READING

I. Read the passage and decide whether the statements are True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG)

What Companies Don't Want You to Know About Online Shopping

A. The growth of online shopping has been incredible. When it first started in the U.K. in 1979, it was not well known. As a result, sales totals were small. By the mid-1990s, when the Internet really started to become popular, online shopping was becoming better known and more attractive. By the early 2000s, shoppers in the U.S. spent over $50 billion online. And these days, online sales continue to grow. For example, data from 2016 shows that just one online retailer - Amazon - achieved more than $80 billion in sales. As a majority of Americans prefer shopping online to visiting stores, this figure does not seem surprising. What may be surprising, or perhaps shocking, is that different customers may be offered different prices online.

B. The price that a shopper sees online seems to depend on several things. One is the geographical location of the customer: Where he or she lives, in other words. People shopping from a large city, for example, might see lower prices than customers who live in the countryside. Or shoppers who live near a large bookstore might be able to buy books online more cheaply than customers who live far away from any stores selling books. This is probably due to competition. In places with a lot of competition, stores - both physical and online - usually have lower prices in order to attract more customers.

C. Shopping history is another factor that can affect the price an online customer sees. A simple example can show how this works. Customer A, for example, often shops online and spends around $300 per month. When he buys something, he looks for quality and rarely buys the cheapest item. In contrast, Customer B is not a regular online shopper. When she does buy something, she usually waits until the item is on sale. Online stores track and save this information - among other details – about customers, and they use it to set prices that are likely to be attractive. Not surprisingly, the prices offered to a shopper like Customer A are generally going to be higher than the prices Customer B would see.

D. Among online shopping sites, some offer better prices to people who connect using a mobile device like a smartphone or tablet, rather than a desktop or laptop computer. Others give cheaper prices to customers who are logged in to the site. Some may offer different prices to users who visit by following a link from a social media site. As these examples suggest, *how* a shopper connects to the Internet may affect the prices that he or she is offered.

TRUE *if the statement agrees with information in the passage*

FALSE *if the statement contradicts information in the passage*

NOT GIVEN *if there is no information about this in the passage*

1. The Internet became popular because many people wanted to enjoy online shopping.

2. Online sales on one site in 2016 were more than total online sales 16 years before in the U.S.

3. Where a customer lives can change the price he or she sees when shopping online.

4. Online shoppers who live near large bookstores generally pay more to buy books online.

5. People who have shopped online since the 1990s pay less than inexperienced online shoppers.
6. Companies that sell goods online record details about their customers' shopping habits.
7. Some customers might be able to get a better deal by connecting to a site on a mobile device.
8. Shoppers who visit an online store via a social media link can expect to see higher prices.