

Fake Reviews: A Real Pain Point for Brands

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BY RIYA



Online reviews have revolutionized how customers purchase products and services. While there are valid users who write accurate reviews, there are also bots and malicious users that indulge in writing fake reviews. Review sites like TrustPilot, Google Reviews, and marketplaces like Amazon are littered with fraudulent reviews. In fact, Guardian calculated that **3.6%** of all reviews on TripAdvisor were fraudulent. According to a [2021 report](#) by Statista, 46% of the 2.7 million online fake reviews that were removed were five-star reviews!

Fake online reviews are misleading since customers shopping both online and offline [rely on reviews to make purchase decisions](#). Fake reviews also pose further problems because they deceive consumers into spending money on a product or with a company they may not have otherwise chosen.

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) made a [recent announcement](#) to send penalties to over 700 brands and retailers for fake endorsements and reviews. While this notice references influencer content and testimonials, it also applies to customer reviews.

In this blog, we will discuss the importance of reviews for brands and retailers, spotting fake reviews on Amazon, and steps that eCommerce companies can take to tackle fake reviews.

Importance of reviews for Brands and Retailers



Customers do not make blind purchases. **Consumers read reviews before buying products.** Statistics show that irrespective of the industry, having a positive online presence is essential and has become an integral part of branding. It also indicates that customers have a high confidence level in fellow consumers' opinions. Overall, **positive online ratings & reviews can help skyrocket eCommerce sales.**

Customers are more likely to purchase if other customers, even strangers, agree that it was a great purchase. Reviews also make brands more visible.

Why are fake online reviews so resilient?

A significant reason is that the ROI of getting fake reviews increases profitability & sales multifold. For example, an extra star on Yelp can increase a restaurant's revenue by **5% to 9%**. FTC has **said** that the expenditure on fake reviews can provide a 20x return. However, fake and incentivized reviews are a huge problem. Amazon, one of the largest eCommerce marketplace, banned incentivized reviews in 2016. It took down suspicious reviews and has taken legal action against sellers who violate its policies.

The collage consists of four screenshots from Amazon reviews:

- Top reviews from other countries:** Shows reviews from Isaac Blanco and N O Martin. A red arrow points from the image of the shirts to the text: "Use of actual images in the review often suggests that it is indeed a genuine review".
- Reviews corroborated with the purchase history:** Shows a review from ohguru. A red arrow points from the "Verified Purchase" tag to the text: "Reviews corroborated with the purchase history suggests it's a genuine review".
- A top contributor tag differentiates a genuine review from others and boosts user confidence:** Shows a review from Ally with a "Top Contributor: Pets" badge. A red arrow points from the badge to the text: "A top contributor tag differentiates a genuine review from others and boosts user confidence".
- Source: amazon.com**: A small text at the bottom left of the collage.

Online Reviews

How to Spot a Fake Review on Amazon

Marketplaces, Google, and review sites like Yelp can get hundreds of thousands of reviews daily. In a **survey** by PCMag, that interviewed 1,000 US

shoppers who looked forward to shopping on Prime Day 2020, only 16% were very confident about detecting fake Amazon product reviews, and 24% were confident they could do it. The rest of the survey respondents were somewhat or not confident they could pick out the fakes on Amazon. Here are our best tips for spotting fake reviews on marketplaces like Amazon:

- **Duplicate Content:** If you notice dozens of reviews with the same description and title as if they were copied and pasted multiple times, they're most likely fake reviews.
- **Multiple Reviews on the Same Day:** Another identification of fake reviews is when there are dozens or multiple reviews on a single day. There can be a bunch of both positive and negative reviews for products.
- **Unverified or Anonymous Reviewers:** You can see if the review is from a verified buyer on Amazon. Brands can also check if they have any record of the reviewer's purchase to weed out fake reviews.
- **Incorrect Language:** Fake reviews can come from people outside your country. If you notice multiple reviews with similar incorrect words and common errors, there is a good chance those reviews are fake, and someone paid the reviewer to write them.

What can eCommerce brands do?

- **Follow a zero-tolerance policy for fake reviews.**

The major step is to ensure that fake reviews are never posted on your site. Allowing fake reviews negatively affects your business and your bottom line. You can hire a third-party UGC moderator that uses data-driven, anti-fraud methods to evaluate reviews. It will be a much more successful and quicker step in protecting your brand's reputation.

- **Don't screen out negative reviews.**

While receiving a negative review might be the worst nightmare, they're necessary for a successful UGC program. Customers are more likely to purchase from a business that responds to all reviews, including negative reviews. Customers said that negative reviews have more detailed product information, while 32% of those customers think they're less likely to be fake. Besides, brands that respond to negative reviews gain customers' trust and loyalty.

Here are some [Tips on how to Respond to Negative reviews online](#).

- **Be transparent about how you collect UGC.**

Brands can ensure that their customers trust user-generated content by being honest about how they collected it. Companies should never ask for paid or incentivized positive reviews. Instead, brands should empower their customers to leave honest feedback. If you're offering free products, a chance to win something, or discount coupons in exchange for an unbiased review,

then the review should specify how it was collected. For example, you can add indicators like “this reviewer received a coupon or a free product in exchange for honest feedback.

→ **Maintain trust**

Having fake reviews causes a loss of trust, with many consumers believing that they have seen fake reviews for online and offline businesses. Removing fake reviews doesn't only help with revenue and brand trust, but it also helps brands to maintain trust among their existing and future customers.

Conclusion

Fake reviews are one of the biggest reputation killers and a huge problem for eCommerce platforms, brands, and customers. Brands must take the necessary steps to minimize the risk of fake reviews and expand businesses among authentic users. Although modern text generation tools are becoming more competent in writing realistic reviews, there are AI- and ML-backed tools that can accurately detect reviews written by other machines.

Need help tracking your online ratings & reviews? Or decoding customer sentiment from reviews they've left for your products? [Sign up for a demo](#) with our team to know how DataWeave can help!

- **Riya Anand**

Riya Anand is the Director of Marketing at DataWeave, 27th Jul, 2022

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