

trivago's Statement on the 10 principles proposed by the hotel industry relating to "hotel review" site

Point 1: Editorial control

Full editorial control is not always possible in, since the administrative costs would simply be too high. Nevertheless the establishment of a control mechanism is much-needed.

5 million visitors per month rely on trivago when planning their holiday trips. This is why we regard the editorial control of reviews as very important as far as their authenticity and validity are concerned. Only through this control can hotel reviews be of additional benefit to travelers.

The close cooperation between trivago as a web portal and longtime members of the trivago community offers an efficient solution to the problem. Every hotel review is repeatedly read by experienced members of our travel community and tested as to its validity and unwanted content. Reviews containing offensive and obviously false or defaming content are immediately removed.

Furthermore every hotel review is being reviewed as to its helpfulness. Thus the visitor will always know whether a review was rated as helpful by other travelers; extensive and informative reviews are of higher relevance for the overall rating.

In the past we had our reviews first tested and then approved. However, from the perspective of web portal operators one has to consider that visitors who want to write reviews are being demotivated by a subsequent approval of their texts. Having contributed a text, they want to see the result immediately. trivago handles this issue by assigning a signaling sentence to new reviews, saying "This review has not yet been approved" and, if necessary, by removing the review in the course of the next 48 hours.

Point 2: Prevention of manipulation

2.1

Transferring the traveler for his booking to a booking partner, we do not have access to personal travel data or booking confirmations. Nevertheless we take an interest in publishing true and unbiased reviews on our website.

In the context of editorial control a review is carefully tested by means of a clearly defined list of criteria. In this way we can ensure, to a very large degree, that the writer was actually a guest of the reviewed hotel and we can sort out potentially manipulated reviews.

If there are any doubts as to its validity, the review will be removed. The author is given the opportunity to prove that he was truly a guest at the hotel.

Additionally one has to consider the fact that distribution portals - being the only ones who have personal data of guests at their disposal and can thus retrace the sources of their

reviews - are dependent on hoteliers. In this respect they are inclined to remove critical reviews at the hotelier's request. We expect visitors to detect this systematic "fault" on distribution portals, which provide reviews, and that they will finally seek out other sources of information supplying independent and neutral travel information.

2.2 and 2.3

As a metasearch for reviews trivago integrates ratings from the six largest hotel websites (tripadvisor, holidaycheck, booking.com, hotel.de, expedia, venere). By calculating the average ratings trivago provides clear hotel recommendations. The validity of an overall evaluation is dependant on the total number of reviews. This way trivago offers a representative overall liking for hotels.

Furthermore, every hotel that is rated for the first time on trivago receives a value that is measured according to the average evaluation rate of hotels on trivago: this is currently 70 points. This procedure ensures that a new hotel without any reviews cannot be totally degraded on trivago. The more reviews a hotel receives, the less important is the average value for the overall rating.

Visitors' own ratings of hotel reviews (shown as percentage from 10 to 100 percent) also have an influence on the overall rating of a hotel. For example a rating that itself is rated at 20% with regards to the usefulness will only have an impact of 20% divided by the total number of ratings on the overall rating. Hereby is ensured that ratings that are regarded as less helpful do only have a minor impact on the overall rating of a hotel.

Point 3: Quality assurance

3.1

To ensure that hotel contact coordinates and basic content data are displayed on our site accurately the hotelier can register for his hotel on trivago to edit, update and complete hotel details. Furthermore he can write his own hotel descriptions, upload professional photos and post special offers or news.

3.2

trivago ensures that users can only comment on criteria the hotel actually offers. The review form automatically adapts to the hotel type and the hotel's facilities. Further the review form also adapts to expectable circumstances concerning the form of accommodation; in the case of a B&B, for example, the quality of the mattress can be rated, in a five star hotel not. Gastronomical criteria would not be rated in the case of a "Hotel Garni", but when it comes to "All inclusive hotels" the amount and quality of meals would be rated.

3.3

The writer of a review is explicitly advised by trivago to rate only services that he really used.

3.4.

In order to cover topics that are relevant to guests, trivago developed evaluation criteria on the basis of surveys. These criteria automatically adapt to the respective type of hotel and the hotel's characteristics, since hotels vary in type, category and facilities.

3.5

Quantitative hotel reviews allow the traveler to make a direct comparison. However, he does not receive a detailed impression of a former guest's travel experiences. In order to enable travelers to express their subjective experiences, hotel reviews on trivago do not only consist of quantitative criteria, but also of free text fields for different categories of rating (e.g. overall rating, rooms, facilities, food and drinks, location and surroundings).

Point 4: No anonymous reviews

To write a review on trivago travelers have to deposit their valid email address. Even if they do not provide any additional data they have to register that trivago can contact the traveler per email in case of doubt.

Hoteliers have the possibility to comment on reviews. The hotelier's answer, marked as a hotels' comment, is presented next to the traveler's review on trivago.

Point 5: Guaranteed minimum number of reviews

Unfortunately, it is difficult to realize a guaranteed minimum number of reviews. Particularly small and less known hotels reach this minimum number of reviews only in the minority of cases. Whereas in the package area the minimum of ten reviews can easily be generated, this is much more difficult in the area of individual hotels. To support hoteliers in their efforts to get more reviews from satisfied guests we provide them with personalized promotion material for free.

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Point 6: Harmonisation of rating scales

In order to improve the reliability and comparability of reviews among each other, the hotel is attributed a value on a rating scale between 10 (bad) – 100 (excellent). Every hotel gets an overall liking based on the existing reviews not only on trivago but on all the guest reviews about a hotel that can be found on the most important travel websites (e.g. trivago, expedia, booking.com, tripadvisor, holidaycheck).

Point 7: Right of reply

With our service „trivago hotelier“ we offer hoteliers the possibility to comment on their reviews. To allow hoteliers to react actively and on-time we developed an email “alert system” by what the hotelier will be informed automatically in the event of a new review of his hotel on trivago.

Point 8: Legal certainty

For trivago it is of high importance that published reviews are truthful and do not contain false statements of fact. Reviews with false factual, abusive, manipulated or defaming statements are immediately removed within our editorial control system.

If trivago should publish a review that the hotelier regards as false, offensive or defaming in spite of our comprehensive editorial control, we remove the review from our site immediately after notification by the hotelier.

Point 9: Up-to-date data

We have not been confronted with the aspect of outdated data yet, since trivago was launched in 2005. But as a result of your proposal we do not include reviews older than two years in the hotel's overall rating any longer.

Additionally, trivago displays the travel dates of every review. Thus our visitors can directly see the travel dates of the according review.

Point 10: Indication of the official star classification

For many travelers the official star classification is a very important criterion for their choice of accommodation. In order to increase transparency for guests we attach importance to this information and name the official star classification for all hotels in our database.

According to the 10 HOTREC Principles we already integrated a link to the applicable classification criteria (<http://www.trivago.co.uk/berlin-8514/hotel/adlon-kempinski-berlin-5568>).