



A Legal Analysis of The Practice of Review Manipulation (Fake Reviews) on Marketplaces as A Form of Unfair Business Competition in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the legal status of review manipulation practices in digital marketplaces and evaluates their qualification as a form of unfair business competition within the Indonesian legal framework. Employing a non empirical legal research design with a normative juridical approach, the study analyzes statutory regulations, legal doctrines, and conceptual principles related to competition law, consumer protection, electronic transactions, and criminal law. The findings indicate that fake reviews constitute a deceptive mechanism that distorts market transparency and creates artificial competitive advantages that are inconsistent with the principles of fair competition. Although Indonesian Competition Law does not explicitly regulate fake reviews, systematic and teleological interpretation demonstrates that such practices contradict the objectives of maintaining equal market opportunities and protecting competitive neutrality. The analysis further reveals significant regulatory fragmentation among consumer protection, electronic transaction, and criminal law regimes, resulting in enforcement difficulties and legal uncertainty. Comparative examination of foreign regulatory developments suggests the importance of strengthening marketplace accountability, establishing mandatory review verification systems, improving digital evidence standards, and expanding institutional oversight. Legal reform is therefore necessary to ensure effective governance of digital marketplaces and preserve competitive integrity in Indonesia's evolving digital economy.

Keywords : Fair Competition, Digital Marketplace, Fake Reviews, Legal Reform, Unfair Competition.



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital commerce has transformed contemporary market structures across the world by shifting competitive interactions from conventional transactional mechanisms toward platform mediated ecosystems in which consumer generated information functions as a strategic determinant of market visibility and purchasing behavior. Within this transformation, online reviews have evolved into a critical informational asset that influences consumer trust, reduces information asymmetry, and shapes competitive positioning among sellers operating in digital marketplaces. The growing dependence of consumers on review systems has simultaneously created incentives for business actors to manipulate digital reputations through fabricated evaluations, misleading endorsements, and coordinated review generation practices that distort authentic market signals. Such developments have attracted increasing scholarly and regulatory attention because digital competition is no longer determined solely by price, quality, or innovation but also by algorithmically amplified reputational metrics that influence product rankings and consumer exposure. In emerging digital economies such as Indonesia, where marketplace platforms occupy a dominant role in commercial transactions, concerns regarding the adequacy of existing legal frameworks in responding to novel forms of digital market distortion have become increasingly significant, particularly because competition law institutions continue to confront challenges in adapting traditional legal doctrines to platform based economic environments (Sukarmi et al., 2024). At the same time, the rapid growth of electronic transactions has intensified concerns regarding consumer vulnerability arising from deceptive

digital practices that undermine informed decision making and erode confidence in electronic commerce systems (Swandari et al., 2025).

Existing scholarship has consistently demonstrated that review manipulation constitutes a multidimensional legal and economic problem because it simultaneously affects consumer protection, digital governance, market transparency, and competitive fairness. Studies examining consumer protection in electronic commerce emphasize that false or misleading information fundamentally undermines the consumer right to obtain accurate and reliable information before entering commercial transactions, thereby creating conditions in which purchasing decisions are no longer based on objective assessments of product quality (Widiarti & Saragi, 2025). Parallel legal analyses have revealed that deceptive review practices increasingly manifest through sophisticated mechanisms involving fictitious transactions, automated accounts, and organized reputation management services designed to artificially elevate commercial credibility within digital platforms (Swarianata et al., 2023). Research concerning digital marketplace governance further argues that platform operators occupy a central position in mitigating such practices because their technological infrastructures shape the circulation, visibility, and verification of consumer generated content (Ubay et al., 2026). Although these studies collectively establish that manipulated reviews generate substantial risks for consumers and market integrity, the dominant analytical orientation remains concentrated on consumer harm and platform accountability rather than examining review manipulation as a strategic instrument deployed to alter competitive dynamics among business actors.

Despite valuable contributions from prior research, significant conceptual and empirical limitations remain evident within the literature. Most existing studies approach fake reviews primarily through the lens of consumer protection law or electronic transaction regulation, resulting in a fragmented understanding of how deceptive review practices operate as mechanisms of unfair competition within digital marketplaces (Swandari et al., 2025; Widiarti & Saragi, 2025). Investigations concerning brushing activities and fabricated transactions have successfully identified legal violations associated with misleading information dissemination, yet they frequently stop short of exploring the broader competitive implications arising from reputational manipulation and market exclusion effects experienced by competing businesses (Swarianata et al., 2023). Similarly, discussions regarding marketplace responsibility often focus on intermediary liability and digital governance without systematically integrating principles of competition law into the analysis of platform based misconduct (Ubay et al., 2026). This fragmentation is further reinforced by the limited engagement between contemporary digital economy scholarship and classical competition law doctrines, creating a conceptual gap in understanding whether fake reviews should be classified merely as consumer deception or as a distinct manifestation of unfair business competition within evolving digital markets (Sukarmi et al., 2024).

The persistence of this gap carries substantial scientific and practical consequences because review manipulation produces harms that extend far beyond individual consumer losses. When commercial success becomes increasingly dependent upon artificial reputation enhancement rather than genuine product performance, marketplace competition risks becoming structurally distorted in ways that reward deceptive conduct while disadvantaging honest business actors. Such conditions challenge the fundamental objectives of competition law, namely the preservation of fair market processes and equal competitive opportunities among market participants as articulated within Indonesian competition law doctrine (Indonesia, 1999a; Nugroho, 2018). Concurrently, fake reviews interfere with consumers' legally protected right to receive truthful information and make informed purchasing decisions, thereby undermining the normative foundations of consumer protection regulation (Indonesia, 1999b). The dissemination of misleading digital content may also intersect with broader concerns relating to electronic information governance and unlawful digital conduct under Indonesia's electronic transaction framework (Indonesia, 2008). The cumulative effect of these harms demonstrates that fake review practices cannot be adequately understood solely as isolated acts of misinformation but must be examined as systemic behaviors capable of altering market structures and competitive outcomes.

Against this backdrop, the present study positions itself at the intersection of competition law, consumer protection law, and digital marketplace governance by advancing a legal analysis that conceptualizes fake reviews as a form of unfair business competition within Indonesia's digital economy. Unlike previous studies that predominantly emphasize consumer rights violations, this research shifts analytical attention toward the competitive functions of review manipulation and its

implications for market fairness. Such positioning enables a more integrated examination of the relationship between deceptive digital practices and the objectives underlying Indonesia's competition regime as embodied in Law Number 5 of 1999 concerning the Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices and Unfair Business Competition (Indonesia, 1999a). It also provides a framework for evaluating whether existing regulatory instruments governing consumer protection, electronic transactions, and marketplace accountability collectively offer sufficient legal responses to reputational manipulation strategies that increasingly characterize digital commercial competition (Indonesia, 1999b; Indonesia, 2008; Ubay et al., 2026).

This study aims to analyze the legal characteristics of fake review practices in Indonesian marketplaces and to assess their qualification as a form of unfair business competition within the contemporary digital economy. The research contributes theoretically by developing an integrated analytical framework that connects competition law principles with emerging forms of digital reputational manipulation, thereby expanding the conceptual boundaries of unfair competition discourse in platform based markets. Methodologically, the study contributes through a normative legal approach that systematically synthesizes statutory provisions, legal doctrines, and conceptual interpretations across multiple regulatory domains to generate a more comprehensive understanding of legal responses to review manipulation in Indonesia's evolving marketplace ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a non empirical legal research design grounded in a normative juridical approach. The research examines the legal status of fake review practices in digital marketplaces and evaluates their qualification as a form of unfair business competition within the Indonesian legal framework. The analytical focus is directed toward statutory norms, legal doctrines, and conceptual principles governing competition law, consumer protection, electronic transactions, and criminal law. The selection of legal materials was conducted through a systematic literature review process involving primary legal sources consisting of Law Number 5 of 1999 concerning the Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices and Unfair Business Competition, Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection, Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions and its amendment under Law Number 1 of 2024, Law Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code, and the previous Criminal Code provisions. Secondary legal materials included scholarly books, peer reviewed journal articles, and doctrinal writings on competition law, digital commerce, consumer protection, and criminal law, particularly those relevant to marketplace governance and deceptive commercial practices (Marzuki, 2021; Nugroho, 2018; Zulkarnain, 2024; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The study employs an integrated analytical model combining statutory analysis, conceptual analysis, and legal system interpretation to assess the relationship between fake review practices and the principles of fair competition in digital markets. Statutory analysis was used to identify the normative scope, legal obligations, and prohibitions contained in relevant legislation, while conceptual analysis was applied to examine the legal characteristics of review manipulation in relation to market transparency, consumer rights, and competitive fairness. The interpretation process utilized grammatical, systematic, and teleological methods to determine the meaning and regulatory objectives underlying applicable legal provisions. Legal materials were subsequently analyzed through qualitative legal reasoning to evaluate normative consistency, identify regulatory gaps, and formulate a coherent legal construction regarding fake reviews as a potential manifestation of unfair business competition in Indonesia. This interpretative framework enabled a comprehensive assessment of the adequacy of existing regulations and the need for legal reform within the rapidly evolving digital marketplace environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal Construction of Fake Reviews as Deceptive Information Practices in Digital Marketplaces

The rapid expansion of digital marketplaces has transformed consumer decision making by shifting substantial informational authority from traditional advertising toward user generated evaluations. Within this environment, consumer reviews function as market signals that reduce information asymmetry and facilitate trust formation between buyers and sellers. Marketing theory explains that purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by peer generated information because consumers perceive experiential feedback as more credible than firm controlled promotional messages

(Kotler & Keller, 2016). The legal significance of reviews consequently extends beyond communication activities because reviews now operate as economic instruments that shape market allocation and competitive outcomes.

A normative examination of marketplace transactions demonstrates that review systems were originally designed to strengthen transparency and improve the efficiency of digital exchange. The legal value of transparency is closely connected to the consumer right to receive accurate and reliable information before entering a transaction as recognized in Law Number 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection. When review systems function properly, they support informed consent and contribute to fair market competition through quality based differentiation. Challenges emerge when the informational function of reviews is deliberately distorted through artificial reputation engineering.

The phenomenon of fake reviews reflects a structural transformation in deceptive commercial conduct because manipulation no longer occurs exclusively through advertisements or promotional claims. Instead, deception is embedded within seemingly authentic consumer generated content that is difficult to distinguish from legitimate evaluations. Recent legal scholarship identifies fake reviews as a form of digital misrepresentation that creates misleading perceptions regarding product quality, seller reliability, and transaction satisfaction (Hasibuan & Rasyid, 2026). Such manipulation alters market behavior because consumers frequently rely on review metrics when comparing competing products.

The normative characteristics of fake reviews reveal several recurring patterns within contemporary marketplace ecosystems. These patterns include fabricated positive reviews, coordinated review campaigns, paid endorsements disguised as authentic experiences, and malicious negative reviews targeting competitors. Similar patterns are also observable in brushing practices where artificial transactions are created solely to generate favorable ratings and visibility advantages (Swarianata et al., 2023). The existence of these practices indicates that review manipulation has evolved into a systematic market strategy rather than an isolated ethical violation.

From a conceptual perspective, fake reviews undermine the integrity of information exchange that constitutes the foundation of digital commerce. Consumer trust emerges because marketplace participants assume that reviews originate from genuine transactional experiences. Phenomenological evidence concerning consumer perceptions demonstrates that trust is significantly weakened once users become aware of manipulation practices within review systems (Ridwan et al., 2026). The resulting erosion of confidence affects not only individual transactions but also the legitimacy of marketplace governance structures.

Table 1. Normative Characteristics of Fake Review Practices in Digital Marketplaces

Dimension	Legal Characteristic	Market Consequence
Fabricated Positive Reviews	False representation of product quality	Distorted consumer choice
Paid Review Networks	Concealed commercial endorsement	Misleading market information
Fake Orders and Brushing	Artificial transaction creation	Inflated reputation metrics
Coordinated Negative Reviews	Reputation attacks against competitors	Competitive disadvantage
Automated Bot Reviews	Non authentic consumer participation	Systemic information distortion

Source: Developed by the author based on Swarianata et al. (2023), Hasibuan and Rasyid (2026), Herlina et al. (2025), and Santoso and Khan (2025).

The classification presented in Table 1 demonstrates that fake reviews share a common legal element consisting of intentional informational distortion. Although operational methods differ, each mechanism interferes with the authenticity of market signals used by consumers to evaluate products and sellers. This convergence supports the argument that fake reviews should be analyzed through a unified legal framework rather than through fragmented regulatory categories. The issue concerns not merely technological abuse but also the preservation of market integrity.

The relationship between fake reviews and consumer decision dynamics further strengthens the legal relevance of this phenomenon. Mathematical modeling of consumer behavior indicates that

manipulated reviews can significantly influence purchase intentions because perceived social validation affects attitudes and behavioral intentions toward products (Herlina et al., 2025). Such findings suggest that review manipulation produces measurable consequences within competitive markets. Legal intervention becomes necessary because the harm extends beyond individual deception and affects broader market efficiency.

Consumer protection doctrine provides an important analytical foundation for understanding these consequences. The right to truthful information constitutes a central principle within Indonesian consumer law and functions as a prerequisite for autonomous decision making under digital conditions. Several contemporary studies argue that misinformation embedded in marketplace reviews directly conflicts with statutory obligations requiring honesty and transparency in commercial communication (Swandari et al., 2025; Widiarti & Saragi, 2025). The legal concern therefore centers on the quality of information available during the transactional process.

The issue also intersects with broader debates regarding business ethics and platform governance. Scholars examining digital commerce emphasize that ethical obligations within online markets cannot be separated from the informational architecture through which transactions occur (Nugroho & Nurhayati, 2025). Fake reviews compromise this architecture because they create artificial reputational advantages that are unrelated to actual product performance. Ethical distortions consequently acquire legal significance when they produce market harm and consumer losses.

A systematic interpretation of Indonesian legal principles indicates that fake reviews should be understood as deceptive informational practices operating within digital commercial environments. Their legal relevance derives from the capacity to manipulate consumer perceptions, interfere with informed decision making, and compromise the transparency required for efficient market functioning. Existing doctrinal analysis supports the view that review authenticity has become a critical component of contemporary marketplace governance (Handa et al., 2026). This legal characterization establishes the foundation for examining whether fake reviews also constitute a form of unfair business competition under Indonesian competition law.

Legal Qualification of Fake Reviews as Unfair Business Competition in Indonesian Digital Markets

The normative assessment conducted in this study indicates that fake reviews can be legally qualified as a form of unfair business competition because they alter competitive outcomes through reputation engineering rather than through genuine market performance. Fair competition theory emphasizes that business actors should compete on the basis of product quality, innovation, efficiency, and service excellence instead of deceptive strategies that distort market signals (Nugroho, 2018). In digital marketplaces, reputation functions as an economic asset that directly influences visibility and commercial opportunities. When reputation is artificially constructed through manipulated reviews, competition shifts from merit based rivalry to information based manipulation.

The concept of a level playing field provides an important analytical foundation for evaluating the legality of fake reviews within competition law. This principle requires that market participants operate under conditions that allow equal opportunities to compete according to legitimate business capabilities. Manipulated review practices undermine this condition because certain sellers obtain advantages that are disconnected from actual product performance or operational excellence (Munawaroh, 2024). The resulting asymmetry creates unequal competitive conditions that challenge the normative objectives of competitive neutrality.

From a competition law perspective, the primary concern is not merely the existence of misleading information but the creation of artificial competitive advantages. Marketplace ranking systems frequently rely on ratings, reviews, and seller reputation indicators to determine product visibility and consumer exposure. Review manipulation therefore transforms reputation metrics into strategic instruments for market positioning. Such conduct enables business actors to acquire prominence without demonstrating superior competitive merits, a condition that conflicts with the principles underlying fair competition (Sukarmi et al., 2024).

The analysis further demonstrates that fake reviews generate distortions in the allocation mechanisms of digital markets. Competitive success becomes increasingly dependent on the ability to manipulate platform algorithms rather than on productive efficiency or customer satisfaction. This phenomenon weakens the relationship between actual business performance and market outcomes.

Competition law traditionally seeks to preserve this relationship because it represents the foundation of efficient market functioning (Indonesia, 1999).

Another important dimension concerns artificial market positioning. Sellers who engage in review manipulation may rapidly secure favorable rankings that would otherwise require substantial investment in quality improvement and customer service development. Such positioning influences market visibility and indirectly reduces opportunities available to compliant competitors. Legal doctrine recognizes that practices capable of altering competitive structures without legitimate economic justification warrant closer scrutiny under competition law principles (Nugroho, 2018).

Table 2. Normative Indicators of Fake Reviews as Unfair Business Competition Under Indonesian Competition Law

Legal Indicator	Competition Effect	Relevant Legal Principle
Artificial reputation inflation	Distortion of market ranking	Fair competition
Fake negative reviews	Harm to competitors	Equality of opportunity
Purchased reviews	Information asymmetry	Market transparency
Bot generated reviews	Artificial market advantage	Honest competition
Coordinated review campaigns	Exclusionary effect	Competitive neutrality

Source: Developed from Nugroho (2018), Sukarmi et al. (2024), Munawaroh (2024), and Law No. 5 of 1999.

The indicators presented in Table 2 reveal that review manipulation affects multiple dimensions of competition simultaneously. The conduct does not merely influence individual transactions but also alters market structures by affecting visibility, ranking systems, and competitive opportunities. Each indicator reflects a departure from the principle that competitive advantages should emerge through legitimate economic activity. This interpretation supports the argument that fake reviews possess characteristics commonly associated with unfair competition practices.

A significant normative issue arises from the fact that Law Number 5 of 1999 does not expressly mention fake reviews as a prohibited form of business conduct. The absence of explicit terminology, however, does not necessarily prevent legal qualification through interpretative methods. Normative legal analysis recognizes that statutory provisions must be understood within the broader objectives of the legal system rather than through literal interpretation alone (Marzuki, 2021). This approach becomes particularly important when legal norms encounter technological developments that emerge after the enactment of legislation.

Systematic interpretation demonstrates that the prohibition of unfair business practices within Law Number 5 of 1999 is directed toward preserving healthy competition and preventing distortions of market processes. The law seeks to maintain equitable opportunities for business actors and to prevent conduct that undermines competitive fairness (Indonesia, 1999). Within this framework, fake reviews can be understood as a contemporary manifestation of market distortion despite the absence of direct statutory references. The functional consequences of review manipulation closely resemble other forms of conduct that interfere with competitive equality.

Teleological interpretation further strengthens this conclusion by focusing on the objectives pursued by competition law. The ultimate purpose of the legislation is to create economic conditions where business success is determined through efficiency, innovation, and legitimate competitive performance rather than deceptive tactics (Sukarmi et al., 2024). Review manipulation frustrates these objectives because it enables firms to influence market outcomes without corresponding improvements in productive capacity. Such conduct therefore conflicts with the spirit and regulatory rationale of Indonesian competition law.

The broader implications extend to honest businesses that rely on lawful competitive strategies. Reputational manipulation can marginalize compliant firms by reducing visibility and weakening their ability to compete under equal conditions. Studies on digital market governance suggest that exclusionary effects generated through technological manipulation may create structural disadvantages for smaller enterprises and emerging market participants (Munawaroh, 2024; Santoso & Khan, 2025). Similar concerns are reflected in discussions regarding legal protection and structural inequality within

digital economic ecosystems, where unfair competitive mechanisms can reinforce barriers to market entry and sustainable business growth (Sofiani et al., 2026).

Regulatory Reform and Institutional Strengthening for Addressing Fake Review Practices in Digital Marketplaces

The normative analysis indicates that Indonesia currently regulates digital commercial conduct through several separate legal instruments, yet none provides a specific legal construction regarding fake reviews as an independent regulatory object. Consumer protection provisions focus on misleading business conduct, while electronic transaction regulations concentrate on unlawful digital activities and electronic information integrity (Indonesia, 1999; Indonesia, 2008). The New Criminal Code introduces broader approaches to unlawful conduct in cyberspace but does not formulate explicit elements concerning review manipulation in marketplace ecosystems (Indonesia, 2023). This fragmented structure creates uncertainty regarding the most appropriate legal basis for enforcement against actors engaging in review manipulation.

A systematic examination of the Consumer Protection Law demonstrates that existing provisions may indirectly address deceptive marketplace conduct through obligations related to truthful business information and consumer rights (Indonesia, 1999). The difficulty arises because fake reviews often operate through complex digital interactions involving sellers, intermediaries, marketing agencies, and automated systems. Legal protection mechanisms therefore depend on interpretative extensions rather than direct statutory commands. Similar observations are presented by Hasibuan and Rasyid (2026), who identify regulatory ambiguity as a major obstacle in addressing fake review practices within Indonesian electronic commerce.

The Electronic Information and Transactions framework offers broader possibilities for addressing review manipulation because it regulates the dissemination and use of electronic information in digital environments (Indonesia, 2008; Indonesia, 2024). Nevertheless, the legislation was primarily designed to govern electronic communications rather than marketplace reputation systems. Legal interpretation must therefore connect deceptive review activities with broader principles concerning the integrity and reliability of electronic information. Such an approach remains possible through teleological interpretation but may generate inconsistent enforcement outcomes among institutions.

The enactment of Law Number 1 of 2024 strengthens the regulatory architecture governing electronic interactions and digital accountability mechanisms (Indonesia, 2024). Despite these developments, specific standards concerning authenticity verification of online reviews remain absent. The absence of operational criteria complicates the determination of whether a review constitutes protected consumer expression or unlawful manipulation. Regulatory certainty requires clearer distinctions between legitimate user generated content and commercially engineered reputational distortions.

The New Criminal Code introduces opportunities for future legal development because it adopts a broader perspective on unlawful conduct and emerging forms of digital wrongdoing (Indonesia, 2023). Criminal law intervention remains limited when statutory provisions do not explicitly recognize review manipulation as a distinct harmful practice. The resulting legal landscape places substantial reliance on interpretation by investigators, prosecutors, and courts. Table 3 summarizes the principal regulatory gaps identified through statutory and conceptual analysis.

Table 3. Regulatory Gaps and Reform Priorities for Addressing Fake Reviews in Indonesia

Regulatory Aspect	Existing Condition	Identified Gap	Reform Priority
Competition Law	No explicit provision	Legal ambiguity	Statutory amendment
Consumer Protection	Indirect protection	Limited enforcement	Stronger remedies
Electronic Transactions	General prohibition	Proof difficulties	Digital evidence standards
Marketplace Governance	Partial obligations	Weak accountability	Mandatory verification

Institutional Oversight	Fragmented authority	Coordination issues	Expanded KPPU mandate
Source: Developed from Indonesia (1999), Indonesia (2008), Indonesia (2023), Indonesia (2024), Az Zahra et al. (2025), and Ubay et al. (2026).			

The findings presented in Table 3 demonstrate that regulatory weaknesses are not limited to substantive legal norms but also involve institutional coordination and enforcement architecture. Several legal instruments possess overlapping objectives yet operate without an integrated governance framework. Such fragmentation increases the likelihood of inconsistent interpretations and uneven enforcement outcomes across different authorities. Similar concerns regarding fragmented digital regulation have been highlighted in contemporary analyses of Indonesian electronic commerce governance (Widiarti & Saragi, 2025).

The issue of marketplace liability represents another significant challenge in addressing fake reviews within digital commerce ecosystems. Platform operators occupy a strategic position because review visibility, ranking systems, and content distribution are controlled through marketplace infrastructures (Ubay et al., 2026). Existing regulations acknowledge certain responsibilities of digital platforms, yet detailed obligations concerning review verification and authenticity assessment remain underdeveloped. This condition creates enforcement gaps when harmful content originates from anonymous or difficult to identify actors.

Content moderation systems increasingly function as private governance mechanisms within digital marketplaces. Handa et al. (2026) argue that legal compliance in platform governance requires proactive monitoring measures rather than reactive responses after consumer harm has occurred. Effective moderation depends on technological capabilities, transparent reporting procedures, and clear accountability standards. Regulatory reform should therefore encourage measurable compliance obligations related to review authentication and platform transparency.

Another major enforcement challenge concerns evidentiary requirements in digital environments. Fake review networks frequently operate through multiple accounts, automated technologies, and geographically dispersed actors, making attribution particularly difficult (Swarianata et al., 2023). Questions regarding the admissibility, preservation, and verification of electronic evidence continue to affect enforcement effectiveness. Similar concerns regarding platform responsibility and digital traceability are identified by Nasution and Efendi (2026) in the broader context of marketplace governance and online commercial violations.

Comparative legal developments provide useful guidance for future Indonesian reforms. Regulatory initiatives in the European Union, South Korea, and China demonstrate increasing emphasis on platform accountability, transparency obligations, and mandatory verification mechanisms for digital commercial information (Az Zahra et al., 2025). Comparative criminal and regulatory developments also suggest the importance of adaptive legal frameworks capable of responding to evolving digital misconduct (Zulkarnain, 2024; Wibowo et al., 2025). Future reforms may therefore include explicit statutory recognition of fake reviews, strengthened authority for competition regulators, enhanced interagency coordination, and mandatory review verification systems that support fair digital marketplace governance while preserving legal certainty and procedural fairness (Sofiani et al., 2026; Swandari et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Review manipulation in digital marketplaces possesses legal characteristics that extend beyond consumer deception and enter the domain of unfair business competition because it artificially alters competitive conditions, market visibility, and reputational positioning among business actors. Normative analysis demonstrates that fake reviews are incompatible with the principles of fair competition embodied in Indonesian competition law, despite the absence of explicit statutory provisions specifically addressing such conduct. Through systematic and teleological interpretation, review manipulation can be qualified as a practice that undermines market transparency, distorts competitive advantages, and creates exclusionary effects for honest businesses, particularly smaller enterprises that rely on genuine market performance. The study also identifies regulatory fragmentation among consumer protection law, electronic transaction law, and criminal law, which limits enforcement effectiveness and creates legal uncertainty in addressing increasingly sophisticated forms of digital

manipulation. Comparative legal developments indicate that stronger marketplace accountability mechanisms, mandatory review verification systems, enhanced digital evidence standards, and expanded institutional authority are essential components of future regulatory reform. An integrated legal framework is required to strengthen digital marketplace governance and ensure that competition in Indonesia's digital economy remains transparent, accountable, and based on legitimate business performance rather than manufactured reputational advantages.

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