

TripAdvisor – Good Or Evil?



Since the very conception of the idea of booking hotels and entire trips online, there has been a debate about whether or not hotels should be connected to the site TripAdvisor. For some individuals, no argument can be made against TripAdvisor. For example, some people are owners of extremely successful establishments and as such,

TripAdvisor is a great way of gaining publicity and interest. Inevitably, a high amount of both of these qualities leads to an increase in bookings. In the case of this particular scenario, there truly is a high degree of utility offered by TripAdvisor.

If a person has a quality hotel and a quality experience, focusing on the notion of value-added offers, they will inevitably gain positive reviews on TripAdvisor. It makes logical sense that an individual wants to save money, and will reward companies that allow them do so. Top ranking, well attended hotels have begun the trend of inviting their guests to leave a review on TripAdvisor, either in person or through an email after they have completed their stay. Consequently, these companies have a far greater online presence and reputation than smaller, local establishments.

These large establishments are active in monitoring the activity on TripAdvisor, taking measures to respond to unfavorable reviews.



Although the effort of certain establishments to improve their standing on TripAdvisor is certainly admirable, there is another, more detrimental side to the site. Some individuals believe that TripAdvisor causes more harm than good. A colloquial claim made by some property managers who do not look upon TripAdvisor favorably is that 'Opinions are like bellybuttons. Everyone has one.' These people with a less optimistic outlook on TripAdvisor's utility hire people to work full time to monitor their TripAdvisor presence and respond to the complains and criticisms presented by their clients. It has been recently discovered that there are certain circumstances which lead to negative reviews on trip advisor that aren't necessarily the fault of the establishments. For example, one hotel owner stated that the room type he was offering through Priceline was different from what people has been expecting, leading to an incorrect perception of his facilities by the general public. This same person claimed it was essential to see if there are patterns and trends in the negative ratings that would be remedied. In his particular

case, once he decided to stop offering the room type through Priceline, the negative reviews also desisted.

It is not just TripAdvisor that business owners have problems with. There is another site called Bed Bug Registry (www.bedbugregistry.com), and once you are on the list it is notoriously difficult to get off it, even if the problem has been remedied.

According to a veteran in the hospitality industry, TripAdvisor has both benefits and detriments, but ultimately is beneficial for the market. It is one of the only venues through which small, independent facilities are able to propagate their information, and get noticed by travelers. To many, this amazing capability greatly outweighs the negatives of including the opinions of a widely varying public and having a few false posts. A suggested way to augment the current services of TripAdvisor would be to have independent survey takers and analysts also provide input about the hotel or establishment, in order to provide a bit of a balance to public opinion.



Another opinion counters that of the veteran of the hospitality industry. A partner in a prominent consulting group states that TripAdvisor had a great core idea, but it has been exaggerated and twisted out of shape to such a great extent that it is unrecognizable. He traces the downfall of TripAdvisor to their purchase by Expedia and their subsequent monetization of operations. By consequence of this acquisition, TripAdvisor increasingly began to offer business services that skewed reviews and visibility away from the original idea of having the views of unbiased travelers published. According to this individual, TripAdvisor is fundamentally flawed because it doesn't have any kind of mechanism in place to verify or qualify reviews before they can be consumed by the general public.

To complicate matters further, some establishments are now taking legal measures to inhibit TripAdvisor reviews from being published. Some rental management organizations are adding non-disparaging clauses to their agreements, stating that customers have to pay a fine of around \$5,000 for posting reviews that were not approved by the establishment.

There is no doubt that the views on TripAdvisor's utility are largely based upon a company's placement in the industry and whether the reviews are helping or hurting their business. What is clear is that TripAdvisor will continue to have a prominent role in travel and for better or worse, a company will have to find an adequate way to coexist with TripAdvisor.

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