product quality, potentially reducing market efficiency and consumer welfare.

Evidence from Indonesia likewise demonstrates the importance of online reviews in purchasing decisions. Pramudita and Agustia's (2024) study of 325

Indonesian e-commerce users found that reviews and ratings significantly influenced purchase intentions (Pramudita, 2024). Puspitasari and Widyasari (2023) similarly found that online reviews significantly affected purchase decisions among TikTok Shop users in Rembang Regency (Puspitasari & Widyasari, 2023). These findings indicate that reviews are important sources of information for reducing consumer uncertainty. Consequently, manipulation of these sources may undermine their informational function and intensify information asymmetry.

Digital literacy and marketplace data integrity also shape this risk in Indonesia. The 2022 Indonesian Digital Literacy Index recorded a national score of 3.54 out of 5, with digital safety receiving the lowest score, 3.12. (Komdigi, 2024) Although these figures do not directly measure consumers' ability to identify fake reviews, they indicate that digital safety remains an area for improvement. Cube Asia estimated that 5–10% of online sales in Indonesia may involve fake sales, including transactions that do not represent genuine purchases by end consumers (Kompas.id, 2025). Artificial orders followed by positive reviews can create misleading signals of product popularity and seller reputation. When consumers cannot verify these signals, their purchasing decisions and the reliability of marketplace information may be undermined.

Online reputation systems help consumers assess products through feedback from previous buyers, but their reliability depends on the authenticity of submitted information (Chrysanthos Dellarocas, 2003). Germany's Federal Cartel Office examined more than 60 major online platforms across 16 sectors and found that fake reviews could be purchased from specialized providers, generated by bots, or exchanged for free products and other incentives (Bundeskartellamt, 2020). The inquiry also found that many platforms relied on word filters or user complaints after publication, while fewer verified reviews before publication or used advanced detection methods. Although these findings cannot automatically be generalized to every market, they illustrate how weak monitoring can undermine online reputation systems and raise broader questions about platform responsibility and public oversight.

Overall, review manipulation can transform online reviews from signals of product quality into sources of misleading information that reinforce information asymmetry. In Akerlof's terms, consumers may struggle to distinguish products according to their actual quality, potentially reducing market efficiency and consumer confidence. The issue therefore extends beyond individual business misconduct to consumer protection and market fairness. The following section evaluates whether

Indonesia's legal system can respond effectively, using Friedman's framework of legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture.

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Positive Laws on Review Manipulation Practices in E-Commerce

The effectiveness of digital consumer protection depends not only on the existence of legal rules but also on their implementation and ability to address actual problems. Akerlof's information asymmetry theory explains how manipulated reviews distort information used by consumers, while Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory provides a framework for evaluating the legal system's response through three interrelated components: legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture (Istianah Zainal Asyiqin, M. Fabian Akbar, 2025). Legal substance concerns the adequacy of applicable rules, legal structure concerns enforcement institutions and their capacity, and legal culture concerns the attitudes and behavior of legal actors and society. These components provide a basis for assessing Indonesia's consumer protection framework and identifying the factors that may hinder effective responses to review manipulation.

Indonesia has institutional foundations for supervising digital commerce. The Ministry of Trade, through the Directorate General of Consumer Protection and Orderly Commerce, is responsible for consumer protection and trade supervision, while the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi) supervises electronic system operators under the applicable regulatory framework (Peraturan Menteri Komunikasi Dan Informatika Nomor 5 Tahun 2020, 2020). Minister of Trade Regulation Number 31 of 2023 also provides an updated framework for electronic commerce, including supervision and administrative sanctions (INDONESIA, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these institutional arrangements depends on whether their mandates, coordination mechanisms, and supervisory instruments adequately address review authenticity and algorithmic manipulation.

Enforcement also faces technical challenges because identifying deceptive reviews may require analyzing review volume, posting frequency, behavioral patterns, and coordinated accounts (Naveen Kumar et al., 2018). Such investigations may require specialized analytical capabilities and access to relevant platform data. Although the Consumer Dispute Resolution Agency (BPSK) has functions in consumer dispute resolution and protection, individual dispute-handling procedures differ from continuous platform-wide monitoring and technical algorithmic audits. Government Regulation Number 71 of 2019 and Minister of Trade Regulation Number 31 of 2023 provide a broader supervisory framework, but the provisions examined in this study do not establish a dedicated mechanism specifically requiring

independent algorithmic audits to detect manipulated reviews and assess their effects on product rankings. The institutional challenge therefore concerns the specificity of supervisory mandates, technical capacity, access to digital evidence, and coordination among relevant authorities rather than the complete absence of legal authority (Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 71 Tahun 2019, 2019).

Indonesia's existing regulations provide a legal basis for addressing misleading commercial information. Article 4(c) of Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection (UUPK) guarantees consumers the right to correct, clear, and honest information, while Article 9(1) prohibits certain misleading commercial representations (Republik Indonesia, 1999). Article 28(1) of Law Number 1 of 2024 concerning amendments to the Electronic Information and Transactions Law addresses the intentional distribution or transmission of false announcements or misleading information that causes material consumer loss in electronic transactions (Republik Indonesia, 2024). Nevertheless, applying these provisions to manipulated reviews requires examining the conduct, the responsibility of the actors involved, and the applicable elements of each legal provision. In particular, the material-loss requirement under Article 28(1) may complicate its application when the effects of manipulation primarily concern distorted product reputation or consumer perceptions and material loss cannot readily be established

Civil liability provides another potential avenue for consumer redress. Article 1365 of the Indonesian Civil Code concerning unlawful acts and Article 19 of the UUPK provide legal bases relevant to compensation claims. However, consumers may encounter practical barriers when the costs, time, and evidentiary complexity of litigation are disproportionate to their losses. In the administrative sphere, Minister of Trade Regulation Number 31 of 2023 provided a framework for electronic commerce supervision and administrative sanctions during its period of validity. The central question is whether the provisions examined establish sufficiently clear and enforceable requirements concerning review authenticity, platform accountability, and preventive measures against digital reputation manipulation. Thus, the regulatory issue lies not in the complete absence of applicable rules, but in the adequacy and specificity of existing mechanisms for addressing review manipulation.

The effectiveness of consumer protection also depends on business compliance, public legal awareness, and attitudes toward enforcement. Research identifies deceptive online reviews as a form of deviant online behavior and indicates that commercial incentives, including improving product reputation and influencing consumer decisions, can encourage review manipulation (Lin Li et al., 2020;

Yuanyuan Wu et al., 2020). These findings suggest that competitive pressures may create incentives for deceptive practices when compliance is weak. However, international findings alone do not establish that fake reviews have become normalized among Indonesian e-commerce sellers. The relevant issue is whether commercial incentives and prevailing business practices support or undermine compliance with consumer protection obligations.

Consumers' ability to assess review authenticity also affects the effectiveness of protection mechanisms. Harrison-Walker and Jiang found that consumers use multiple cues to assess potentially fake reviews and that doubts about authenticity can influence their evaluations of reviewers, brands, and websites (L. Jean Harrison-Walker, 2023). However, these findings do not directly establish whether Indonesian consumers report suspected manipulation to enforcement authorities. Consumers may face difficulties verifying reviews, identifying responsible parties, and determining appropriate complaint procedures. The extent to which digital literacy, legal awareness, and public confidence influence reporting in Indonesia therefore requires further empirical evidence. Overall, the legal culture dimension highlights the importance of promoting responsible business practices and strengthening consumer awareness alongside formal legal enforcement.

Tabel 2. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Consumer Protection Laws



Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

The limitations identified above become clearer when compared with regulatory developments in the United States and the European Union. In the United States, Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act provides a basis for addressing unfair or deceptive commercial practices. In the Sunday Riley Modern Skincare case, the

Federal Trade Commission alleged that the company and its CEO misled consumers through fake product reviews posted by employees without disclosing their affiliations. The case resulted in a final consent order in 2020. In addition, the FTC's Rule on the Use of Consumer Reviews and Testimonials, effective October 21, 2024, prohibits specified practices involving fake reviews, certain undisclosed insider reviews, review suppression, and the purchase or sale of fake reviews and testimonials. The rule also provides for civil penalties for knowing violations, although it does not impose a general duty on all businesses hosting consumer reviews to investigate every review's authenticity (Commission, 2019).

In the European Union, Directive (EU) 2019/2161 amended the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive to prohibit practices including submitting or commissioning fake reviews and manipulating reviews or endorsements to promote products. It also requires traders providing access to consumer reviews to inform consumers whether and how they verify that published reviews originate from people who have actually used or purchased the products (Union, 2019). These approaches combine prohibitions on deceptive practices with specific information obligations. The United States emphasizes enforcement through general consumer protection provisions and specific rules, while the European Union explicitly addresses disclosures concerning review verification. Neither framework, however, should be interpreted as automatically requiring independent algorithmic audits in every case.

Compared with these jurisdictions, Indonesia has general legal grounds for addressing misleading commercial information and supervising electronic commerce, but the adequacy of its provisions concerning review authenticity, verification disclosures, and platform accountability requires further examination. Under Friedman's framework, the challenge extends beyond legal substance to institutional capacity, enforcement coordination, business compliance, and consumer awareness. The comparative analysis therefore suggests that Indonesia could strengthen its framework through clearer rules addressing review manipulation, more effective institutional coordination, and specific obligations concerning review verification and platform accountability. These measures should be designed in accordance with Indonesia's existing legal framework and institutional capacities.

The analysis of legal substance, legal structure, and legal culture indicates that Indonesia's consumer protection framework faces challenges in addressing the specific mechanisms of digital review manipulation. Existing regulations provide a basis for responding to misleading commercial information, but their effectiveness depends on the clarity of applicable obligations, the capacity of institutions to examine digital evidence, and the willingness of businesses and consumers to support lawful

practices. These challenges may allow manipulated reviews to continue distorting consumer information and increasing the risk of uninformed purchasing decisions. Consumer protection should therefore complement enforcement after violations occur with preventive measures addressing the mechanisms that enable information distortion. In this context, *sadd al-dharā'i* provides a normative basis for developing preventive legal protection within *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the protection of reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*).

Reconstruction of Digital Consumer Protection Law Based on Sadd Al Dhara'i in the Framework of Sharia Maqashid

The preceding evaluation based on Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory indicates that Indonesia's legal framework faces challenges in addressing digital review manipulation, particularly in regulatory adequacy, institutional oversight, and legal culture. These findings support the need for a preventive approach to address the mechanisms that enable misleading information before consumer harm occurs. In this context, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* provides a normative foundation for protecting reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), while *sadd al-dharā'i* offers a preventive principle for restricting means that may lead to harm (Anatasya, 2025).

The protection of reason and property is interconnected because reliable information supports rational purchasing decisions and reduces the risk of financial loss (Sanusi, 2025; Inayati et al., 2025). Accordingly, *sadd al-dharā'i* provides a basis for preventing information manipulation by closing opportunities for deceptive practices rather than relying exclusively on sanctions after harm occurs (Ermi Suryani Harahap, 2022; Taufiq, 2025). This approach does not require prohibiting digital reviews or recommendation systems altogether, but instead supports proportionate safeguards against their misuse.

The proposed reconstruction integrates Friedman's three legal system components through clearer regulatory requirements, stronger institutional supervision, and greater business accountability. In the context of review manipulation, these measures address inauthentic accounts, manipulated ratings and rankings, insufficient algorithmic oversight, unclear legal obligations, and inadequate coordination among supervisory institutions.

First, mandatory review authenticity verification. E-commerce platforms should distinguish reviews linked to verifiable completed transactions through a *verified purchase* label. Platforms should disclose the verification criteria, maintain auditable transaction records, detect suspicious review patterns, and provide accessible reporting channels. Because verified purchase status does not guarantee that a review

is truthful, this mechanism should operate alongside additional safeguards. Under *sadd al-dharā'i*, verification reduces opportunities to create artificial product reputations through fictitious transactions and inauthentic accounts.

Second, transparency in product ranking and recommendation systems. Platforms should provide clear explanations of the principal factors influencing product visibility, including consumer ratings, review volume, and relevant engagement indicators. They should also disclose sponsored placements or commercial relationships that affect rankings, where applicable. Consumers need accessible explanations rather than unrestricted access to source code or confidential algorithmic details, while authorized regulators should be able to obtain relevant technical information for investigations. These measures aim to reduce information asymmetry and limit opportunities to conceal artificially enhanced product reputations.

Third, periodic independent algorithmic audits. A clear regulatory framework should establish qualified and independent auditors, conflict-of-interest safeguards, audit frequency, and conditions triggering additional examinations. Audits should assess whether manipulated ratings, review volumes, or engagement indicators disproportionately influence product rankings and recommendations. Platforms should provide relevant information to authorized auditors, and findings should be reported to the competent supervisory authority with appropriate protection for personal data and legitimate trade secrets. Where significant weaknesses or violations are identified, platforms should implement corrective measures within specified periods, with noncompliance addressed under the applicable legal framework. This mechanism would strengthen accountability by identifying technical vulnerabilities that enable review manipulation.

Fourth, explicit legal prohibitions against digital review manipulation. The UUPK and the ITE Law provide general legal grounds for addressing misleading information, but the specific legal treatment of deliberate review manipulation requires further examination. The proposed reconstruction should clarify prohibited conduct, including the deliberate creation or commissioning of fake reviews, the use of fictitious accounts to manipulate ratings, and the artificial enhancement of product reputation. Clearer provisions should also identify relevant forms of responsibility and applicable enforcement mechanisms, subject to the legal elements and authority established by the relevant legislation. This approach would improve legal certainty and support more consistent enforcement.

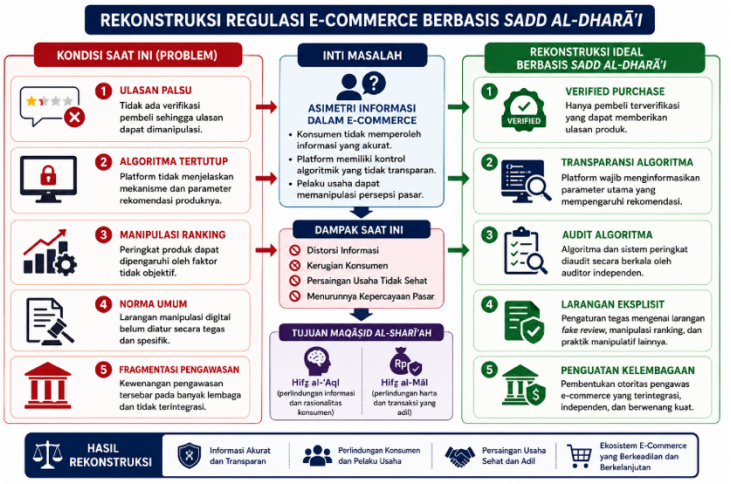
Fifth, stronger institutional coordination. The Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi), and law enforcement authorities

should coordinate according to their respective legal mandates. A formal framework should establish procedures for receiving complaints, referring suspected violations, exchanging relevant information under applicable safeguards, coordinating investigations, and following up on findings. Strengthening existing coordination should be prioritized before establishing a new supervisory institution. A specialized unit or expanded audit authority may be considered where a demonstrated regulatory need, adequate resources, and a clear legal basis justify it.

Implementation should proceed through a phased regulatory approach. First, the competent authorities should evaluate existing rules and identify gaps concerning review verification, algorithmic transparency, audits, and platform accountability. Second, specific requirements should be developed through appropriate implementing regulations where existing delegated authority permits. Where additional obligations cannot be established under current authority, amendments to the UUPK or other appropriate legislative instruments should be considered. Consultation with consumer organizations, platforms, academics, and regulators should assess technical feasibility, compliance costs, and consumer protection implications. This approach would align the proposed reforms with Indonesia's legal hierarchy and institutional capacity.

The five pillars collectively translate *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* into preventive consumer protection measures. Verification and transparency support the protection of reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) by improving the reliability of information used in purchasing decisions, while all five measures contribute to protecting property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) by reducing the risk of financial loss arising from deceptive practices. Through *sadd al-dharā'i*, the proposed framework seeks to restrict mechanisms that facilitate information distortion before consumer harm occurs, while preserving the legitimate functions of digital commerce.

Tabel 3. Reconstruction of Digital Consumer Protection Law Based on Sadd al-Dharā'i



Source: Processed by the Author (2026)

The proposed model complements existing enforcement mechanisms with preventive safeguards addressing the formation and distribution of misleading information. Its contribution lies in integrating the preventive principle of *sadd al-dharā'i* with legal substance, institutional supervision, and business accountability to strengthen consumer protection in digital commerce.

Conclusion

This study concludes that digital review manipulation can transform online reviews from instruments for reducing information asymmetry into mechanisms that distort consumer perceptions and undermine informed purchasing decisions. An analysis based on Lawrence M. Friedman's legal system theory indicates that Indonesia's consumer protection framework faces challenges in addressing these practices, particularly in the specificity of legal provisions, the capacity and coordination of supervisory institutions, and the development of a legal culture that supports responsible business conduct and consumer awareness. To address these challenges, this study proposes a preventive legal reconstruction based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the protection of reason (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), through the principle of *sadd al-dharā'i*. The proposed reconstruction comprises five measures: mandatory verification of review authenticity through verified-purchase mechanisms, transparency regarding the principal factors influencing product rankings and recommendations, periodic independent algorithmic audits, explicit legal provisions prohibiting deliberate review manipulation, and strengthened institutional coordination and supervision of digital commerce. These measures aim

to prevent information distortion before it results in consumer harm while strengthening platform accountability and preserving legitimate digital commerce activities. The contribution of this study lies in integrating preventive Islamic legal principles with the regulatory and institutional dimensions of digital consumer protection. Future research should empirically examine the feasibility and effectiveness of these measures and compare Indonesia's regulatory framework with those of the United States and the European Union to identify regulatory practices that can be adapted to Indonesia's legal and institutional context.

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