

As fake online reviews spread, so do consumers' concerns

Article



Online reviews are vital to the [shopping experience](#), but a growing wariness of fake reviews and [AI's](#) escalation of the problem has recently spurred governments to act.

"Ninety-one percent of consumers say they read [online reviews] before they make a purchase," our analyst Suzy Davidkhanian said on [the "Behind the Numbers" podcast](#).

- 59% of US shoppers are most influenced by honest [creator](#) reviews, according to a September 2024 survey by Bazaarvoice and Savanta.
- 31% of US adults use review and rating websites to research and plan their travel itineraries, per August 2024 YouGov data.

[Gen Z](#) shoppers particularly rely on the opinion of online strangers.

- Gen Z consumers say online reviews are the most important factor when shopping, per a June 2024 report from NielsenIQ and World Data Lab.
- 87% of Gen Zers say online reviews had at least a little influence over their decision to purchase a product, according to January data from CivicScience.

Consumers have long been cautious about the prevalence of fake reviews and that mistrust has only grown over time.

- 75% of consumers are concerned about fake reviews, according to a January 2024 study from Bazaarvoice.
- 39% of US consumers who read reviews say they trust online reviews less than they did five years ago, according to a January report from CivicScience.

And then AI entered the story. Generative AI (genAI) tools have [reportedly been used to craft reviews on retail sites](#) since early 2023.

- AI-generated reviews are growing 80% month over month, according to a December 2024 study from The Transparency Company.

With almost half of consumers (49%) thinking their government should address the epidemic of fake reviews, per the Bazaarvoice study, multiple governments have leapt into action.

The FTC found "that it has reason to believe that certain unfair or deceptive acts or practices involving consumer reviews or testimonials are prevalent."

In a final rule, passed unanimously in August 2024, the FTC prohibited fake reviews, buying reviews, company-controlled review websites, and other forms of misrepresentative reviews.

However, enforcement of this rule is very uncertain. The new US administration has vocally opposed many government regulation entities. And the newly appointed head of the FTC,

Andrew Ferguson, pledged in a release to "end the previous administration's assault on the American way of life, and we will usher in a new Golden Age for American businesses, workers, and consumers."

The UK's Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA) has also led an effort to combat fake reviews, investigating both [Google](#) and [Amazon](#) over lax content moderation.

Last month, Google agreed to "have in place enhanced processes to tackle fake reviews written about businesses and services," the CMA announced. "Google has also agreed to enforce sanctions to deter businesses that try to benefit from fake reviews and sanction those that write fake or misleading reviews."

"Left unchecked, fake reviews damage people's trust and leave businesses who do the right thing at a disadvantage," Sarah Cardell, chief executive of the UK's Competition and Marketing Authority, said [in a release](#). "This is a matter of fairness—for both business and consumers—and we encourage the entire sector to take note."

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