

Publications

How to Remove Fraudulent TripAdvisor Reviews

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TripAdvisor, known as “the world’s largest travel site,” is home to approximately 200 million reviews seen by more than 315 million unique users each month, according to the website. With 70 million-plus members, TripAdvisor has developed a reputation as a well-trusted source for information and trip planning options for **hotels**, restaurants, and various attractions. Of course, like any website, TripAdvisor is not free of false or otherwise fraudulent reviews.

While TripAdvisor reviews are supposed to be limited to true firsthand experiences, oftentimes an angry customer or a business competitor, for example, will post fraudulent reviews. When this happens, the owner or manager of an affected business – whether the victim of a false negative review or if he or she suspects a competitor orchestrated the posting of a false positive review of its own business – can report the suspicious review through TripAdvisor.com.

This is good news considering TripAdvisor reviews are not editable by the authors (although it may be possible to remove and repost a review with updates). Unlike Yelp, for instance, TripAdvisor does not offer business owners (or managers) a platform for corresponding with authors of reviews.

Moreover, TripAdvisor’s more formalized process for reporting disparaging reviews facilitates easier removal when warranted; this in contrast to those websites without reporting mechanisms, where a harmed business or individual might send an email not knowing if it will ever be read or considered.

Fraudulent reviews

Under the “**Fraud Detection**” heading, TripAdvisor makes it clear that fraudulent reviews are not tolerated: “Any attempt to mislead, influence or impersonate a traveler is considered fraudulent and will be subject to penalty.”

Fraudulent or “fake” reviews come in many forms, and TripAdvisor.com lists several of the many ways people can cause harm to others on TripAdvisor. For example: the aforementioned positing of review’s about one’s own business, or when a person with some other financial stake in a business publishes a review about it; impersonating another individual; offering money or other incentives in exchange for posting reviews or even for removing negative reviews; asking friends or family to publish reviews; soliciting reviews only from those who indicated positive experiences with the business in prior feedback; and discouraging guests from posting bad reviews.

According to TripAdvisor, such behavior could result in the ranking of the business dropping on the website, and/or the business’s page being marked with a “large red penalty notice,” flagging the business page for consumers and communicating to them that TripAdvisor has reason to believe some of the business’s reviews appear suspicious.

Reporting fraudulent reviews

TripAdvisor has a team of moderators that screens questionable reviews, but many fraudulent reviews look authentic and will go live on the website.

To report such a review, a business owner or manager will need to have a registered TripAdvisor account. Then, he or she will click “Your Business” in the upper right-hand corner of the website and then select “Manage Your Reviews” under the Management Center section.

He or she should then click “See our guidelines and submit your comments” under the “Concerned about a review?” heading. This will produce an online form, through which the owner or manager can flag the particular review in question and explain the situation surrounding it.

Owners and managers should provide any evidence they have to demonstrate how particular reviews violate TripAdvisor’s review guidelines. TripAdvisor will not take the time to fact check the claims in the original review, so it is important to have strong evidence to support a request for removal.

Although individual reviews do not appear in search results, as is the case with complaint websites such as Ripoff Report, false reviews on TripAdvisor can nevertheless be quite harmful. In particular, if the harming party decides to post several bad reviews instead of just one.

Accordingly, owners and managers of hotels, restaurants, and other attractions that appear on TripAdvisor should regularly monitor their TripAdvisor listings and report any fraudulent reviews they find.

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