

# CMA investigates misleading online reviews

News story

The CMA has launched an investigation into several major websites to see whether they are doing enough to protect shoppers from fake and misleading reviews.



As people rely increasingly on shopping online during the lockdown, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) will examine how these sites currently detect, investigate and respond to fake and misleading reviews. It will look into issues such as:

- suspicious reviews – where, for example, a single user has reviewed an unlikely range of products or services;
- whether businesses are manipulating the presentation of reviews about their products and services by, for example, combining positive reviews for one product with the reviews for another; and
- how these websites handle reviews about products or services that the reviewer has received a payment or other incentive to review.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

Most of us read online reviews to help decide which products or services to buy. During lockdown, we're more dependent than ever on online shopping, so it's really important that the online reviews we read are genuine opinions. If someone is persuaded to buy something after reading a fake or misleading review, they could end up wasting their money on a product or service that wasn't what they wanted.

Our investigation will examine whether several major websites are doing enough to crack down on fake reviews. And we will not hesitate to take further action if we find evidence that they aren't doing what's required under the law.

The CMA is not currently alleging that any website has acted illegally. Through this work, the CMA wants to ensure that the sites have robust systems in place to find and remove fake reviews or reviews that mislead people about a product or business. But if it finds that any of these websites are not doing what is legally required, the CMA will take enforcement action to secure the necessary changes, pursuing action through the courts if needed. If appropriate, the CMA will identify the companies involved at this point.

This announcement comes as the CMA has [secured commitments from Instagram](#), which is operated by Facebook, to tackle the risk that people can buy and sell fake online reviews through its platform. Instagram has committed to provide for more robust systems to detect and remove this kind of harmful material from Instagram. This builds on the CMA's previous work on online reviews, where it identified the trading of of fake reviews on Facebook and eBay and secured commitments from them to tackle this issue. The CMA is not alleging that Facebook, eBay or Instagram intentionally allowed this content to appear on their websites.

For more information, visit the [online reviews](#) web page.

For media queries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk)

Published 22 May 2020