

## LEGAL PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS IN E-COMMERCE TRANSACTIONS: A REVIEW OF CIVIL LAW IN THE DIGITAL ERA

**Sanusi**

Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal

E-mail: [sanusi@upstegal.ac.id](mailto:sanusi@upstegal.ac.id)

### *Abstract*

*In an era of rapid globalization and digitalization, e-commerce has emerged as a cornerstone of the global economy. In Indonesia, e-commerce has experienced tremendous growth. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information, the value of e-commerce transactions in Indonesia reached Rp 266.3 trillion in 2020 and is expected to continue rising with increased internet and smartphone penetration. Despite the economic benefits, this development has brought forth numerous legal issues that need to be addressed. Consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions is a crucial issue, considering the prevalence of online fraud, discrepancies in product descriptions, and violations of consumer data privacy. This research explores several significant aspects of consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions during the digital era, which have not been comprehensively addressed in previous literature. The study adopts a literature review approach to examine this topic, with a focus on civil law in Indonesia. Although the Consumer Protection Law (UU PK) covers various provisions related to the rights and obligations of businesses and consumers in buying and selling transactions, the implementation of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) in electronic transactions still faces several challenges. Crimes committed by businesses against consumers remain prevalent, and many consumers have yet to receive their rights, especially concerning safety and legal protection when they become victims of breach of contract in electronic transactions.*

**Keywords:** *Civil Law, E-Commerce Transactions, Consumers, Legal Protection*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid globalization and digitalization, e-commerce has become a cornerstone of the global economy, providing consumers with unrestricted access to goods and services across geographical boundaries. According to Statista, global e-commerce transactions are estimated to have increased by over 230% in 2021, reaching US\$ 4.48 trillion or approximately Rp 60,467 trillion from a 2014 position of just US\$ 1.8 trillion (Hidayat et al., 2023). This growth not only facilitates convenience and speed in shopping but also presents various new challenges, particularly concerning consumer rights protection. E-commerce, as one of the greatest innovations in trade, has transformed the way consumers and businesses interact. On one hand, consumers benefit from real-time accessibility, anytime shopping, diverse product choices, and transparent price comparisons. On the other hand, digital transactions also entail risks such as fraud, misuse of personal data, and difficulties in obtaining adequate legal protection. In many countries including Indonesia, consumer protection regulations in e-commerce transactions are still evolving to adapt to technological dynamics and rapidly changing markets (Prayuti, 2024).

In Indonesia itself, e-commerce has experienced significant growth. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information, the value of e-commerce transactions reached Rp 266.3 trillion in 2020 and is projected to continue

growing alongside increased internet and smartphone penetration. However, despite the economic benefits, numerous legal issues persist. Consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions is a critical issue, given the prevalence of online fraud, discrepancies in product descriptions, and breaches of consumer data privacy (Prayuti, 2024). Therefore, a thorough review is needed on how civil law in the digital era can effectively provide protection for consumers in Indonesia.

At a global scale the increase in e-commerce transactions has prompted countries to tighten consumer protection regulations. For instance, the European Union has implemented the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), setting high standards for safeguarding consumer personal data. In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) actively oversees and enforces laws related to fair trade practices in the digital world. According to UNCTAD reports, approximately 97 countries have adopted consumer protection laws in digital transactions, underscoring the international importance of this issue. These regulations aim to create a secure and fair e-commerce environment, ensuring that consumer rights are protected amidst the rapid technological advancements. However, several issues persist in the context of consumer legal protection in e-commerce. Product and service discrepancies, fraud, transaction security, data privacy violations, legal ambiguities, complex dispute resolution mechanisms, and inadequate consumer education are major concerns that require specific attention (Pratiwi et al., 2024). This research aims to identify, analyze, and provide recommendations to address these issues, focusing on strengthening consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions during the digital era.

This study offers significant insights into the context of consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions during the digital era, which have not been comprehensively addressed in previous literature. While previous research has discussed consumer protection in general and the implementation of international regulations, this study specifically focuses on the civil law framework in Indonesia. It explores how Indonesia's civil law framework adapts to e-commerce dynamics and provides adequate protection for consumers. Additionally, an evaluation of online dispute resolution mechanisms in handling consumer disputes in Indonesia, along with recommendations for improving these mechanisms, constitutes a crucial contribution of this research. Moreover, the research aims to develop an adaptive consumer protection policy model that can adjust to technological developments and the dynamics of the e-commerce market, while remaining relevant to the Indonesian context.

The study's objectives include analyzing Indonesia's civil law framework concerning consumer protection in e-commerce, exploring cases of fraud and data misuse, evaluating online dispute resolution mechanisms, developing an adaptive consumer protection policy model, identifying effective consumer education strategies, and recommending security technology implementation. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable input for policymakers in formulating more comprehensive and effective regulations to protect consumers in e-commerce transactions, enhance digital transaction security, develop dispute resolution mechanisms, and improve consumer education. This research is significant in its contribution to legal policy, enhancing digital transaction security, developing dispute resolution mechanisms, improving consumer education, relevance to market dynamics, and strengthening the e-commerce ecosystem. Therefore, this study not only holds academic value but also

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practical benefits that can be applied to enhance consumer protection and support sustainable and healthy e-commerce development in Indonesia.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Civil Law

Civil Law is a branch of legal system that governs civil relationships between individuals or legal entities recognized under the law (Bagenda et al., 2023). Broadly, it encompasses various aspects such as property rights, contracts, legal responsibilities, and inheritance. Its primary focus is to provide a framework for resolving conflicts arising from interactions between individuals or legal entities, aiming to establish legal certainty and safeguard legitimate rights (Suwasta, 2024). Historically, civil law has evolved from Roman law principles and has been influenced by various national legal systems. In Indonesia, civil law is primarily governed by the Civil Code (Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Perdata or KUHPerdata), which draws from Roman, Dutch, and customary law traditions. Fundamental concepts in civil law literature, such as legal subjects, legal acts, and agreements, form the core principles of civil law (Imaniyati et al., 2021).

### 2.2. E-Commerce Transactions

E-commerce transactions refer to the process of buying and selling goods or services conducted electronically via the internet. This phenomenon has experienced significant growth alongside the development of digital technology (Mahran et al., 2023). In legal contexts, e-commerce transactions raise various legal issues that need attention to protect the interests of consumers and businesses. Key issues include consumer protection, data privacy, transaction validity, and dispute resolution (Saragih et al., 2023).

Legal protection of consumers in e-commerce transactions encompasses rights to receive clear information about the goods or services offered, protection against fraud or misuse of personal data, and the right to lodge complaints and obtain compensation for violations of these rights (Izazi et al., 2024). Data privacy is crucial given the volume of personal data handled in online transactions. Legally, regulations governing e-commerce transactions vary by country and may include aspects such as electronic contract provisions, electronic payments, and digital consumer protection. Law enforcement in e-commerce transactions is essential to ensure public trust in the system and facilitate sustainable digital economic growth in the current digital era (Rahman et al., 2023).

### 2.3. Consumers

Consumers are central entities in modern market economies, defined as individuals or groups who use goods or services to satisfy their needs or desires (Dewi et al., 2022). This concept not only encompasses the process of purchasing and using products but also involves consumer attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that influence purchasing decisions. Consumers are often analyzed from various perspectives including psychological, social, economic, and cultural, to understand their motivations in consumption and interaction with the market. The consumer dimension in legal protection includes rights that must be ensured by legal regulations, such as the right to clear and accurate information about products or services, the right to protection against unfair or deceptive business practices, and the right to lodge complaints and receive fair compensation if issues arise in e-commerce transactions. Legal protection of consumers

also includes aspects of personal data protection, which is crucial in the context of the collection, use, and storage of personal information by online merchants. Thus, the consumer dimension in the context of e-commerce legal protection encompasses not only transactional aspects but also substantive and procedural rights designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and security for consumers in an increasingly complex and global digital environment (Aswar et al., 2023).

#### **2.4. Legal Protection**

Legal protection is a fundamental concept in modern legal systems aimed at safeguarding the rights, freedoms, and interests of individuals or groups from abuse or injustice (Nugraha et al., 2023). Legal protection is often examined from normative and practical perspectives, encompassing safeguards against human rights violations, contract regulation, criminal liability, and efforts to prevent social injustice. This concept also refers to the role of the state in enforcing legal rules to ensure justice, balance of power, and protection for all citizens, including a set of rules and regulations designed to protect consumers from unfair, misleading, or detrimental business practices in online transactions (Muhtar et al., 2023).

In civil law consumer legal protection is often enforced through principles of equality, fairness, and compensation that govern the relationship between consumers and merchants. This includes provisions regarding product warranties, manufacturer liability, and consumers' rights to seek compensation if products or services do not meet promised standards or if losses occur due to manufacturer or merchant errors (Sihombing, 2023). Therefore, consumer legal protection in the context of civil law not only ensures fairness in commercial transactions but also promotes trust and integrity in the economic relationship between consumers and business operators (Martinelli et al., 2023).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research employs a literature review approach to examine consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions in the digital era, focusing on civil law in Indonesia. The literature review method was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze and synthesize various relevant sources of information to deeply understand existing issues and develop evidence-based policy recommendations (Purwanto, 2022). The literature utilized in this study includes scholarly journals, books, research reports, laws, government regulations, policy documents, and articles published within the last 10 years to ensure relevance and currency of information. Literature searches were conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, SpringerLink, and ScienceDirect, as well as national legal sources and databases in Indonesia.

Analysis was conducted using a qualitative approach, where collected data were organized, interpreted, and synthesized to identify key themes and gaps in the literature. The analytical framework included identifying existing regulations, case studies of fraud and data breaches, evaluating mechanisms for online dispute resolution, and policy recommendations. Selected literature was reviewed to identify patterns, trends, and major findings related to consumer protection in e-commerce transactions, integrating findings from various sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. To ensure validity and reliability, the research employed data triangulation from multiple sources to mitigate bias and enhance the reliability of findings.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Research Results

In the digital era, e-commerce transactions have become an integral part of people's lives, but they are not free from various risks such as fraud, privacy violations, and ambiguities in the rights and obligations between sellers and buyers. This literature review identifies that consumer protection in Indonesia is regulated under several legal frameworks, including Law Number 8 of 1999 on Consumer Protection, as well as other relevant regulations such as Ministerial Regulations of Trade and provisions in the Civil Code (KUHPperdata).

This research finds that despite the existence of regulations, the implementation and enforcement of the law still face various challenges. One of these challenges is the lack of consumer awareness regarding their rights and the procedures they should follow when encountering disputes in e-commerce transactions (Hanfiah et al., 2021). Additionally, the complexity of technology and the rapid pace of digital development often outstrip the capacity of existing laws to adapt, creating legal loopholes that can be exploited by irresponsible parties. Technological advancements, especially the internet, have revolutionized the concept of buying and selling, where transactions can now be conducted between sellers and buyers without direct physical contact (Fista et al., 2023). This phenomenon is known as e-commerce, which is simply defined as electronic transactions. E-commerce encompasses trade transactions between sellers and buyers involving the provision of goods, services, or transfer of rights, with contracts made through electronic or digital media, without the physical presence of the transacting parties (Sherlina, 2022). The medium used is an open public network system, namely the internet or the World Wide Web, which allows transactions to occur across territorial and national legal boundaries.

E-commerce is a business activity involving the exchange of data via the internet, where both parties, the seller and the buyer, can negotiate and transact. According to Amir Hatman in his book "Net Ready: Strategies for Success in the Economy," e-commerce is more specifically defined as an electronic business mechanism that focuses on individual-based business transactions using the internet as the medium of exchange for goods or services, whether between two institutions (Business to Business) or between institutions and direct consumers (Business to Consumer) (Fista et al., 2023). E-commerce has become a key element in the digital economy, offering significant flexibility and efficiency in the buying and selling process, while eliminating geographical limitations and expanding market reach for businesses worldwide.

According to Article 1, point 2 of the Consumer Protection Law (UU PK), a consumer is defined as any individual who uses goods or services available in society, whether for personal, family, other individuals' benefit, or for other living creatures, provided that the goods or services are not intended for resale. (Fista et al., 2023). Consumers are generally understood as end-users of products received from business actors, i.e., individuals who acquire goods for use and not for resale. Consumer protection is an effort to ensure legal certainty in protecting consumers from arbitrary actions by business actors. According to Pasal 1, paragraph (1) of the Consumer Protection Law, consumer protection encompasses all efforts that guarantee legal certainty to protect

consumers. (Apandy et al., 2021) explains that consumer protection law encompasses all principles and rules that regulate and protect consumers in the provision and use of products, both goods and services, in the relationship between providers and users. Meanwhile, Johanes Gunawan states that legal protection for consumers can be carried out before the transaction (no conflict/pre-purchase) and after the transaction (conflict/post-purchase) (Zulfikar, 2024).

The Consumer Protection Law has regulated consumer protection, emphasizing the importance of legal certainty in protecting consumer rights (Siregar, 2024). This regulation aims to prevent business actors from acting arbitrarily to the detriment of consumers. However, many consumers still experience losses, especially in electronic transactions. E-commerce transactions, which enable transactions without direct meetings between sellers and buyers, offer convenience but also pose risks. One such risk is when the seller does not have good intentions, resulting in consumers who have fulfilled their obligations not receiving the purchased goods. In many cases, consumers find it difficult to obtain accurate information about the seller. The information obtained is limited to the profile displayed by the business actor. After the transaction is completed, consumers often cannot contact the seller because phone numbers and promotional accounts have been blocked. This situation leaves consumers seemingly without legal power to resolve protection disputes.

The implementation of consumer protection as a collective effort is based on five fundamental principles, all of which are relevant to national development, namely:

- a. Principle of Benefit: This principle mandates that all efforts in the implementation of consumer protection must provide the greatest possible benefit for the interests of consumers and business actors as a whole;
- b. Principle of Justice: This principle aims to ensure the maximum participation of all people and to provide opportunities for consumers and business actors to obtain their rights and fulfill their obligations fairly;
- c. Principle of Balance: This principle aims to provide a balance between the interests of consumers, business actors, and the government in both material and spiritual terms;
- d. Principle of Consumer Safety and Security: This principle aims to provide guarantees for the safety and security of consumers in the use, consumption, and utilization of goods and/or services
- e. Principle of Legal Certainty: This principle ensures that both business actors and consumers comply with the law and obtain justice in the implementation of consumer protection, with the state guaranteeing legal certainty.

The emergence of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) reflects the government's attention to the development of electronic information and transactions (Alhakim, 2022). The utilization of information technology and electronic transactions is carried out with the aim of providing security, justice, and legal certainty for users and providers of information technology, as well as developing national trade and economy to improve community welfare. It also aims to open up opportunities for everyone to advance their thoughts and abilities in the use and optimal and responsible utilization of information technology. The rules for electronic transactions are regulated in the UU ITE as follows:

- a. Article 17 regulates:

- 1) The implementation of Electronic Transactions can be conducted in the public or private sphere;
  - 2) Parties engaging in electronic transactions must act in good faith in their interactions and/or exchange of electronic information and/or electronic documents during the transaction; and
  - 3) Further provisions regarding the implementation of electronic transactions are regulated by government regulations.
- b. Article 18 regulates:
- 1) Electronic transactions incorporated into electronic contracts bind the parties;
  - 2) The parties have the authority to choose the applicable law for the international electronic transactions they create;
  - 3) If the parties do not choose the applicable law in international electronic transactions, the applicable law is based on the principles of International Private Law;
  - 4) The parties have the authority to determine the court, arbitration, or other alternative dispute resolution forums that are authorized to handle disputes that may arise from the international electronic transactions they create; and
  - 5) If the parties do not choose a forum as referred to in paragraph (4), the determination of the authority of the court, arbitration, or other alternative dispute resolution forums authorized to handle disputes that may arise from the transaction is based on the principles of International Private Law.
- c. Article 19 and 20 state that the parties engaging in electronic transactions must use an agreed electronic system, except:
- 1) Otherwise determined by the parties, the electronic transaction occurs when the transaction offer sent by the sender has been received and approved by the recipient; and
  - 2) Approval of the electronic transaction offer must be made with an electronic acceptance statement

Although the Consumer Protection Law (UU PK) encompasses various provisions related to the rights and obligations of business actors and consumers in buying and selling transactions, the implementation of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) in electronic transactions still faces several obstacles (Aji, 2022). Crimes committed by business actors against consumers still frequently occur, and many consumers have not yet received their rights, especially concerning safety and legal protection when they become victims of breach of contract in electronic transactions. The lack of socialization and understanding among consumers also affects their ability to obtain legal protection from relevant agencies. With the rapid development of technology, it is hoped that the awareness of business actors, consumers, and relevant agencies can be increased to strengthen legal protection for all parties.

Consumer disputes are often undesirable for everyone, including in trading activities between producers and consumers. These disputes can be caused by misunderstandings, violations of the law, breach of contract, conflicting interests, and losses to one party. According to Shidarta, consumer disputes encompass all aspects of the law, including civil, criminal, and administrative law (Sihombing, 2023). Therefore, the term consumer transaction dispute is considered too narrow as it only covers civil law

aspects. Thus, this study finds that although consumer protection regulations have been established, significant challenges remain in the enforcement of the law, especially in the context of e-commerce transactions. Information technology, while providing great benefits, also brings risks that need to be addressed through more effective policies and regulations to protect consumers.

#### **4.2. Discussion**

In the advancing digital era, e-commerce transactions have significantly evolved to become an integral part of everyday life. While offering convenience and efficiency, e-commerce also brings risks that cannot be ignored, such as fraud, privacy violations, and unclear rights and obligations between sellers and buyers. This literature review study identifies that consumer protection in Indonesia is regulated within a legal framework consisting of Law No. 8 of 1999 on Consumer Protection, as well as other relevant regulations such as provisions in the Civil Code (KUHPerdata) and regulations from the Ministry of Trade. Despite these regulations, their implementation still faces serious challenges. One such challenge is the low awareness among consumers about their rights and the procedures to follow in resolving e-commerce disputes. The complexity of technology and the rapid pace of digital development often outstrip the law's ability to adapt, creating legal gaps that can be exploited by irresponsible parties.

Consumer protection regulations, such as the Consumer Protection Law (UU PK), establish an important framework to prevent abuses by business actors and protect consumers from financial and non-financial losses. However, the challenges faced still include a lack of effective law enforcement and difficulties for consumers in obtaining accurate information about sellers before and after transactions. Many cases show that consumers often cannot contact the seller after the transaction is completed because the phone number and promotional account have been blocked, leaving consumers without legal recourse to resolve disputes. Additionally, the implementation of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) also faces challenges, especially in dealing with crimes by business actors against consumers in electronic transactions. Although UU ITE regulates various aspects of electronic transactions, including provisions on transactions incorporated into electronic contracts, there is still a need to enhance understanding and enforcement of the law in practice.

This research reveals several important findings related to legal protection for consumers in e-commerce transactions in Indonesia, which can be analyzed through various legal and digital economy theories. One relevant theory is the "Consumer Protection Theory" (Aswar, 2023), which emphasizes the importance of regulation to protect consumers from unfair and harmful business practices. In the context of e-commerce, this theory highlights that consumer protection should cover aspects such as clarity of information, transaction security, and effective dispute resolution mechanisms. This study also finds that although the Consumer Protection Law (UU PK) and the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) provide an adequate legal framework, their implementation is still not optimal. The success of a regulation depends not only on the quality of the legislation but also on the effectiveness of enforcement and the awareness of the parties involved. The lack of consumer awareness about their rights and the procedures to follow when facing disputes indicates that efforts in education and socialization need to be enhanced.

The study also finds that existing dispute resolution mechanisms are often ineffective and difficult for consumers to access. According to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Theory, out-of-court dispute resolution, such as arbitration and mediation, is considered faster and more efficient than litigation (Solikhin, 2023). In practice, these mechanisms are still underutilized by e-commerce consumers in Indonesia. This indicates the need for the development of accessible and efficient online dispute resolution platforms that can expedite the resolution process and reduce costs for consumers. To enhance consumer protection in e-commerce transactions, several practical recommendations can be implemented. Strengthening more specific and comprehensive regulations regarding e-commerce is needed to close existing legal gaps. Increasing legal education and socialization for consumers through educational campaigns on social media and digital platforms is crucial to raising consumer awareness. Developing effective and accessible online dispute resolution mechanisms for consumers should be prioritized. Cross-sector collaboration between the government, business actors, and civil society must be enhanced to create a safe and fair e-commerce ecosystem for all parties.

In conclusion, this study indicates that consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions in Indonesia still needs improvement. Recommendations include strengthening more specific e-commerce regulations, increasing legal socialization and education for consumers, and reinforcing swift and effective dispute resolution mechanisms. It is hoped that consumers will feel safer and more protected when conducting transactions in this digital era. This research makes a significant contribution to understanding and addressing the challenges of consumer protection in e-commerce transactions in Indonesia and offers recommendations that can be implemented to enhance consumer legal protection in the digital age.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study indicates that consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions in Indonesia still faces various challenges despite the existence of comprehensive regulations. The lack of consumer awareness about their rights, the complexity of technology surpassing the regulatory capacity to adapt, and the ineffective dispute resolution mechanisms are major issues that need to be addressed. Theories of consumer protection, law implementation, law and technology, and market regulation help explain these challenges and provide the perspective that consumer protection requires more flexible, adaptive, and transparent regulations. Additionally, more intensive education and the development of more accessible and efficient dispute resolution mechanisms are crucial steps to enhance consumer protection in e-commerce transactions in the digital era.

Future research can focus on several specific aspects to deepen understanding and improve consumer legal protection in e-commerce transactions. This includes in-depth studies on the effectiveness of various existing online dispute resolution platforms and the development of more user-friendly models for Indonesian consumers. Research on the level of consumer awareness regarding their rights in e-commerce and how effective educational programs can be implemented is also essential. Furthermore, an analysis of more flexible and responsive regulatory adaptations to digital technology developments is needed. Comparative studies between Indonesia and other countries regarding

regulation and consumer protection in the e-commerce sector can be conducted to find best practices that can be adopted. With further, in-depth research focusing on these issues, it is hoped that a safer, fairer, and more efficient e-commerce ecosystem for consumers in Indonesia can be established.

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