

Security is a measure of how much reassurance is provided to users during the checkout process. Top marks are awarded to clear information, in prominent view, that the checkout is secure – with confirmation provided by third parties such as VeriSign or Comodo and trade associations such as the IMRG. This was a low-scoring area for many sites. Argos was unusual in providing no reassurance on checkout pages themselves, but instead just a ‘Secure online shopping’ link arranged with 18 others at the very bottom of the page (at least two screens below the ‘Continue’ button on some pages:

Website Info	Customer services	Argos Services	About Argos	Argos partners
Site map	Order tracking	Argos Credit & Insurance	About Us	Affiliate programme
Secure online shopping	Contact us	Argos Business Solutions	Argoscareers.com	Argos gift card
Terms & conditions	Check & Reserve	Product insurance	Argos.ie	Argos Spares
Privacy policy	Delivery info	Gift list service		
	Free returns			

Argos provided only a link to security information at the very bottom of the checkout pages.

Some sites did display IMRG and certificate provider logos, but lost the opportunity of reassuring customers by failing to link them to useful information. Clicking on Orange’s IMRG logo, produced a certificate error (which is possibly worse than having no logo at all) and the VeriSign logo was not linked to the VeriSign site:

On the Orange checkout page, clicking on the ‘Internet shopping is safe’ logo produced a certificate error. The VeriSign logo was not linked to the VeriSign site.



Online assistance is helpful to customers when they cannot find what they are looking for or have questions. It is not always convenient to use a telephone and queue for customer service, yet only two UK mobile phone sites provided online assistance; T-Mobile and Three. (Both provided live chat facilities although a ‘call me’ service would also have been acceptable.) Unfortunately, the T-Mobile chat had the potential to be annoying rather than helpful since it popped up at seemingly random points and could not be requested by users:

T-Mobile had one of the few live chat facilities but it appeared randomly and could not be requested by users. This could make it more annoying than helpful.

