Top Tips for using price comparison websites

Comparison sites can help you to compare products and prices quickly. Here are the OFT’s top tips to help you get the most out of them:

1. Protect your data

Always read the information these sites provide (usually in a privacy policy but sometimes in the part of the terms and conditions dealing with data and privacy).

If you do not want your personal information to be passed to other companies, check to see if there is the ability to ‘opt out’ on the website, for example by ticking a box to say that you do not give your consent for your information to be shared.

2. Make the comparison which is most helpful to you

Check if your results are presented by relevance, price, or popularity and what the website says about how often it updates its information on prices and availability of goods.

3. Use a number of different sites

Expressions like ‘We’ve found the best deal’ or ‘We’ve searched the market’ don’t guarantee you are seeing every available offer in the market, so always check out what is on offer on a number of different sites.

4. Know who you are doing business with

Check whether the site tells you the identity of the business (not just the name of the website) and their business address. By law they have to do so.

5. Do your homework

If you can, use an accredited site as part of your search as they have met certain standards for accreditation. Some websites comparing energy products are accredited by Consumer Focus, and some telecoms comparison websites are accredited by Ofcom. Some financial services are compared by the Government backed Money Advice Service.

6. Problem or complaint? Citizens Advice can help

Some sites may tell you that they are not liable if they make mistakes or mislead you; this may not in fact be the case. If you want to complain but aren’t sure how, Citizens Advice can help you to direct your complaint to the relevant person.

Visit www.adviceguide.org.uk or call the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 08454 04 05 06.