

CMA expects Facebook and eBay to tackle sale of fake reviews

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found troubling evidence that there is a thriving marketplace for fake and misleading online reviews. After web sweeps performed in the period November 2018 to June 2019, the CMA was concerned about over 100 eBay listings offering fake reviews for sale. It also identified – during the same period – 26 Facebook groups in total where people offered to write fake reviews or businesses recruited people to write fake and misleading reviews on popular shopping and review sites.

It is estimated that over three-quarters of UK internet users consider online reviews when choosing what to buy. Billions of pounds of people's spending is influenced by reviews every year. Fake and misleading reviews not only lead to people making poorly informed choices and buying the wrong products, but they are also illegal under consumer protection law.

The CMA is not alleging that Facebook or eBay are intentionally allowing this content to appear on their websites. Since the CMA wrote to the sites, both have indicated that they will cooperate and Facebook has informed the CMA that most of the 26 groups have been removed. The CMA welcomes this, and expects the sites to put measures in place to ensure that all the identified content is removed and to stop it from reappearing.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Chief Executive said:

Lots of us rely on reviews when shopping online to decide what to buy. It is important that people are able to trust that reviews are genuine, rather than something someone has been paid to write.

Fake reviews mean that people might make the wrong choice and end up with a product or service that's not right for them. They're also unfair to businesses who do the right thing.

We want Facebook and eBay to conduct an urgent review of their sites to prevent fake and misleading online reviews from being bought and sold.

This is the first phase in a wider programme of CMA work aimed at tackling fake and misleading reviews. It builds on previous action in this area to protect shoppers from misleading information on the internet, including enforcement action taken against an online marketing company to stop it from writing fake reviews and demand it removed those it had posted.

For more information, [view the case page](#).

Notes to Editors

1. The [Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008](#) (CPRs) contain a general prohibition on unfair commercial practices, requiring traders to exercise professional diligence towards consumers. They also prohibit commercial practices that are misleading or aggressive and set out 31 'banned practices' which will be unfair in all circumstances, regardless of their effect on consumers. For example, it is a banned practice to falsely claim or create the impression that a trader is not acting for purposes relating to his trade, business or profession, or to falsely represent oneself as a consumer.
2. The CMA wrote to Facebook and eBay on 20 June 2019 to inform them of the CMA's concerns and tell them immediately to remove the content identified and put measures in place to stop such content reappearing.
3. On eBay the fake review services are offered for sale/auction as listings in the same way as other items are sold on the website.
4. Data on the number of people who use online reviews is available in Ofcom's Adults' media use and attitudes report, 2017:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/102755/adults-media-use-attitudes-2017.pdf
5. Information about the CMA's previous work on online reviews and endorsements is available here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-reviews-and-endorsements>
6. All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk, or by phone on 020 3738 6460.