



Deceptive conducts in online games have attracted consumer concerns. The COMESA Competition Commission, therefore, wishes to create awareness on some of the deceptive conducts and risks associated with online games and educate consumers on measures to protect themselves against harm where possible. The Commission further wishes to warn game designers, that engaging in such conduct may be in violation of Articles 27 and 28 of the COMESA Competition Regulations. Below are common concerns of gaming:

MISUSE OF CONSUMER DATA

Gaming companies may collect personal and biometric data from consumers without their consent, including financial and location data, players' interactions with the game, and other information which may be used to drive sales through customized marketing, leverage on a consumer's weakness or for credit card fraud.



DECEPTIVE MONETISATION STRATEGIES



Designers may make it difficult to progress in games based on merit, but rather progress is made easy through in-game micro purchases which give players access to points or rewards needed to advance to higher levels, or skip levels altogether. Examples include loot boxes.

YOUNG CONSUMERS' VULNERABILITY

Gaming provides an opportunity for online predators to interact with young consumers as their teammates, allies or defenders and in the process may lure them through inappropriate messages, webcam chats and face to face meetings. The games may also be designed in a manner that poses a risk of addiction to players.



DARK PATTERNS



Online games may employ tricks and manipulative tactics such as complete lack of, or inaccurate disclosures of information on the terms & conditions or fees and charges, for example designs which disguise drip pricing, thereby hiding the final cost to the player. They may also include tactics which lock in consumers and make it impossible to unsubscribe from paid games.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

As a consumer, the Commission encourages you to take measures to avoid falling victim including the following:

- * Be aware and alert of the deception and risks involved in online games.
- * Monitor your children's activities online and set parental controls on children's gadgets.
- * Be cautious of your personal information given online and reduce amount of time spent on gaming to avoid addiction.
- * Monitor payments from your cards for any unaccounted deductions and always verify the authenticity of the game.
- * Report any identified risks or deceptive conducts in any online games to the Commission on the following contacts:

Email: compcom@comesacompetition.org / consumers@comesacompetition.org or Tel: + 265 111 772466