

BOOKING PLATFORMS IN THE FOCUS OF BRITISH AUTHORITIES



The UK Competition and Market Authority has identified a number of cases of misleading hotel booking platforms practices.

After examining a number of hotel booking portals, the UK Competition and Market Authority (CMA) is launching enforcement actions against some websites. **The reason for this is that their practices could violate consumer protection.**

In investigations, the CMA came across misleading methods of the booking platforms. In the case of search results, where it was examined how hotels are listed they found out that the search results are influenced by factors that are not relevant to the requirements of users. This includes, for example, the amount of commission a hotel pays to the website.

Another issue that has been examined is the selling pressure that the booking platforms have on guests. For example, it was examined whether a statement on how many people are interested in the same room or how many rooms are still available or how long a price is available, creates a false impression of room availability and causes the guest to make a booking decision.

The CMA also clarified whether so-called “discount claims” of portals offer customers a fair comparison. The discount could be based on a higher price that was available only for a short period of time or that is not relevant to the guest’s search criteria.

It was also checked how many booking platforms do not show hidden costs to the customer. These later exposed them to unexpected charges such as taxes or booking fees.

Andre Coscelli, Managing Director of the CMA, said: “Booking platforms can make the choice of a holiday so much easier, but only if people can trust them.”

Guests must be sure that they receive the offer they expect. Whether they receive the promised discount or reliable information on the availability of rooms. Coscelli also considers important that no one feels pushed by misleading statements to a reservation.

The CMA demands that booking platforms state clearly how they present information to their customers and thus abide by the law.

“Our next step is to take all necessary action – including courts if necessary – to make sure people get a fair deal,” the manager said.

In addition to its enforcement measures, the CMA sent warning letters to the portals. **The Authority requires portals to review their terms and practices and to ensure that they are fair and in compliance with consumer protection laws.**

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