



THE VALUE OF TRUSTPILOT

87% OF CONSUMERS FIND ADVERTISING MORE TRUSTWORTHY WHEN THEY SEE THE TRUSTPILOT LOGO AND STARS. WITH INSURANCE AND FINANCE IT CAN RISE TO 92%.

PREVIOUS ARTICLES ABOUT TRUSTPILOT FAKE REVIEWS

[Fake reviews plague consumer websites | Online shopping | The Guardian](#)

[BBC One - Watchdog – Trustpilot](#)

[Can I trust Trustpilot's reviews for firms that do and don't pay it? | This is Money](#)

[Fake five-star reviews being bought and sold online - BBC News](#)

[How Companies Create Fake Reviews on TrustPilot | by Trustalyze | Medium](#)

'COMPANY X' WAS CHOSEN FOR THE STUDY BECAUSE:

They are a large independent financial advisory organisation that operates world-wide

From 2017 Company X featured on Trustpilot and their reviews were damning

Adjectives such as 'confidence tricksters', 'scammers' and 'con artists' featured heavily.

By mid 2020 everything had changed.....

WHY DID THE NEW REVIEWS LOOK SUSPICIOUS?

A remarkable 'about turn' in consumer confidence for Company X – almost all were now 5*

Most of the reviewers were reviewing for the 1st time

Reviews flooded the site often in batches

Extraordinary levels of detail and an over use of complementary adjectives

Prolific naming of individual advisers

Some serious negative reviews had been moved out of chronological order

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

A complaint was made to Trustpilot in early December 2020

- *“The possibility of fake reviews is of great concern to our business”*
- *“We will enhance our fraud detection software to make it more accurate and combat fake reviews, and strengthen our 'consumer alert' system and respond to your queries more quickly”.*

The Trustpilot whistle-blowing policy was actioned in mid-January 2021

- *“Once they (the content integrity team) open an investigation, privacy rules mean that they’re rarely able to provide details to parties other than those specifically being investigated”.*

ANY CHANGES BY MARCH 2021?

The reviewer genre had significantly changed and now most were from people who had left multiple reviews for different companies on the review site.

Anywhere between 2 and 120 reviews had been made per individual

20 individuals were chosen to further investigate their buying habits

MR X FROM THE UK

- He does business with a one company without any accessible information because it is identified as a security risk.
- A company that appears not to be registered at all has 5 X 5* reviews including one from Mr X
- He has subscribed to a driving school that the general public are denied access to the site
- His review for a company whose registration has just expired was given in fluent Italian. For another company he writes to in fluent Danish.
- He uses a service to help him emigrate to Canada
- He lives in the UK but applied to 2 different companies for visas so he could travel to France and Spain.
- The only negative review he leaves is for an investment company that is possibly a competitor to Company X
- He uses a removal firm in the USA to move house and is 5* happy with the service
- He enters a survey and gets paid in dollars for participating

MS B FROM THE UK

- An alarming number of companies she buys from are shared with Mr X. All were scored 4 to 5*stars.
- 5 different companies responded and thanked her for her reviews - all calling her 'Tom'
- She receives a bachelor degree from one educational company, but failed an exam with another and was given a free 're-sit'. She gave one company 5* and yet almost every other reviewer reported that the company was atrocious
- She holidays in Guatamala. She lost her job due to COVID, owns a pub in England called the White Horse Inn. She is still a student and gets discount vouchers

HAVE SOME COMPANIES BEEN REGISTERED SPECIFICALLY TO MAKE FAKE REVIEWERS LOOK CREDIBLE?

Some companies cannot be accessed at all and/or identified as a security risk

Some companies' web-sites directs the customer to different company

Many of the companies do not give proper contact details on the site, nor is there any relevant product information except to leave personal contact details

It costs \$9.98 to register a new company

IN CONCLUSION

Even without the benefit of the Trustpilot's Integrity team, or their 'state of the art' fraud detection systems, the reviews for Company X look fake

The sheer volume of suspicious reviews suggest they are being produced by an outside source.

So many reviews are being manufactured that mistakes are being made

Companies are probably being registered to give credibility to the fake reviewers who are trying to appear 'experienced'

Briefly looking at 3 other international financial institutions there is evidence to suggest that they too are manufacturing fake reviews

Trustpilot have the technology to weed out and remove reviews such as these, but seem to be turning a blind eye to the activities of their paying clients and resist a proper investigation

Trustpilot are contributing to the 'cause' of companies who mis-sell pension products

AND FINALLY.....

- A report has been sent to the Competition and Markets Authority in the hope that formal investigations are undertaken
- These companies need to be stopped at source, before they sell – it's a national and international disgrace that Trustpilot are allowed to turn a blind eye to fake reviews and seemingly complicit in 'duping' people out of their life savings and pensions

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