

Fake and misleading reviews: 5 businesses under CMA investigation

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Five companies now under investigation as the CMA steps up its work to tackle fake reviews and misleading star ratings - and protect people online.

- Five companies now under investigation: Autotrader, Feefo, Dignity, Just Eat and Pasta Evangelists
- Action builds on the CMA's extensive enforcement in this area - including securing important undertakings from Amazon and Google
- CEO: "Fake reviews strike at the heart of consumer trust"

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has launched 5 new consumer law investigations as part of a crackdown on fake and misleading reviews - opening cases across sectors including funerals, food delivery, and car sales.

CMA concerns

Online reviews play a significant role in people's decisions, influencing billions of pounds of UK spending every year. Research from Which? found that 89% of people use reviews when researching a product or service - making it essential that the information they rely on is genuine and transparent.

The CMA is investigating 5 businesses to determine whether they have infringed consumer law:

- Autotrader and Feefo - Treatment of negative reviews: Whether a number of 1-star reviews - which were moderated by Feefo - were not published on Autotrader's platform, and were not counted towards star ratings, therefore denying consumers a fully rounded picture of other customers' experiences.
- Dignity - Misleading reviews: Whether Dignity asked staff to write positive reviews about the company's crematoria services - giving people a potentially inaccurate picture of genuine customers' feedback.
- Just Eat - Star ratings: Whether Just Eat's ratings system has inflated certain restaurants' and grocers' star ratings - giving consumers a potentially misleading picture of quality when choosing where to order.
- Pasta Evangelists - Discounts for reviews: Whether customers were offered discounts on future orders in exchange for leaving 5-star reviews on delivery apps, without this being disclosed - meaning people may not have known how reliable or representative those ratings were.

While the CMA is investigating these 5 businesses, it has not reached any conclusions about whether consumer law has been broken.

The CMA's work is looking at the key stages in the online reviews ecosystem - from how reviews are obtained, to the way they are moderated and displayed, to the star ratings people so often rely on. By taking cases across each of these stages, the CMA is investigating multiple practices that can shape what people see when they search, shop or book online.

In April 2025, several practices relating to online reviews became ‘banned practices’ under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCC Act), meaning they are automatically deemed unfair and illegal. This includes obtaining and posting fake reviews, and paid-for reviews that are not clearly marked as incentivised. It also covers how reviews are handled – for example, if negative reviews are hidden, or if star ratings present an inaccurate picture.

The investigations bring the total number of businesses under review using the CMA’s new consumer powers to 14. These powers enable the CMA to decide whether consumer laws have been broken, without having to go through the courts.

Sarah Cardell, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

Fake reviews strike at the heart of consumer trust – with many of us worrying about misleading content when looking at reviews online.

With household budgets under pressure, people need to know they’re getting genuine information – not reviews or star-ratings that have been manipulated to push them towards the wrong choice.

We’ve given businesses the time to get things right. Now we’re deploying our new powers to tackle some of the most harmful practices head on.

Top Tips for avoiding fake reviews

Not all fake or misleading reviews are easy to spot at first glance. The CMA’s Top Tips are designed to help you spot some of the warning signs about online reviews generally, before making a decision.

1. **Read the reviews:** It sounds obvious, but too often shoppers get taken in by 5-star ratings without actually reading what people have to say about a product or service. You’ll be surprised at how many reviews sound dubious, overly vague or even totally unrelated to the item they’re supposedly endorsing.
2. **Be alert to AI generated reviews:** Advances in artificial intelligence mean fake reviews can now sound fluent, polished and highly convincing. If a review feels a bit too slick, reads like it’s been perfectly crafted, or uses very similar wording to others, it may not reflect a real customer’s experience. Trust your instincts – if something feels off, look for more detail elsewhere before deciding.
3. **Take a look at the other ratings:** It’s unlikely that a 3 or 4-star review is fake, so they can be particularly useful. Someone might knock off a star because delivery was a day late or the packaging wasn’t perfect, but still be very happy overall. If their minor gripe doesn’t matter to you, you can be more confident the rest of their review is genuine.
4. **Check out multiple sites:** We all have our go-to platform when it comes to reading reviews, but it’s always worth seeing what people are saying elsewhere. Looking across several sites helps you spot patterns – and ensures you’re getting a consistent picture.

New programme of work on fake reviews

This new programme marks the next phase of the CMA’s work to curb fake and misleading reviews, and improve trust and transparency online. It builds on the significant work already taken to raise standards – including securing major changes from Google and Amazon to bolster their systems for

identifying and removing fake reviews, as well as tough new sanctions for repeat offenders, and easier reporting functions.

To help businesses stay on the right side of the law, the CMA issued detailed guidance on their obligations regarding online reviews last year – along with a short-hand version designed to help them grasp quickly what compliance looks like.

The CMA also carried out a sweep of over 100 review publishers and issued advisory letters to 54 firms to improve their compliance with the law – 90% made changes in response, and 75% said they better understood the rules.

Next steps

The CMA will continue to engage with the companies under review to get to the bottom of its concerns.

If the CMA finds an infringement of the law, it can require businesses to change their practices and impose fines of up to 10% of global turnover.

How the investigations unfold will depend on the nature of the evidence. They could result in a finding of unlawful conduct, the imposition of remedies, or case closures.

For more information, visit the online reviews case page.

Statistics

- Reviews were found to be used by 90% of consumers and contributed to the £217 billion spent in online retail markets in 2023 [Source: GOV.UK]
- Research suggests that up to 50% of online reviews are fake [Source: Truth Engine].
- 90% of consumers are concerned about fake content when reading reviews [PowerReview 2022].
- 87% of consumers believe they've read fake reviews in the past [Source: PowerReview 2022]
- 89% of UK adults said they use online customer reviews when researching a product or service [Source: Which?]
- Dignity operates 46 crematoria and provided 70,000 services in 2024. Its reported turnover is £326.3 million [Source: Dignity Group Holdings Limited, Report and Financial Statements for the period ended 27 December 2024].
- Autotrader attracts around 80 million monthly visits to its platform [Source: Autotrader].
- Feefo provides review services to more than 6,500 brands worldwide [Source: Feefo].
- Just Eat serves 19 million UK customers via its platform [Source: Just Eat]
- Pasta Evangelists reported a turnover of £33.2 million for 2024, an increase of £0.9 million on the previous year [Source: Pasta Evangelists]

Notes to editors

1. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.
2. Members of the public can contact the CMA's General Enquiries team at general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6000.
3. The CMA expects to make an update on these investigations in September 2026.
4. The consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation is principally the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024.
5. There is no legal deadline to complete consumer investigations under the DMCC Act. As with

all its work, the CMA will progress this investigation at pace, whilst ensuring a robust and detailed review is conducted, and the businesses' rights of defence are respected.

6. If the CMA provisionally decides that the companies have broken consumer law, it will issue what is known as a Provisional Infringement Notice (PIN). This sets out the CMA's concerns and gives businesses the opportunity to respond. However, not all cases proceed to a PIN.
7. Under the new consumer regime, if a company infringes consumer protection law, the CMA can fine them up to 10% of their global turnover. If a company breaches undertakings given to the CMA, it could face fines of up to 5% of its global turnover – with additional daily penalties for continued non-compliance. Failure to provide information when requested (without a legitimate reason), concealing evidence, or providing false information can likewise result in a fine, with penalties of up to 1% of a business' global turnover and additional daily penalties.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fake-and-misleading-reviews-5-businesses-under-cma-investigation>