

# The Case of the Fraudulent “Free Gift”- Amazon.Com and Luminary Skin Care



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**Received:** February 16, 2018; **Published:** February 22, 2018

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## Introduction

One of the realities of human psychology is that people want “something for nothing” [1]. Franklin P. Jones, the long-time humorist whose column in the Saturday Evening Post was its longest continually posted feature, once wisely observed, “If you get something for nothing, you just haven’t been billed yet [2].” Jones was only partially right in today’s credit card age when some fraudulent advertisers access your credit card balance without even the courtesy of a bill before the fact! Unfortunately, one of the more disappointing realities of business life is that the name of the highly regarded Amazon.com corporation-one of America’s most highly respected companies [3] has been used to perpetuate a fraud by Luminary Skin Care, yet Amazon.com is allowing this fraud to go on unchecked. Luminary Skin Care uses the Amazon.com name on a simple online survey which, when answered, informs the customer that (s) he has won a “free gift.” Among those gifts is Luminary Skin Care products advertised as “a free trial [3].” The ruse is perpetuated by having the respondents provide their credit card number “to cover shipping and handling.” Unfortunately for hundreds of recipients, Luminary Skin Care bills them for the “free gift” to the tune of \$187.58, ten days after the product is received and sends these recipients more of the unordered products.

What is particularly galling for recipients of the Luminary Skin Care “free gifts” is that the company’s “Customer Service Staff” who handle incoming phone calls provide callers with no “service” whatsoever -although they do emphasize, “Didn’t you access the company’s website and read the fine print?” Allegedly, there is such a website with a fine print explanation, but the product is nonetheless advertised enthusiastically. Like many “come on” ads, this Luminary Skin Care website misrepresents their product,

claiming that this “special offer” is only available for a short time and that the product is virtually flying off the shelves due to overwhelming customer demand. Interestingly, of course, repeated trips to the website-just to double-check its validity-reveals that the same bogus information is repeated time after time and day after day. [4] Although the Better Business Bureau affirms that Luminary Skin Care is not a member of their organization and publishes many customer complaints, Amazon.com has nonetheless failed to “police” Luminary Skin Care and apparently condones their use of the Amazon name [5]. Attempts to contact Amazon.com’s Fraud Division result in sympathy but no apparent action in requiring Luminary Skin Care to responsibly inform surveyed customers thus perpetuating the fraud. Meanwhile, complaints to Luminary Skin Care occur on an hourly basis and are posted online, but customers continue to be defrauded by Luminary Skin Care and to have that fraud condoned by Amazon.com.

## References

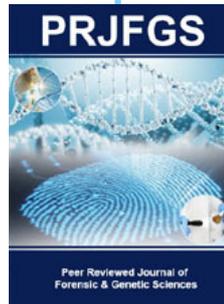
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3. Franklin P Jones (2018) The irony of Amazon.com’s reputation as one of America’s most respected companies is panned by Grandoni D, (2014). “Amazon Has Jedi Mind-tricked you into Forgetting It’s Pretty Much Walmart, New York, USA
4. Franklin P Jones (2018) See the Better Business Bureau website about Luminary Skin Care’s fraudulent actions and their inclusion of Amazon’s name in their fraud.
5. Franklin P Jones (2018) The online Luminary Skin Care website can be found easily through a Google search at Luminary Skin Care, (2018) “Luminary Skincare-Exclusive \$4.95 Free Trial”.
6. Franklin P Jones (2018) Ibid.



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DOI: [10.32474/PRJFGS.2018.01.000106](https://doi.org/10.32474/PRJFGS.2018.01.000106)



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