



Fake Reviews:

A Nationally Representative Phone Survey

March 2020 Results

Overview of Methodology

Consumer Reports fielded a nationally representative phone survey of Americans to explore Americans' online review behaviors and their opinions about and experiences with fake reviews. The results are based on interviews conducted February 25-March 1, 2020.

The survey was administered by SSRS through its Omnibus survey platform to a nationally representative sample of 1,007 respondents in English (971) and Spanish (36). Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (305) and cell phone (702, including 451 without a landline phone). The margin of error for total respondents is +/- 3.57 at the 95% confidence level. Final data are weighted so that respondents in the survey are demographically and geographically representative of the U.S. population.

TOPLINE RESULTS

The questions presented below were shown to respondents in order. Where appropriate, question verbiage, response answer choices, or direction of scales were randomized or rotated and those instances are noted below.

Prepared by CR Survey Research Department, February 2021

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Q1. [ALL RESPONSES READ]

When making a purchasing decision, how often, if ever, do you read online reviews before making a decision?

	Total
	%
Always or almost always	32
Often	16
Sometimes	26
Hardly ever	9
Never	17
Base: All respondents	1,005

Q2. [SHOW IF Q1 = "HARDLY EVER" OR "NEVER". ALL RESPONSES READ IN RANDOMIZED ORDER WITH A Y/N RECORDED FOR EACH, KEEPING TOGETHER "YOU DON'T TRUST THEM EVEN IF THEY ARE REAL REVIEWS, YOU JUST DON'T TRUST WHAT OTHERS THINK ABOUT PRODUCTS" AND "YOU CAN'T TELL IF THEY ARE REAL OR FAKE". ALWAYS READ "ANY OTHER REASON" LAST AND CAPTURED THE RESPONSE. AS NEEDED, INTERVIEWER ALSO READ: "IS THIS THE REASON WHY YOU DON'T READ ONLINE REVIEWS BEFORE MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION?"]

Note: Final data shown represents only respondents who said they "never" read online reviews before making a purchase decision.

Which, if any, are reasons why you don't read online reviews before making a purchase decision?

	Total
	%
It's too much work to sort through all of the conflicting information	59
You do other research before buying a product such as getting a recommendations from family or friends	55
It's just not something you've ever done	55
You can't tell if they are real or fake	51
You trust the brand reputation so you don't bother reading reviews	48
You don't have the time	42
You don't trust them even if they are real reviews, you just don't trust what others think about products	40
You've been misled by a fake review in the past	26
Any other reason?	5
Base: Respondents who say they never read online reviews before making a purchase decision	177

Note: Respondents who said they never read online reviews in Q1 or did not answer the question were dropped and not shown any subsequent questions.

Q3. [ALL RESPONSES READ]

When reading online reviews before you make a purchase decision, how concerned or not concerned are you that they are fake?

	Total
	%
Extremely concerned	9
Very concerned	18
Moderately concerned	41
Slightly concerned	20
Not at all concerned	12
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision	821

Q4. [YES/NO RESPONSES READ. 'UNSURE' RESPONSES WERE VOLUNTARY.]

Have there been times when you've read a review online and thought it was fake?

	Total
	%
Yes	76
No	22
Unsure	2
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision	823

Q5. [YES/NO RESPONSES READ. 'UNSURE' RESPONSES WERE VOLUNTARY.]

Have you ever purchased a product based on an online review and the performance or quality of the product did not match the review?	
	Total
	%
Yes	50
No	49
Unsure	1
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision	823

Q6. [ALL RESPONSES READ IN RANDOMIZED ORDER WITH A Y/N RECORDED FOR EACH. INTERVIEWER READ FOR THE FIRST ITEM AND THEN AS NECESSARY "DO YOU TYPICALLY VISIT (ITEM) TO READ PRODUCT REVIEWS?" ALWAYS READING "ANY OTHER SITE?" LAST AND CAPTURED THE RESPONSE.]

Please tell me whether you typically visit each of the following websites to read reviews about a product you are considering purchasing.	
	Total
	%
Google search results	75
Amazon	75
Retailer websites (e.g., Best Buy, Home Depot)	61
Manufacturer websites	53
YouTube	45
Facebook	29
Yelp	26
Product review websites (e.g., Wirecutter, CNET)	23
Any other site?	7
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision	823

Q7. [ONLY "YES" RESPONSES FROM Q6 SHOWN AND READ IN SAME RANDOMIZED ORDER AS Q6 WITH A Y/N RECORDED FOR EACH. 'UNSURE' RESPONSES WERE VOLUNTARY.]

Do you believe you have EVER seen or read a fake or misleading product review on this site?

Do you believe you have EVER seen or read a fake or misleading product review on this site?	
	Total
	%
Amazon	
Yes	54
No	45
Unsure	1
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit Amazon to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	608
Google search results	
Yes	61
No	38
Unsure	1
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit Google to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	611

Facebook	
Yes	74
No	26
Unsure	0
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit Facebook to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	220
Yelp	
Yes	55
No	43
Unsure	2
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit Yelp to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	219
YouTube	
Yes	54
No	46
Unsure	1
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit YouTube to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	341
Retailer websites (e.g., Best Buy, Home Depot)	
Yes	36
No	62
Unsure	2
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit retailer websites to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	513
Manufacturer websites	
Yes	40
No	58
Unsure	2
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit manufacturer sites to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	449
Product review websites (e.g., Wirecutter, CNET)	
Yes	31
No	68
Unsure	2
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit product review sites to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	187
Other	
Yes	52
No	48
Base: Respondents who say they typically visit other sites to read reviews about a product they are considering purchasing	62

Q8. [ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION TEXT: "FOR EACH OF THE PRODUCT CATEGORIES, PLEASE TELL US HOW MANY DIFFERENT SITES YOU TYPICALLY VISIT TO READ PRODUCT REVIEWS BEFORE YOU MAKE A PURCHASE DECISION." ALL PRODUCT CATEGORIES READ IN RANDOMIZED ORDER WITH RESPONSES "NONE", "1 TO 2", "3 TO 5", "MORE THAN 5", "OR THIS IS NOT APPLICABLE TO YOU" READ AND RECORDED FOR EACH. INTERVIEWER ALSO READ FOR THE FIRST ITEM AND THEN AS NECESSARY "HOW MANY DIFFERENT SITES DO YOU TYPICALLY VISIT TO READ PRODUCT REVIEWS BEFORE YOU MAKE A PURCHASE DECISION?"]

How many different sites do you typically visit to read product reviews before you make a purchase decision?	
	Total
	%
Cars	
None	27
1 to 2	18
3 to 5	30
More than 5	25
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision (excluding those who said this category was not applicable to them)	698
Large appliances (e.g., refrigerators, washer/dryers)	
None	24
1 to 2	33
3 to 5	33
More than 5	9
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision (excluding those who said this category was not applicable to them)	734
Small appliances (e.g., vacuums, air purifiers, toasters, microwaves)	
None	29
1 to 2	44
3 to 5	22
More than 5	5
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision (excluding those who said this category was not applicable to them)	760
Home electronics (e.g., televisions, sound bars)	
None	19
1 to 2	35
3 to 5	36
More than 5	9
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision (excluding those who said this category was not applicable to them)	747

<i>Baby products (e.g., car seats, strollers)</i>	
None	58
1 to 2	20
3 to 5	16
More than 5	5
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision (excluding those who said this category was not applicable to them)	467
<i>Personal electronics (e.g., headphones, cameras)</i>	
None	22
1 to 2	40
3 to 5	30
More than 5	8
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision (excluding those who said this category was not applicable to them)	732
<i>Everyday items (e.g., sunscreens, laundry detergent)</i>	
None	69
1 to 2	23
3 to 5	7
More than 5	1
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a purchase decision (excluding those who said this category was not applicable to them)	707

Q9. [ALL RESPONSE CATEGORIES READ IN RANDOMIZED ORDER WITH RESPONSES "STRONGLY AGREE", "AGREE", "NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE", "DISAGREE", "STRONGLY DISAGREE" READ AND RECORDED FOR EACH. INTERVIEWER ALSO READ FOR THE FIRST ITEM AND THEN AS NECESSARY "HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?"]

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	
	Total
	%
<i>Fake reviews make you feel less confident when making a purchase decision</i>	
Strongly agree	19
Agree	39
Neither agree nor disagree	20
Disagree	17
Strongly disagree	5
<i>You can tell when a product review is fake</i>	
Strongly agree	13
Agree	43
Neither agree nor disagree	23
Disagree	18
Strongly disagree	3
<i>You avoid reading reviews because you can't tell which ones are genuine and which ones are fake</i>	
Strongly agree	6
Agree	23
Neither agree nor disagree	19
Disagree	39
Strongly disagree	12
<i>You believe most reviews are real so you don't worry if some are fake</i>	
Strongly agree	6
Agree	37
Neither agree nor disagree	25
Disagree	28
Strongly disagree	5
<i>In general, you don't trust product reviews</i>	
Strongly agree	6
Agree	20
Neither agree nor disagree	31
Disagree	38
Strongly disagree	5
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a product purchase decision	823

Q10. [ALL RESPONSES READ IN RANDOMIZED ORDER WITH A Y/N RECORDED FOR EACH. ALWAYS SHOW "YOU DO ANY OTHER CHECKS?" AND "YOU DO NOTHING TO TRY TO CHECK IF A PRODUCT IS REAL OR FAKE" AT THE END IN THAT ORDER AND INCLUDE A TEXT BOX TO CAPTURE THE "OTHER" RESPONSE.]

Which, if any, of the following checks do you use to try to determine if a product review is real or fake?	
	Total
	%
You avoid extreme reviews that are one-sided (i.e., no balance of both positive and negative feedback)	62
You look for reviews with verified purchases (i.e., the review platform may show if the purchase actually happened on that site and those that did not are more likely to be fake)	61
You look at the spelling and grammar to tell if it's fake	58
You avoid reviews that nobody or only a few people found helpful	53
You use an online fake review analyzer tool (e.g., Fakespot, ReviewMeta)	10
You do other checks?	5
You do nothing to try to check if the product review is real or fake	26
Base: Respondents who say they read online reviews before making a product purchase decision	823

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