

ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION FOR E-COMMERCE IN SRI LANKA: A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) is developing as a crucial solution for Sri Lanka to address the growing number of consumer-business disputes in its expanding e-commerce sector. Consumer Affairs Authority Act No. 9 of 2003 (CAA) relies on offline mediation boards and it lacks electronic provisions on this matter, while the Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Act No. 25 of 2017 enables digital elements like e-signatures and filings without timeliness mandates. The authors propose a national ODR roadmap through the desk-based mixed research method including doctrinal analysis of Sri Lankan Laws (Consumer Affairs Authority Act offline ADR gaps, Electronic Transaction (Amendment) Act No. 25 of 2017 validity support, data protection) and comparative analysis of EU, Indian and South African ODR approaches using secondary sources to evaluate platforms, standards (Independence, 90-day timelines) and outcomes. Key findings emphasize the foundation laid by the Electronic Transaction (Amendment) Act No. 25 of 2017 for electronic ODR infrastructure but highlight the necessity of amending the Consumer Affairs Authority Act to add deadlines, accreditation, and procedural rules on top of the current digital validity. There are three phases in the suggested roadmap including short term (0-2 years) legal reforms for ODR recognition, ICTA/CCA oversight and standards, medium term (2-4 years) implementation of a centralized multilingual portal with automated routing chat/video mediation, e-signatures and e-commerce pilots, and the long term (4+ years) cross border expansion, AI techniques, platform integration and KPI monitoring (settlement rates, satisfaction). This framework advances existing literature by providing an actionable, socio-technical plan to address specific challenges like digital literacy and privacy. This suggested roadmap is still highly relevant for consumer confidence and the development of the digital economy in 2025 in the absence of dedicated ODR platforms among offline mediation development.

Keywords: Online Dispute Resolution, E-Commerce, Sri Lanka, Consumer Affairs Authority Act, Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Act