

CONTRACT CHEATING WEBSITES: AN ANALYSIS OF PRICES, SERVICES, AND PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES

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Background

It was recently reported that almost 1000 students across universities in New South Wales were implicated in a scandal involving a “contract cheating” website that ghost-wrote assessment pieces for a fee¹. Other universities are not immune to this problem, and reports of contract cheating site use are appearing across the country. Contract cheating has negative implications for Universities and society-at-large, as cheating students who successfully graduate may pursue jobs as underqualified workers.

Aims

To better understand the phenomenon of contract cheating by examining the services offered and the persuasive techniques used by contract cheating websites.

Design and Methods

We conducted an environmental scan of contract cheating sites and compiled a list of the sites that are most frequently returned in site-related searches. We studied these sites for product coverage, domain ownerships, pricing structures, and persuasive techniques.

Results

We found assignment purchase was readily available at affordable prices in multiple formats and subjects. We also established a strong relationship between assignment cost and delivery time. The sites use a range of persuasive techniques, including assurances of quality and rapid provision of personalised support to users.

Conclusions

Contract cheating sites use a sophisticated business model that combines support, availability, and rapid production of products that appear to be personalised. They prey on the vulnerabilities of students and it is possible that naïve students may not even realise that using the sites is classed as cheating under university rules. Universities need to establish counter measures that include preventive education for both students and academics to discourage this form of cheating.

References

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