

# Up to tenth of Amazon shoppers in Great Britain ‘bribed’ by sellers to offer good review, poll finds

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As many as one in 10 Amazon shoppers could have been offered a “bribe” in exchange for a positive review of a product in the past year, research from the UK consumer body Which? suggests. The organisation claimed that unscrupulous sellers on Amazon were “bombarding customers” with incentives such as gift cards, free products and refunds “in order to cheat the system”. Amazon said in response that it had “clear policies that prohibit reviews abuse”. Which? said its survey of more than 1,500 adults in Great Britain carried out in July found that 10% of respondents who had bought from Amazon in the previous 12 months had received a note or card in the packaging of the product offering an incentive for leaving a five-star review. About 8% of those who had shopped on Amazon during the previous year told Which? that they were asked by a seller, via email or another communication method, to leave a five-star review in exchange for an incentive. It added that 4% of those polled said they were offered a reward for changing a negative review to a positive one. One individual told the consumer body that they received £50 in Amazon vouchers plus a full refund for leaving a positive review. Another said she ordered a handheld vacuum cleaner from Amazon, and in the box was a letter offering a £10 gift card in exchange for a five-star review. The UK government is looking into how to tackle fake reviews with new powers in the digital markets, competition and consumers bill currently going through parliament. Which? called on ministers to follow through on proposals to make it a criminal offence to host reviews without taking proper steps to ensure they are genuine. Rocio Concha, the consumer group’s director of policy and advocacy, said: “It’s clear that sellers on Amazon are bombarding customers with incentives in order to cheat the system, and we have seen evidence that they are successfully evading Amazon’s defences.” She added: “Amazon and other review-hosting websites need to step up and do more to banish fake reviews from their platforms.” An Amazon spokesperson said: “We have clear policies that prohibit reviews abuse, and we do not allow sellers to contact customers directly about a review and offer them incentives like gift cards to alter their reviews.” They added that there was “absolutely no place for this kind of activity, and we suspend, ban, and take legal action against sellers who violate our policies. “We had already taken action against the sellers identified by Which? prior to publication of the report and removed a number of reviews.” In June this year, Amazon said shoppers were being deceived because social media platforms and messaging apps were not doing enough to prevent a “cottage industry of fraudsters” soliciting fake reviews. The company added that last year it proactively blocked more than 200m suspected fake reviews. This week the US Federal Trade Commission and 17 state attorneys general filed a lawsuit against Amazon alleging it used its position in the marketplace to inflate prices on other platforms, overcharge sellers and stifle competition. Amazon said that the FTC lawsuit was wrongheaded and

would hurt consumers by leading to higher prices and slower deliveries.