



## CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **CASE launches the CaseTrust accreditation scheme for e-businesses**

Shoppers can now identify online businesses that adopt consumer-friendly practices, while e-retailers and service providers can now distinguish themselves from their competitors by adopting pro-consumer policies when handling complaints, refunds or disputes.

This comes after the Consumers Association of Singapore (“CASE”) announced today the launch of the CaseTrust Accreditation Scheme for E-businesses (“the e-CaseTrust scheme”). It was co-developed over a year with Nanyang Polytechnic’s Singapore Institute of Retail Studies (“NYP-SIRS”).

CASE launched the e-CaseTrust scheme to address issues and pain points commonly experienced by consumers when they shop online. With this CaseTrust mark, consumers can be assured that these e-businesses have put in place mechanisms and controls to ensure the security of payment transactions. Consumers can also have the assurance that these e-businesses are committed to being honest and transparent in how they communicate prices, delivery/shipping charges and other additional charges.

E-businesses accredited under the e-CaseTrust scheme will be required to display critical business information such as the entity’s legal name, business registration number and address on their websites to facilitate the resolution of disputes.

The e-CaseTrust scheme was launched by Ms Low Yen Ling, Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Mr Melvin Yong, President, CASE, Mr Jayems Dhingra, Chairman, CaseTrust Advisory Council, and Mr Russell Chan, Principal & Chief Executive Officer, Nanyang Polytechnic at an industry event held at ZALORA’s South East Asia (“Zalora”) corporate office this morning.

CASE will be working with e-marketplace Lazada Singapore Pte Ltd (“Lazada”) to encourage sellers on their platform to apply for accreditation. CASE and Lazada will also be exploring opportunities to increase the visibility of accredited e-businesses so that consumers can identify these e-businesses easily.

#### **Background**

CASE has seen a 14.7% increase in consumer complaints involving online purchases from 2,206 complaints in 2021 to 2,530 complaints in 2022. From January to September 2023, CASE received 2,486 related complaints. Common complaints relate to delivery issues, defective or non-conforming goods, and misleading and false claims.

To help consumers identify reliable e-businesses committed to fair business practices and consumer-friendly policies, CASE worked with NYP-SIRS to develop the e-CaseTrust scheme and its accreditation criteria.

### **E-CaseTrust Scheme**

The e-CaseTrust scheme incorporates the following:

- CaseTrust’s general accreditation requirements such as ethical advertising, price transparency, good sales and after-sales service and business integrity; and
- Relevant industry guidelines for retail consumer-facing e-businesses such as CASE’s Standard Dispute Management Framework for E-marketplaces<sup>1</sup>, Technical Reference 76 (“TR 76”) which is Singapore’s national standard for electronic commerce transactions<sup>2</sup> and the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (“CCCS”)’s Guidelines on Price Transparency<sup>3</sup>.

The assessment criteria cover the applicant’s policies, communication, practices/systems and personnel<sup>4</sup>.

Refer to Annex A for selected sections in the criteria unique to the e-CaseTrust scheme or enhanced to better address issues in the e-commerce landscape.

### **Applications**

Applications for the e-CaseTrust scheme are now open. E-businesses interested in applying for accreditation can visit <https://www.case.org.sg/casetrust/e-businesses/> for more information. E-businesses that pass the accreditation assessment will be awarded the CaseTrust mark.

NYP-SIRS will be conducting a series of workshops to guide e-businesses through the accreditation process. They also provide one-on-one mentorship programmes to help e-businesses identify and address gaps in their policies and systems. More information can be found on <https://www.sirs.edu.sg/courses/retail-excellence/ecommerce/accreditation-schemes/casetrust-accreditation-scheme-for-e-commerce-business>.

E-businesses interested in applying for the e-CaseTrust scheme can refer to Annex B for the fee structure.

Mr Melvin Yong, President, CASE said: “We are happy to launch the new CaseTrust accreditation for e-businesses. This is the only consumer trust mark for e-businesses in Singapore amidst the rapid growth of e-commerce. I would like to thank the Singapore Institute of Retail Studies for helping to develop the accreditation scheme in consultation with the industry. I encourage e-businesses to apply for accreditation as a sign of commitment to standards, consumer confidence and service excellence. Being on the CaseTrust whitelist will help accredited e-businesses differentiate themselves in a diverse e-market space. I am happy that Lazada has voluntarily stepped forward to be the first major e-marketplace in Singapore to work with CASE to encourage sellers on its platform to apply for accreditation and to increase visibility of sellers with the CaseTrust mark to consumers. I hope that more e-marketplaces can do the same.”

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<sup>1</sup>See link for more information on CASE’s Standard Dispute Management Framework for E-marketplaces: [https://www.case.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/325\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.case.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/325_pdf.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>A copy of TR 76 can be purchased from the Singapore Standards E-shop via: <https://www.singaporestandardseshop.sg/>

<sup>3</sup>See link for more information on CCCS’s Guidelines on Price Transparency: <https://www.cccs.gov.sg/legislation/consumer-protection-fair-trading-act/price-transparency-guidelines>

<sup>4</sup>See link to access the accreditation criteria: (insert specific URL)

Mr Russell Chan, Principal & Chief Executive Officer, Nanyang Polytechnic said: “The accreditation dovetails into NYP-SIRS’ ambit to uplift the retail industry. E-commerce continues its march, and the new safeguards will prosper businesses. Through workshops and mentorship programmes, NYP-SIRS will guide e-businesses as they obtain the e-CaseTrust mark. Beyond strengthening consumer confidence in e-businesses, we believe this emblem of trust will give companies an advantage to further scale up their online business and stand out against competition.”

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**About the Consumers Association of Singapore:**

The Consumers Association of Singapore (“CASE”) is an independent, non-profit organisation that is committed to protecting consumers’ interest through information and education, and promoting an environment of fair and ethical trade practices. One of its key achievements is in advocating for the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act 2003 (“CPFTA”) which came into effect on 1 March 2004.

**About CaseTrust:**

CaseTrust was launched by CASE in 1999 to promote fair and ethical trading among businesses so that consumers can shop with confidence. Today, more than 1,200 storefronts are accredited under different schemes catered to the needs of each industry.

For more information, please visit <https://www.case.org.sg/casetrust/>.

## Annex A – Selected Sections from the Assessment Criteria (Extracted from Full Criteria)

Section A: Policies		
Section	Assessment Criteria	Remarks
Pricing and Payment	<p>A8: Business clearly states any delivery and shipping charges incurred.</p> <p>(Assessment requirements: Delivery and shipping charges incurred are clearly and prominently displayed on the website and in contracts/ communication materials.)</p> <p>A9: Business clearly states any additional charges for extra services such as subscriptions, alterations, repairs and express shipping.</p> <p>(Assessment requirements: - Additional charges for extra services are clearly and prominently displayed on the website and in contracts/ communication materials. - Add-ons, including subscriptions, and extra services are opt-in only and the additional charges are clearly displayed on the website and in contracts/ communication materials.)</p> <p>A10: Honouring Displayed Prices – My business honours the prices displayed at the time that the order/transaction is made.</p> <p>(Assessment requirements: The policy is clearly and prominently displayed on the website and in contracts/ communication materials.)</p>	Addresses consumer concerns pertaining to incomplete price information and practices such as “pre-ticked boxes” <sup>5</sup> and “drip pricing” <sup>6</sup> .
Section B: Communications		
Section	Assessment Criteria	Remarks
External Communications	<p>B3: Business has sufficient information on the website about my business.</p> <p>[Assessment requirements: The following are easily accessible: Legal Name of Company’s trading entity; Business Registration number; GST number (for GST registered companies); Place of registration and physical location of office; and Disclaimers and licensing information (if applicable).]</p>	Addresses instances where consumers cannot pursue their complaints as they cannot identify the merchants.
Section C: Practices and Systems		
Section	Assessment Criteria	Remarks
Retailing	C1: Business provides an online ordering system that enable consumers to complete the transaction efficiently and without difficulty.	New criteria unique for this scheme.

<sup>5</sup>“Pre-ticked boxes” are optional items accompanying online purchases which are automatically included by default without consumers’ express consent.

<sup>6</sup>CCCS’s Guidelines on Price Transparency defines “drip pricing” as the practice of advertising a product or service at a lower headline price than the final price that a consumer would pay.

	<p>C2: Business allows consumers to review their purchase decision before confirming the transaction. This could be in the form of the “Shopping Cart” or “Shopping Basket”.</p> <p>C3: Business provides a confirmation button for consumers to confirm their purchases and finalise the transaction.</p> <p>C4: Business processes orders accurately.</p> <p>C5: Business provides confirmation slips to consumers with details of their purchases for all transactions. Business’ confirmation slips reflect the full detailed information of the purchases made.</p>	
Retailing	<p>Exchange and Refund: C9: Cancellation of Orders</p> <p>a. Business completes delivery of goods and services within time frame stipulated. Otherwise, we refund consumers for any purchases made or immediately offer consumers the option of a refund or later date of delivery.</p> <p>b. Business communicates to consumers the outcome of cancellation requests.</p> <p>C10: If there are stock changes or quality concerns after confirmation of an order, business informs the consumer immediately and provides the option to cancel or make amendments.</p>	Enhanced existing criteria to better address needs in the e-commerce landscape.
Security	<p>C22: Business provides an easy to use, secure payment mechanisms.</p> <p>C23: Business has the appropriate level of controls; encryption is provided to transmissions and transactions with my consumers.</p> <p>C24: Business ensures that updates are performed on a regular basis to ensure the security of all payment mechanisms and transactions offered on my website is maintained at an appropriate level.</p> <p>C25: Business has the log, report and regular reviews of all the security activities and any breach or attempted breach of security to avoid recurring incidents.</p>	New criteria unique for this scheme.

**Annex B – Fee Structure (Fees are inclusive of GST)**

	Small Business Sales Turnover < S\$1M	Medium Business Sales Turnover S\$1M – S\$15M	Large Business Sales Turnover > S\$15M
<b>Application</b>	S\$324.00	S\$324.00	S\$324.00
<b>*Full Assessment</b>	S\$734.40	S\$1,836.00	S\$2,700.00
<b>**Interim Assessment</b>	S\$367.20	S\$918.00	S\$1,350.00
<b>Annual Management</b>	S\$756.00	S\$1,512.00	S\$2,484.00