

Amazon and its fake reviewers

Tulasi Ramarao

7/5/2017

Most users consider reviews as part of their research when buying a product from Amazon. A guitar showing 2000 reviews, all of them five stars should be a great product to buy. It is, if the reviews are not fake.

Interestingly, more and more companies are creating just that – fake reviews. They are creating fake reviews to inflate their ratings by coming up with sketchy purchases. These purchases are skillfully done and are successful in fooling even amazon's watchful eyes. The review process these companies are using is called a compensated review program.

Compensated review program is when sketchy companies are paid to create dummy accounts that give out four or five stars after making purchases from Amazon. These purchases are verified ones, so even Amazon has a hard time to catch these businesses. The dummy accounts buy and review all kinds of products and even add a few negative comments to make their review look legit and authentic. Its known [Ref#2] that for a little bit of extra money, these firms can write a negative review of a competitor's product!

Amazon is aggressively tackling these fake reviews by suing these companies, but by the time Amazon catches them, these fraudulent companies would have already made a substantial number of sales. More ever, these companies may popup again under a new name and Amazon would still have problem identifying them.

To prevent this kind of abuse, collecting user information like their profile, location is helpful. Identifying the users who are mostly generous in their reviews will narrow down the choice of users causing this problem. Create a pattern of their behavior will also help identify these users - like giving high rating for an unknown/less known product. Amazon must have these filters in place to catch these businesses already. They can automate a process to copy and paste a link of every item they sell on fakespot.com to rule out a fake review. Amazon can also monitor every activity of their users and watch their behavioral pattern like too many reviews within a very short period of time like in a week or two on an unknown product. Users with this behavior could be fake reviewers. Another tool is to watch for word patterns or image patterns – reviews using a lot of same set of wordings or same kind of image photos. These users could also be giving out fake reviews.

References:

Ref#1: <http://thewirecutter.com/blog/lets-talk-about-amazon-reviews/>

Ref#2: <http://www.soundstagexperience.com/index.php/features-menu/pulse-menu/712-can-you-trust-customer-reviews-on-a>