

Hotel reviews on HolidayCheck

Introduction

HolidayCheck has always been a strong supporter of the engagement of HOTREC in order to establish international guidelines for the responsible handling of hotel reviews. HolidayCheck welcomes the refined catalogue of principles and complies with them as follows:

1. Editorial control

Guest reviews should only be published after verification by qualified editorial staff of the authenticity and reliability of the entry.

Every hotel review on HolidayCheck has to pass a quality check prior to its publication on the website. This quality check consists of a technical scan and an additional manual revision. If the technical scan detects distinctive features and also randomly, hotel reviews are screened manually by trained professional employees from the content quality assurance team.

2. Prevention of Manipulation

2.1 *Site providers should ensure that reviews of a hotel are provided only by guests who have actually stayed in the hotel.*

Users, who submit a hotel review to HolidayCheck, affirm by accepting the terms of use that they actually stayed in the property. Furthermore on a random basis, the quality check process requests users, in particular cases, to send a confirmation of their stay (copy of the bill or similar documents) to ensure the authenticity of the hotel review.

2.2 *Guests should indicate their date of stay at the hotel.*

In order to review a hotel on HolidayCheck the indication of the year and month of travel, as well as the length of stay is compulsory.

2.3 *The number of ratings in relation to the number of hotel rooms should be a factor in the calculation of any ranking*

The popularity rankings on HolidayCheck consider the fact that the size of the property may influence the number of reviews. Therefore the influence of the amount of hotel reviews on the popularity ranking decreases the more hotel reviews are collected for a hotel.

2.4 *The review site should indicate the source of input of individual reviews if they are originally stemming from a third party's website in order to give guests and hoteliers the possibility to trace back the review.*

HolidayCheck displays reviews that have passed the HolidayCheck quality processes. In terms of relevance for the reader, socio-demographic details of the author are also displayed next to the hotel review.

- 2.5 *Information displayed on review sites should be truthful and not biased impurely towards the user in order to divert him to third parties booking channels.*

This principle may not apply to HolidayCheck websites, since HolidayCheck runs it's own independent online travel agency.

3. Quality assurance

- 3.1 *Site providers should ensure that hotel contact coordinates, basic content data, availability or rates figures shown on their sites are displayed accurately.*

HolidayCheck offers hoteliers a free online tool called HotelManager for the administration of information such as contact details, pictures, descriptions and comments. Availability and booking rates are provided by affiliated third party systems, that are connected to the HolidayCheck internet booking engine.

- 3.2 *Reviews should only refer to the hotel facilities that are actually offered by the hotel. For example, an evaluation of the "gastronomic" performance of a hotel offering breakfast only should not influence the rating of this hotel.*

Users on HolidayCheck agree by accepting the terms of use, that only hotel facilities, which have been taken advantage of during the stay are rated in the review. Non-rated items do not influence the rating of the hotel.

- 3.3 *The hotel guest should be led to comment exclusively upon the services and offers he/she actually took advantage of during his/her stay in the hotel. For example, a guest not using the spa facilities or the restaurant of a hotel should refrain from posting a review on these hotel facilities.*

When completing the HolidayCheck hotel review form, the user has the possibility to select a "don't rate" option.

- 3.4 *Review sites should provide the user with evaluation criteria, which are*
- *relevant;*
 - *with appropriate levels of detail;*
 - *commensurate with the characteristics of the hotel;*
 - *and open for additional questions on request by the hotel.*

The evaluation criteria on HolidayCheck are designed to be applicable to an international range of hotels. HolidayCheck offers a basic and detailed version of the hotel review form, in order to meet the user's need for wording oriented or rating oriented reviews. In addition, the HolidayCheck HotelManager tool offers the possibility of attaching six self-written questions to the HolidayCheck hotel review form, in order to gain specific insight to a certain part of the hotel product.

- 3.5 *The user should be given the opportunity to express the evaluation not only via ratings, but also via "open" texts.*

HolidayCheck offers a basic and detailed version of the hotel review form. In the basic version with one “open text” field the author is required to write at least 160 characters. The detailed version offers six “open text” fields, giving the user the opportunity to refer to the individual evaluation criteria via written text.

4. Anonymity

Reviews should not be anonymous to the site provider, through whose intermediation the hotelier should have the possibility to react. The site provider should reconfirm e-mail addresses used by guests and exclude temporary e-mail addresses.

HolidayCheck only accepts hotel reviews from users with re-confirmed and validated e-mail addresses.

5. Minimum number of reviews

5.1 *Sites should only display reviews when the number of reviews for a specific hotel is meaningful in relation to the number of rooms.*

Please see below 5.2

5.2 *In order to avoid a “chicken-and-egg problem” during the construction phase of a review site, its provider should take particular care in supervising the individual reviews until a critical number is reached.*

HolidayCheck takes particular care in every individual hotel review, no matter how many hotel reviews are already collected for a hotel. Once a hotel review has passed the HolidayCheck quality process, it is displayed on the website in order to support other users in finding the right hotel for their specific needs and expectations.

6. Business relations

For the sake of independent choices and transparency for consumers and hoteliers, hotel review providers should communicate the basics of sources of their revenues.

HolidayCheck operates an independent online travel agency, which is communicated on various points on the website.

7. Right of reply

In case a review is posted (positive or negative), sites should automatically inform the hotel about it (e.g. by an e-mail “alert” system) and offer the hotel the chance to react. Such a procedure will allow the hotel to assess and manage guest complaints actively and promptly. When available, use should also be made of the official ombudspersons for the hotel industry and their mediation services.

HolidayCheck provides a free tool for hoteliers called HolidayCheck HotelManager. By using this tool, the hotelier may activate an e-mail alert for new contents as well as using the tool for writing individual comments on the hotel reviews shown on HolidayCheck.

8. Legal certainty

Reviews should be truthful and based on the personal experiences of their authors. Hoteliers have a legal right of protection against defamatory criticisms. False factual statements should be removed from sites in a quick and non-bureaucratic manner.

HolidayCheck is a platform to exchange opinions and experiences amongst travellers. Defamatory expressions or intentional false factual statements do not comply with the HolidayCheck terms of use.

When HolidayCheck is informed about an intended false factual statement, the specific hotel review is temporarily removed from the website until the user confirms or rephrases the particular statement.

9. Up-to-date data

Sites should only display current reviews. After a maximum of two years, reviews should no longer influence the rating and should be deleted automatically.

HolidayCheck does not consider hotel reviews older than two years for calculations of ratings and rankings. In terms of transparency, those reviews are also displayed in a different colour on the website.

10. Official star classification

10.1 *In order to increase transparency for consumers, hotel review providers should always supply information about the official star classification of hotels in accordance with the system in place in the country(ies) concerned, including a link to the applicable classification criteria and specify when they use their own classification system.*

Since star classifications around the world are not yet aligned and do not offer a central database yet, HolidayCheck retrieves information about a hotel's classification from different database sources. If procurable, the official national star classification is displayed.

10.2 *Review sites should check star levels of establishments at least yearly together with the official classification providers. Review sites are invited also to include reference to quality schemes.*

HolidayCheck retrieves star classification from different databases on a periodical basis.

10.3 *Under no circumstances should star symbols be used for reviews, so as to avoid any confusion with official hotel classifications.*

HolidayCheck uses smiley and sun-icons to indicate the ratings of hotels on the website.