



WeldingWorld

Campaign to help highlight misleading social media reviews

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is joining international partners in a social media campaign to help stop fake and misleading online reviews and endorsements.

Over the last year, consumer protection agencies around the globe have worked together to prevent false or misleading reviews and endorsements online, and promote new guidelines to help review sites, digital influencers, marketing professionals and other traders understand what they should do to operate fairly.

The CMA's 2015/16 Presidency of the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN) focused on improving practices in this area, and since then a range of action has been taken worldwide.

This has seen at least 16 enforcement cases, including one preventing a US business using deceptive online reviews that had been posted by its own employees, and another obtaining commitments from 4 Norwegian online newspapers to ensure that marketing messages are clearly distinguishable from editorial content. Another case, currently before the Australian Federal Court, seeks to stop a property services company from trying to block guests it suspects would leave a negative review on TripAdvisor from receiving the email inviting their feedback.

In the UK, the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) recent cases include requiring a retailer to disclose unfavourable reviews so that customers have the complete picture, and ensuring that a marketing firm clearly identifies when reviews posted online by social media celebrities are advertising. It has also recently secured improvements to Airbnb's review system so that guests can more easily leave feedback where they have chosen to cut short their stay in a property.

International enforcement efforts have been supported by a global awareness-raising campaign to drive up standards, in the form of guidelines for businesses and digital influencers involved in arranging, managing or posting online reviews or endorsements. The launch of today's social media campaign continues ICPEN's commitment to increase compliance in this area.

Nisha Arora, CMA Senior Director and former ICPEN President, said:

Shoppers worldwide are increasingly relying on online reviews and endorsements before they make a decision to buy a product or service. People need to know they can trust the information they find online, and make informed choices as a result.

By working together with international consumer protection partners, whether in providing clearer guidelines or taking enforcement action against businesses that flout the law, we can achieve greater impact and better outcomes for consumers across the globe.