

Jail time for review fraudsters: TripAdvisor heralds landmark legal ruling in the fight against paid review fraud

Welcomes collaboration with enforcement authorities

NEEDHAM, Mass., Sept. 12, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- [TripAdvisor®](#), the global leader in online review fraud prevention, today commended the result of a pivotal legal ruling in Italy which saw a persistent online review fraudster sentenced to jail.

In one of the first legal cases of its kind, the Criminal Court of Lecce ruled that writing fake reviews using a false identity is criminal conduct under Italian criminal law. The owner of PromoSalento*, which sold fake review packages to hospitality businesses in Italy, was sentenced to nine months in prison and ordered to pay approximately 8,000 Euros in costs and damages.

Paid review fraud – when companies or individuals 'sell' fake reviews to business owners – is a violation of the law in many jurisdictions, but this is one of the first cases of enforcement resulting in a criminal conviction.

TripAdvisor supported the prosecution of PromoSalento as a civil claimant by sharing evidence from its extensive in-house fraud investigations and providing support from its Italian legal counsel. Review fraud is something TripAdvisor takes extremely seriously, employing advanced tracking technology and a dedicated team of investigators to catch paid review companies and prevent them from operating on the site. More information on TripAdvisor's in-house investigation into PromoSalento can be found [here](#).

TripAdvisor welcomes the opportunity to work with enforcement authorities, including the UK Competition and Markets Authority and the US Federal Trade Commission, to share information and support their efforts to tackle online fake reviews.

Brad Young, VP, Associate General Counsel, TripAdvisor, said: "We see this as a landmark ruling for the Internet. Writing fake reviews has always been fraud, but this is the first time we've seen someone sent to jail as a result."

"We invest a lot in fraud prevention and we're successful at tackling it – since 2015, we've put a stop to the activity of more than 60 different paid review companies worldwide. However, we can only do so much alone, which is why we're eager to collaborate with regulators and law enforcement authorities to support their prosecutions."

"Online reviews play a major role in tourism and consumer purchasing decisions, but it's important everyone plays by the rules," said Mr Pascal Lamy, Chairman, World Committee on Tourism Ethics, UNWTO. "Fake reviews clearly contravene the World Committee on Tourism Ethics guidelines, which we published last year to guide the responsible use of ratings and reviews on digital platforms. The recommendations were developed in collaboration with TripAdvisor, Minube and Yelp and we know that industry collaboration has an important role to play in tackling review fraud."

The global travel community is a vital partner in the fight against paid review fraud and evidence shared by business owners approached by paid review companies is particularly valuable. Anyone approached or contacted by companies or individuals offering fake reviews should not engage with them but share that information with TripAdvisor directly at paidreviews@tripadvisor.com. All reports made to our Content Integrity team will be investigated and any information, no matter how minor, can help.

TripAdvisor has recently launched a [new online information resource](#) where people can learn more about how the company moderates reviews and protects its content. New articles will be added regularly addressing popular topics such as how TripAdvisor [moderates reviews](#), or determines whether a review is [biased](#). The site also features a behind-the-scenes series profiling the vital work of our review fraud investigators, with new [investigation cases studies](#) added regularly.

About TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site**, enables travelers to unleash the full potential of every trip. With over 661 million reviews and opinions covering the world's largest selection of travel listings worldwide – covering approximately 7.7 million accommodations, airlines, experiences, and restaurants -- TripAdvisor provides travelers with the wisdom of the crowds to help them decide where to stay, how to fly, what to do and where to eat. TripAdvisor also compares prices from more than 200 hotel booking sites so travelers can find the lowest price on the hotel that's right for them. TripAdvisor-branded sites are available in 49 markets, and are home to the world's largest travel community of 456 million average monthly unique visitors***, all looking

to get the most out of every trip. TripAdvisor: Know better. Book better. Go better.

The subsidiaries and affiliates of TripAdvisor, Inc. (NASDAQ:TRIP) own and operate a portfolio of websites and businesses, including more than 20 travel media brands:

www.airfarewatchdog.com, www.bokun.io, www.bookingbuddy.com, www.citymaps.com, www.cruise critic.com, www.familyvacationcritic.com, www.flipkey.com, www.thefork.com (including www.lafourchette.com, www.eltenedor.com, www.iens.nl and www.dimmi.com.au), www.gateguru.com, www.holidaylettings.co.uk, www.holidaywatchdog.com, www.housetrip.com, www.jetsetter.com, www.niumba.com, www.onetime.com, www.oyster.com, www.seatguru.com, www.smartertravel.com, www.tingo.com, www.vacationhomerentals.com and www.viator.com.

*PromoSalento was the name given to the illegal business created by the fraudster to sell fake reviews to hospitality businesses. It is not a genuine company and is no longer operating given the conviction of the person behind it. It has no connection to any unrelated businesses with the same name.

** Source: comScore Media Metrix for TripAdvisor Sites, worldwide, November 2017

*** Source: TripAdvisor log files, average monthly unique visitors, Q2 2018

TRIP-G

SOURCE TripAdvisor

For further information: United Kingdom/EMEA Press Office, ukpressooffice@tripadvisor.com; TripAdvisor U.S. Public Relations Team, uspr@tripadvisor.com

<https://tripadvisor.mediaroom.com/2018-09-12-Jail-time-for-review-fraudsters-TripAdvisor-heralds-landmark-legal-ruling-in-the-fight-against-paid-review-fraud>