

ITALIAN ANTITRUST AUTHORITY FINES TRIPADVISOR 500,000 EUROS



As a result of the complaints that were lodged by the Italian hoteliers' association and the consumer protection agency, the popular travel website, TripAdvisor, has been fined 500,000 Euros (\$600,000) by Italy's antitrust authority.

According to the authority, the website engaged in improper business practices, which is not acceptable. A statement that was published by the antitrust authority indicates that **TripAdvisor did not put in place measures that could aid in the prevention of the publication of false reviews on its website.**

Additionally, the organization could not scrutinize the content on its site but it went ahead to promote it as "authentic and genuine". With reference to the activities that TripAdvisor carries out, it should scrutinize all information that is available on its website in order to ascertain that it is not misleading. However, its failure to do so has resulted in damage to the users of the website. However, the website has been given 90 days to present a remedy if they want.

Following the communication of the fine, the Federalberghi (Italian federation of hoteliers) confirmed that it was satisfied with the decision. While justifying its satisfaction and the necessity of the fine, the federation made reference to different reviews on TripAdvisor, which it said were defamatory.

In responding to the decision of the antitrust authority, TripAdvisor argued that it would appeal the findings that were used in subjecting it to the fine. In its statement, TripAdvisor confirmed its belief in the processes that it uses in its service provision. Specifically, the company indicated that the fraud detecting team as well as its automated tools and algorithms have been always effective in the protection of consumers from fraudsters and ill-mannered persons who use the systems inappropriately. **The company expressed its determination to uphold the interests of its consumers as well as the policies advocated for in the hospitality industry.**

Even though TripAdvisor has stood its ground and explained that it is innocent, many individuals and organizations have supported the decision that was taken by the antitrust authority. A regulator from the United Kingdom has warned TripAdvisor against claiming that all the reviews posted on the site were written by independent travelers. The regulator explained that many of the reviews were flawed and thus they cannot be relied upon. Many individuals have also made their contributions and they have advised the company to improve its service delivery before it is eliminated in the industry.

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