

Online shoppers fooled by fake reviews

21st June, 2015



A consumer watchdog in the UK has reported that many Internet sites are full of fake reviews. The UK's Competition and Market Authority (CMA) believes there are

millions of reviews on sites for hotels, restaurants, theatres and online stores that have been paid for to trick shoppers. It said at least 25 million people in Britain read reviews on websites such as Amazon and TripAdvisor before booking holidays or doing online shopping. The CMA found there was a growth in the industry that writes fake reviews for companies and businesses. Many companies wrote fake reviews about themselves as a marketing tool. Others offered money, free samples or upgrades in exchange for five-star reviews.

Online reviews are very important to businesses. Industry analysts estimate that in Britain alone, \$36 billion a year of consumer spending could be influenced by online reviews. A CMA spokeswoman said: "Millions of people look at online reviews and endorsements before making decisions such as where to stay on holiday or which plumber to use." She added: "We have found that consumers who use online reviews and endorsements find them valuable, but we have also heard about some practices that may be unlawful." Some of the more illegal activity includes rival companies posting negative remarks about each other's goods and services. Bosses could face going to prison for doing this.

Sources: *Telegraph.co.uk / Yahoo.com / Daily Mail*

Writing

People who write fake online reviews should go to prison. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

consumer / watchdog / fake / reviews / trick / websites / booking holidays / upgrades / businesses / estimate / decisions / valuable / negative remarks / rival / going to prison

True / False

- The article is about shoppers fooled into buying watches and dogs. T / F
- More than 25 million people in the UK read online reviews. T / F
- The industry for writing online reviews is getting bigger. T / F
- Some companies offer money and upgrades to write good reviews. T / F
- Reviews could affect \$36 billion of consumer spending in the UK. T / F
- The article says no one looks at reviews when deciding on a plumber. T / F
- Rival companies never write negative comments about each other. T / F
- A boss who writes a negative review on a rival company can't go to jail. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1. consumer | a. roughly calculate |
| 2. fake | b. shopper |
| 3. trick | c. promotional |
| 4. growth | d. useful |
| 5. marketing | e. deceive |
| 6. estimate | f. support |
| 7. influenced | g. hoax |
| 8. endorsements | h. jail |
| 9. valuable | i. increase |
| 10. prison | j. effected |

Discussion – Student A

- What laws should there be for online reviews?
- Would you be angry if you bought a bad product after reading a good review about it?
- Does most advertising try to trick consumers?
- What was the worst thing you spent your money on?
- What should happen if companies post negative reviews on each other?
- How might someone review your work?
- Would you like a job as an online reviewer?
- What questions would you like to ask an online reviewer?

BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

1. paid for to trick
 2. at least
 3. there was a growth
 4. money, free samples
 5. in exchange
 6. consumer spending could be influenced
 7. some practices that may
 8. rival
 9. posting negative
 10. Bosses could face
- a. going to prison
 - b. or upgrades
 - c. companies
 - d. remarks
 - e. be unlawful
 - f. in the industry
 - g. shoppers
 - h. for five-star reviews
 - i. by online reviews
 - j. 25 million people

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of online reviews?
- b) Have you ever written or would you ever write an online review?
- c) Do you believe online reviews?
- d) How surprised are you at what you read? Why?
- e) How bad is it for companies to fake reviews about themselves?
- f) Would you write a good review for a bad product for money?
- g) What things would you like to review?
- h) How would you review your English class?

Spelling

1. A consumer hocwgadt in the UK
2. nteursaarst, theatres and online stores
3. a growth in the nstidruy
4. companies and isesesusnb
5. free apsmsel
6. in ghcexnae for five-star reviews
7. Industry tlnsaysa
8. ufncenedi by online reviews
9. reviews and smnseteerdno
10. find them vebaaull
11. lilaleg activity
12. negative rmaekrs

Answers – Synonym Match

1. b	2. g	3. g	4. i	5. c
6. a	7. j	8. f	9. d	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Smile

You think a fake smile is the worst thing. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): fake blood, money or a fake resume / CV.

Role B – Blood

You think fake blood is the worst thing. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): a fake smile, money or a fake resume / CV.

Role C – Money

You think fake money is the worst thing. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): fake blood, a fake smile or a fake resume / CV.

Role D – Resume / CV

You think a fake resume / CV is the worst thing. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): fake blood, money or a fake smile.

Speaking – Fake

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst type of fakes at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- banknotes
- online review
- resume / CV
- smile
- painting
- watch
- blood
- designer bag

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	F
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.