

South Korea's FTC seeks views on guidelines against AI washing in adverts

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By Kang Yoon-seung

SEOUL, Oct. 22 (Yonhap) -- South Korea's antitrust watchdog said Thursday it has begun collecting public opinion on draft guidelines against advertisements exaggerating products' use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, a practice known as "AI washing."

The Fair Trade Commission (FTC) said it plans to gather opinions through Nov. 11 amid a growing number of products advertising AI features, with some allegedly providing misleading or deceptive information to consumers.

"The term AI is used to describe products' advanced technology, accuracy and objectivity, leading consumers to perceive their performance and reliability as relatively superior or to be willing to pay extra," the FTC said.

Amid the trend, the watchdog said consumers need to be aware of products advertised as having AI features even though they do not actually use such technologies.

The guidelines cover four major categories of potential violations of the Act on Fair Labeling and Advertising and include a self-assessment checklist and frequently asked questions.

The FTC cited examples including electric hot-water heating mats, cat litter boxes, pillows and weight-control shakes marketed as AI products.

The watchdog also expressed concerns over the use of AI tools to generate virtual people and fabricated reviews to promote food and pharmaceutical products to older consumers, noting the guideline also covers such issues.

"While the guidelines are not legally binding, they will help businesses prevent potential violations of the advertising law, help consumers make rational choices and promote fair competition in markets related to AI technology," the FTC added.

This undated file photo shows the sign of the Fair Trade Commission in the central city of Sejong. (Yonhap)

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