



TRIPADVISOR

REVIEW TRANSPARENCY REPORT





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FOREWORD

By Becky Foley,
Head of Trust & Safety, Tripadvisor

Two years ago, we published our inaugural Review Transparency Report, highlighting in detail the volume of reviews submitted to Tripadvisor over a twelve-month period, how we assessed those reviews to ensure they met our community standards, and how we prevented those who attempted to post fake reviews from infiltrating our platform.

The report was an industry first — no other global review platform had produced such a level of detail into their moderation and fraud detection practices. At the time, we were seeing a lot of misinformation about how, or even if, a platform like ours could effectively ensure that the user-generated content we hosted was accurate and reliable. Our hope was that, in pulling back the curtains to reveal our data in all its detail, we would kickstart a trend towards greater transparency that other review platforms would adopt.

Over the last two years, we have been excited to see exactly that trend play out — other platforms have begun to follow our lead in reporting their review moderation numbers, and consumers and businesses have benefitted from greater access to information about how the platforms they use operate behind the scenes. We believe this level of transparency is vital to maintain trust among the millions of travellers who rely on our community's guidance, and among the millions of businesses — many of which are small and independently owned — for whom Tripadvisor is their shop window to the world.

What we could not predict in 2019, however, was just how much the wider industry in which we operate — travel and hospitality — would be changed in just two years.



Of course, much has already been written about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on how and where we can travel. However, little attention, to date at least, has been paid to the impact of the pandemic on the guidance travellers rely on to plan the trips they care most about — guidance from travellers who have been there before. Because, with all of the uncertainty travellers have faced over the last 20 months, the ability to call upon recent experiences and guidance from people all over the world has never been more valuable. It is at the heart of Tripadvisor's mission to help everyone become a better traveller, and it is why we are the world's largest travel guidance platform.

For the first time, this report sheds light on these important trends. By analysing a year's worth of review data on Tripadvisor, covering the full calendar year in 2020, we reveal just how much review contributions have been altered by the pandemic, as well as the actions we have taken as a platform to adjust to this new reality.

Much has certainly changed in travel in the last year, but what hasn't is the importance of finding travel guidance you can trust. That trust, as ever, is earned, not given. At Tripadvisor, we will never take that for granted. We remain steadfast in our commitment to transparency and taking responsible actions as a platform in service of the global travel community and our partners. We hope this report demonstrates why your trust in us is well placed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, the world faced one of its greatest challenges yet – and the travel industry faced unprecedented change. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted almost every aspect of travel, including how travellers use Tripadvisor to plan their trips.

The 2021 Tripadvisor Review Transparency Report reflects on this transformation, analysing a full year's worth of traveller contributions – over 26 million reviews in total – to provide a deeper look at how review trends shifted during this unparalleled time, and examine the measures Tripadvisor takes to ensure the travel guidance on our platform remains accurate, useful, and relevant.

In This Report, You Will Learn About:

1. The volume and type of reviews Tripadvisor receives annually
2. How the content moderation process works, including how Tripadvisor fights against fraudulent activity on the platform
3. Review trends resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and how Tripadvisor updated its approach to moderation to support travellers and businesses
4. Recent changes to Tripadvisor's community standards
5. Additional actions we are taking to protect the Tripadvisor platform and provide transparency to travellers and businesses

KEY FINDINGS

- Travellers submitted **over 26,000,000 reviews** to the site in 2020.
- The average rating submitted by reviewers for businesses and other locations listed on Tripadvisor was **4.30 out of 5.0**, up from 4.22 out of 5.0 in 2018.
- In 2020, **more than two million review** submissions were **rejected** or **removed** by Tripadvisor, either by our advanced **review analysis system or manually** by a member of our content moderation team – representing just 8.6% of all submissions that year. There are a number of reasons why Tripadvisor rejects or removes reviews, ranging from community standards violations (such as the use of profanity) to fake review activity.

Of the reviews that fell outside of our guidelines and standards, 33.9% were removed or rejected by our review analysis system before being posted, without the need for human intervention. The rest were removed following intervention by our team of content moderators.

Looking specifically at fake reviews, only a **very small fraction** of all review submissions – 3.6% – were determined to be fraudulent, totalling 943,205 reviews. Of those, Tripadvisor prevented **67.1% of all fake review submissions** from ever making it onto the platform.

Travellers or businesses flagged **only 1.0% of reviews** for potentially violating Tripadvisor guidelines. 85% of those community reports were assessed by our moderation team within four hours of being submitted, and 43% of all reviews reported by the community were removed following that assessment.

Note: All references in the report to data from the last year refer specifically to the period January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020, unless otherwise specified.

A YEAR IN REVIEWS



BY THE NUMBERS

26M+

reviews submitted
globally

54.1%

were for locations
in Europe;

23.5% for those in
North America

82.1%

had ratings of
4- or 5-bubbles;

just 7.2% had a
1-bubble rating

IN THIS SECTION...

- Content & Review Submissions
- Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Review Ratings

CONTENT & REVIEW SUBMISSIONS

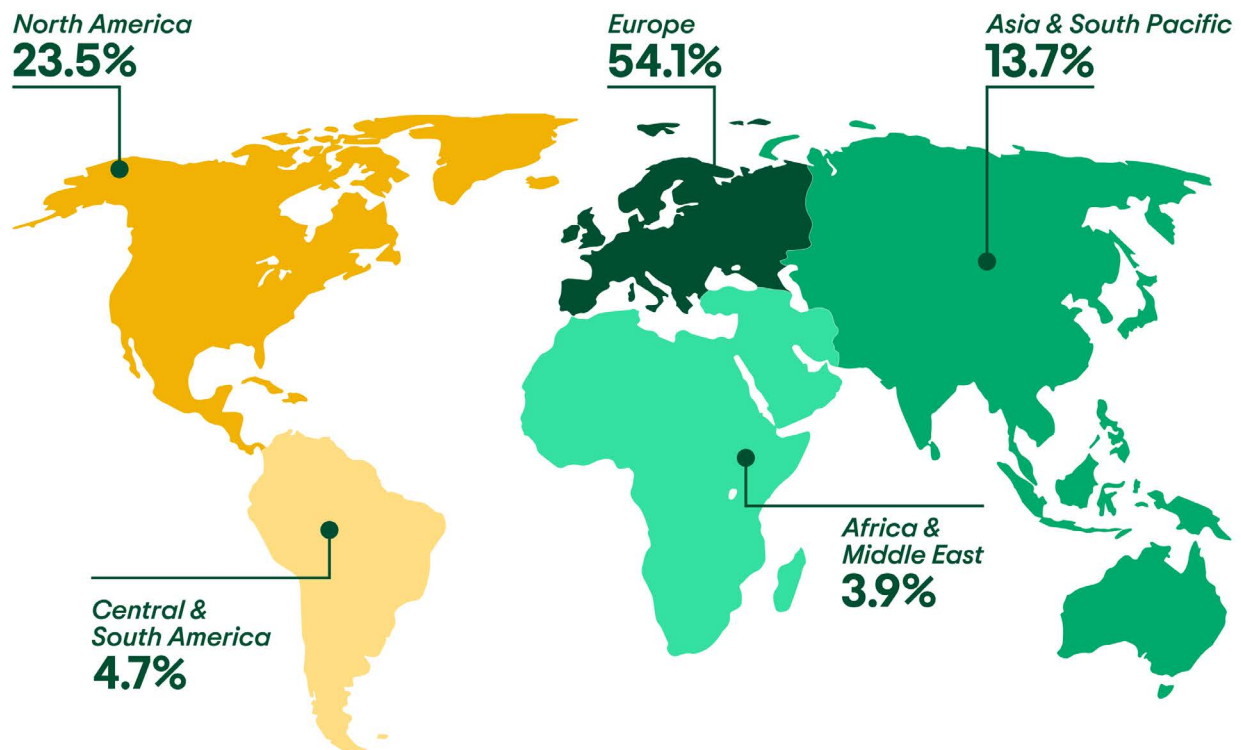
Tripadvisor is the world's largest travel guidance platform, and user-generated content is at the core of our mission. We believe that when individuals share their first-hand experiences of travel, it helps everyone become a better traveller.

In 2020, Tripadvisor received approximately 59 million reviews and opinions from its members around the world. This includes a number of different forms of user-generated content (UGC), such as reviews, management responses (which are submitted by business representatives in reply to reviews), and forum posts. Of these, Tripadvisor received more than 26 million review submissions from its global traveller community in 2020, each averaging 388 characters in length.

Travellers submitted reviews from every continent: 54.1% of submissions were for customer experiences that took place in Europe, 23.5% in North America, 13.7% for Asia and the South Pacific, 4.7% in Central and South America, and 3.9% in Africa, Antarctica, and the Middle East.

Travellers review every part of their journey. In 2020, travellers submitted over 8 million reviews for hotels, over 12 million reviews for restaurants, and over 4 million reviews for experiences, attractions, and activities.

DISTRIBUTION BY CONTINENT



SAFETY FIRST:

HOW COVID-19 CHANGED REVIEW MODERATION AT TRIPADVISOR

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic added another level of complexity both for travellers, when it came to planning a safe trip, and for hospitality business owners, who had to adapt to new regulations and/or introduce special measures to protect the safety of guests and customers.

As a travel guidance platform, it is important that the information available on Tripadvisor reflects this new reality. For this reason, we made the decision to update our community standards and moderation processes to ensure travellers had access to the information they needed and businesses were being treated fairly during this unprecedented time. As the situation continues to evolve, **we've made a number of adjustments** to our review moderation practices since the onset of the pandemic:

- 01 We remove any content that encourages people to ignore government guidelines or restrictions, or discourages people from seeking medical assistance, testing, or promotes misinformation.
- 02 We remove any review criticising an individual business for closing in response to COVID-19 lockdown measures or for the safety of their customers and staff.
- 03 We continue to ban racially insensitive content, including any reviews that refer to the COVID-19 virus as the 'Chinese virus' or 'Wuhan virus'. Reviews naming the virus must use official World Health Organization terminology (such as Coronavirus, or COVID-19).

As a result of these changes, our team manually moderated an additional 257,022 reviews - all of these submissions identified as being related to COVID travel issues. Of those, 17.95% or 46,145 reviews were removed by moderators for violating our posting guidelines. We'll talk more about content moderation later in this report.



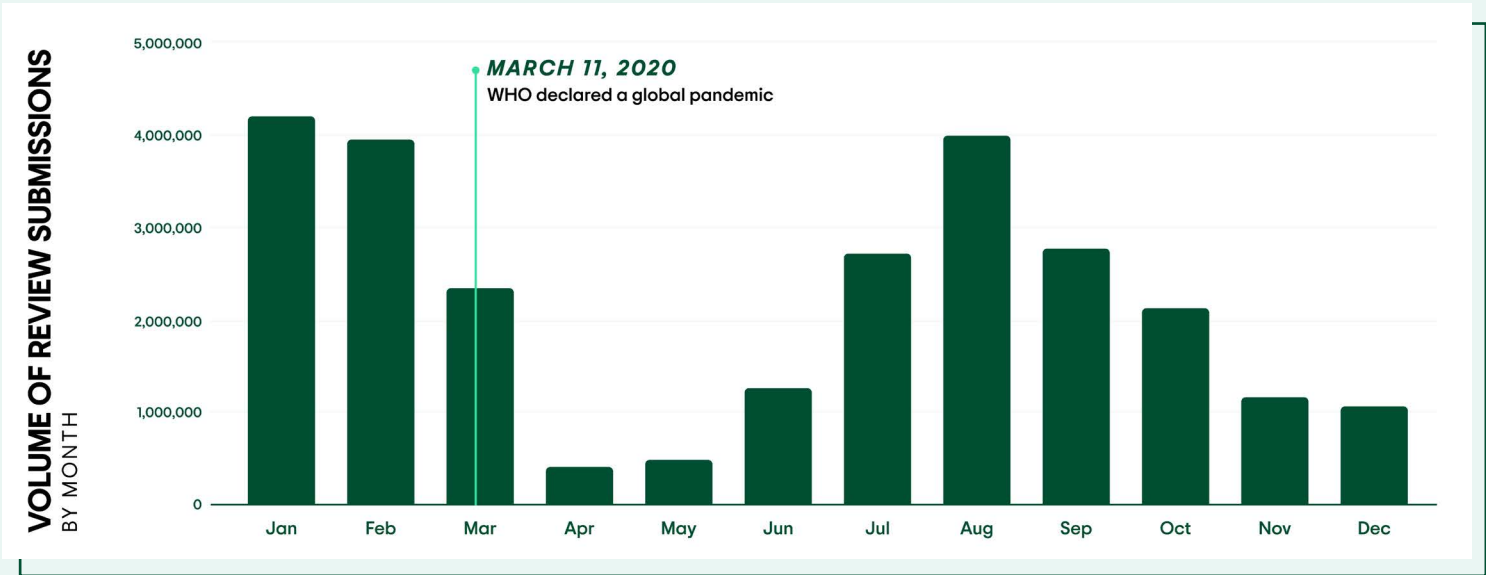
IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically impacted the travel industry – including how travellers used Tripadvisor. With stay-at-home orders enforced in many countries, borders closed, and a global commitment to “stop the spread” – travel came to a standstill.

This meant that overall, travellers submitted fewer reviews on the platform in 2020 compared to previous years, reflective of the fact that the travel community had fewer near-term travel experiences to share.

You can see this most clearly by looking at the breakdown of review submissions by month.

Typically, the volume of reviews spikes in July and August during the Northern Hemisphere’s summer travel season. For example, in 2018, travellers left over 8 million reviews in August alone. By comparison, that number was cut by half in 2020, to approximately 4 million reviews – still lower than review submission totals from January 2020, in the period immediately prior to the pandemic.

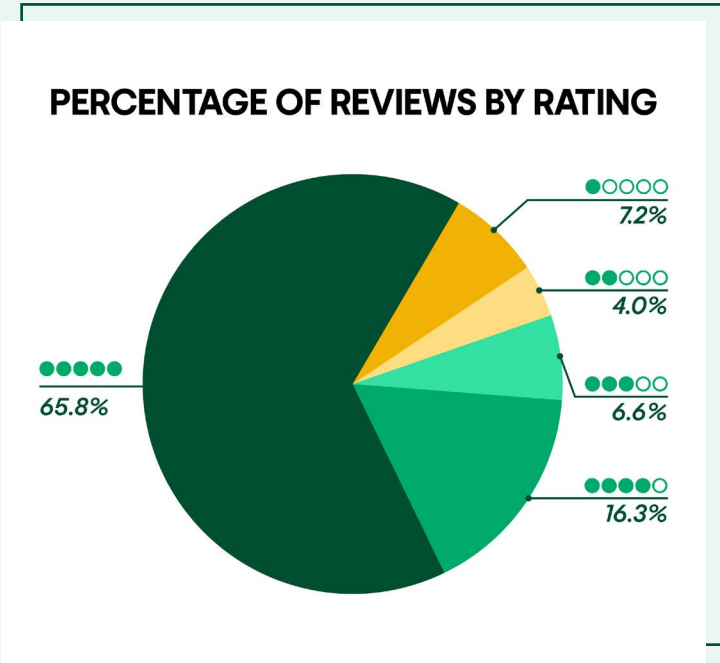


REVIEW RATINGS

When submitting a review on Tripadvisor, travellers submit bubble ratings on a scale from 5 (Excellent) to 1 (Terrible).

Despite the fact that travellers left fewer reviews overall in the past year, the reviews they did leave indicated a higher level of satisfaction – the average review rating in 2020 was 4.30 out of 5.0, up from 4.22 out of 5.0 in 2018 (when we last reported average rating data). Even with all of the challenges the hospitality industry faces today, the majority of travellers submitting reviews on Tripadvisor do so to share their positive experiences and reward businesses that make their experience special.

In fact, one-bubble ratings represent only 7.2% of reviews submitted in 2020. More than eight out of ten reviews (82%) received 4 or 5 bubbles and nearly two-thirds of all reviews received 5 bubbles (65.8%).



SECTION 02

MAINTAINING QUALITY TRAVEL GUIDANCE

BY THE NUMBERS

In total,

8.6%

of all review
submissions were
rejected or removed

That includes over

1.3M

review submissions
that were rejected
before ever being
posted

3.5%

of review
submissions were
removed as a result
of after-posting
moderation

IN THIS SECTION...

- How the Content Moderation Process Works
- A layered approach to moderation
- Investigating Contested Reviews

HOW THE CONTENT MODERATION PROCESS WORKS

People come to Tripadvisor for guidance from those who travelled before them, and they rely on that guidance to make decisions about where to stay, what to do and where to eat. So it is incredibly important that the content we host provides the insight people are looking for. That is why we insist that every piece of content travellers submit to the Tripadvisor platform – whether it is a photo, comment, Management Response, or review – must comply with our community standards.

Specifically, reviews submitted to Tripadvisor must be:

- 01

Recent:
The experience must have occurred within the past 12 months.
- 02

Unbiased:
Individuals or entities affiliated with a property are not allowed to post reviews of their business or competing establishments.
- 03


Non-Commercial:
Reviews cannot contain links or promotional content or advertisements.
- 04

Relevant to travel experiences:
Personal opinions and content irrelevant to the experience are not allowed, including posts about politics, race, ethics, religion, and social issues.
- 05

First-hand:
Reviews must be from the point of view of the traveller authoring them. Rumors, second-hand information, quotations for other sources, or links to news articles will not be published.
- 06

Respectful:
Tripadvisor will not host any content that promotes intolerance for, contains offensive stereotypes of, or incites hatred or bias towards people based on their ethnic or social origin, race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic class, physical or mental ability, immigration status or nationality.


Sample Review



JaneDoe123
1 review

"I enjoyed a fantastic meal here **last week**. The food is delicious. The chef clearly puts an emphasis on fresh, local ingredients and **as a vegan, I had plenty of options** to choose from. **The servers were very friendly and welcoming** and **although the service was a little slow at times, that was understandable given how busy it was.** Loved the ambience and décor too (the restaurant is recently redecorated). I will definitely return!"

Date of visit: Oct 2021

Helpful? 

Recent

Relevant

First Hand

Respectful & Unbiased

A LAYERED APPROACH TO MODERATION

No single mechanism is sufficient to ensure the content appearing on Tripadvisor meets the needs of our traveller community. That's why Tripadvisor uses a two-stage system for screening reviews to ensure they meet our community standards:

PRE-POSTING MODERATION & AFTER-POSTING MODERATION

Pre-posting moderation occurs after a traveller submits a review but before it goes live on the site or app. This process algorithmically screens reviews, automatically eliminating any content that violates Tripadvisor's guidelines, contains misinformation, or spam.

One hundred percent of the traveller reviews submitted to Tripadvisor are screened through this proprietary **review analysis system**. After screening, the system either posts the review, rejects the review, or sends the review for further assessment to our team of human moderators.

The vast majority of review submissions fly through this process.

91.8%

of review submissions in 2020 were posted to the site after an automatic screening, without any additional intervention.

3.1%

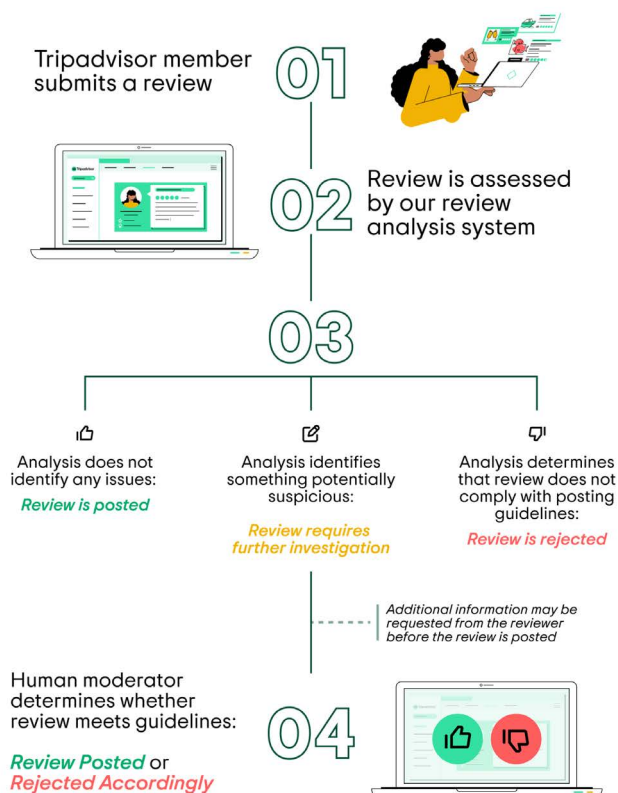
of all review submissions were automatically rejected for clear violations of Tripadvisor's guidelines.

The remaining

5.1%

of reviews were flagged to human moderators for further assessment.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A REVIEW IS SUBMITTED



If the system detects any reason to suspect a review may not be genuine, our team undertakes a deeper assessment before posting.

Tripadvisor has a team of moderators that work around the clock in 28 languages to assess the nuanced factors the automated system may not be able to act on conclusively, including gathering additional information to reach an informed decision. For example, our team may reach out to a reviewer to verify certain information about their review. In 2020, 3.1% of review submissions were posted after a human assessment at the pre-posting stage (i.e. that assessment had been triggered by our review analysis system), while 2% of review submissions were rejected *after* human assessment occurred at the pre-posting stage.

In total, using this layered approach to moderation, Tripadvisor rejected 1.3 million reviews before they ever made it to the site in 2020, or 5.1% of all reviews submitted to the platform - up from 3.2% of submissions in 2018.

A LAYERED APPROACH TO MODERATION (CONTINUED)

INVESTIGATING CONTESTED REVIEWS

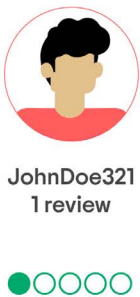
Our goal is always to catch suspicious content before it's ever posted on the site — but no system is perfect. That's why, in addition to assessing reviews flagged by our review analysis system pre-posting, our team of moderators also investigates concerns raised about reviews already posted to the site in a process we call **after-posting moderation**.

Reviews removed as a result of after-posting moderation account for a small minority of reviews submitted to the site. In 2020, less than 4% of all review submissions were manually removed by our moderators after having been live on the platform.

Often, after-posting moderation occurs in response to a report from the Tripadvisor community, which plays an important part in ensuring the integrity of reviews appearing on our platform. 1% of all reviews posted in 2020 were reported by our community — we refer to these as **contested reviews**.

Whenever a review is contested, it automatically prompts an assessment by our moderation team, who determine whether or not the review should be removed. After such an assessment, our team removed 43.1% of all contested reviews in 2020. The remainder (56.9%) complied with our community standards and remained posted.

We want to respond to reports from our community quickly — and we do. Our team responded to 85% of reports in under 4 hours. Across the thousands of contested reviews manually assessed every day, the average response time in 2020 was 5.1 hours. Less than 2% of reports took more than 24 hours.



Report this


Follow

JohnDoe321
1 review

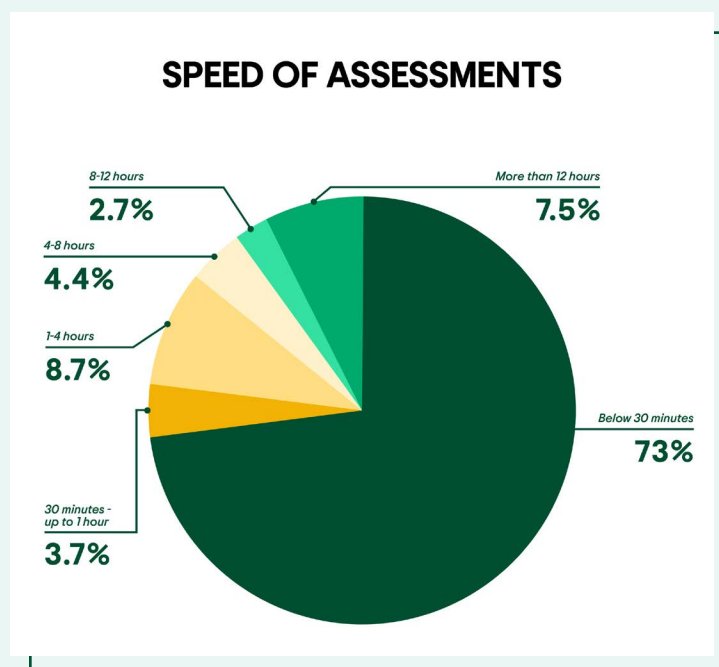
● ○ ○ ○ ○

AVOID THIS HOTEL. The mask police start enforcing masking rules the second you enter the building.. They are clearly in cahoots with the guverment cos COVID-19 is a hoax! Stop forcing us all to wear masks!

Date of visit: Oct 2021

Helpful? 

Travelers can report reviews directly on the site, and business owners can also report suspicious reviews through the Management Center.



In 2020, 99.7% of the contested review reports we received from businesses listed on Tripadvisor were responded to in less than 12 hours. 85.3% of the reports submitted by the wider traveller community (non-business owners) were responded to in less than 12 hours.

Overall, between pre-posting and after-posting moderation, **more than 2 million reviews submissions in 2020 were rejected or removed. That represents 8.6% of all review submissions that year — up from 4.8% in 2018. In the next section, we will outline why reviews get removed or rejected and the reasons behind the increase in rejected content in 2020 versus 2018.**

SECTION 03

A CLOSER LOOK AT REJECTED & REMOVED REVIEWS

BY THE NUMBERS

Tripadvisor caught nearly

1 MILLION

fake review
submissions in 2020

67.1%

of all fake review
submissions never
made it onto the
platform

199

red badge warnings
issued

IN THIS SECTION...

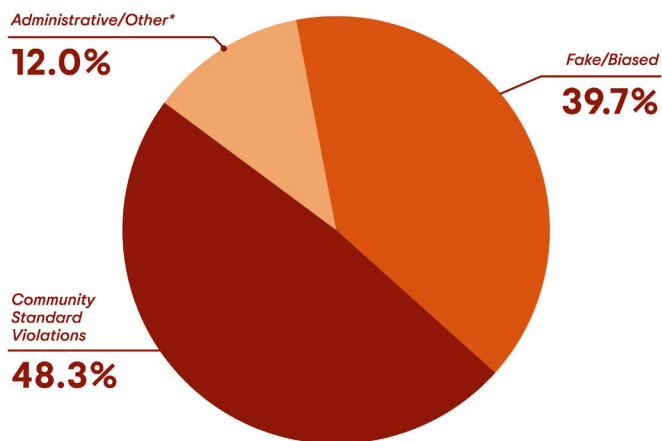
- Why Reviews Get Rejected or Removed
- Combatting Misinformation and Fake Reviews
- Where do paid reviews come from?

WHY REVIEWS GET REJECTED OR REMOVED

Generally, if a review gets rejected or removed it is for one of three reasons: either the review violates our community standard violations, or it is a fake or fraudulent submission intended to deceive travellers, or there is some other administrative reason for its removal (such as the business closing, or the reviewer opting to delete the submission themselves).

When a review violates our community standards in some way, such as through the use of profanity or irrelevant content, it goes through the moderation process described in Section Two. Of the reviews we removed or rejected, 48.3% were because of violations like these, and 12% were removed for administrative reasons. The remaining 39.7% were removed because the submission did not describe a genuine or unbiased experience – we call this category **fake reviews**. A number of world events contributed to this category in 2020 and as such, led to the increase in rejected submissions referenced at the end of Section Two of this report.

REVIEWS REJECTED OR REMOVED IN 2020
BY REASON



*administrative/other includes situations where a business has closed and therefore all reviews are removed, or the reviewer has opted to delete the submission themselves.

COMBATTING MISINFORMATION & FAKE REVIEWS

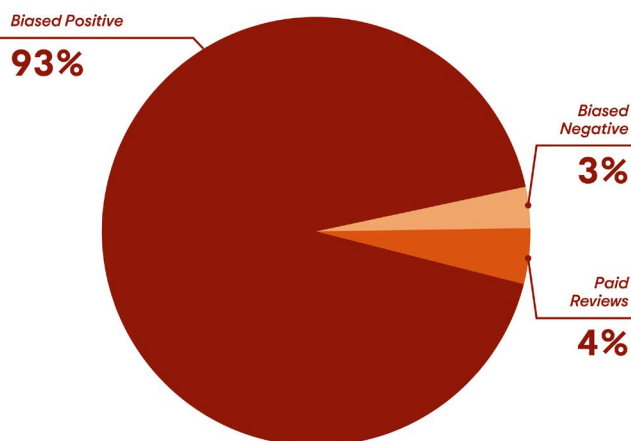
While they represent a very small percentage (3.6%) of the millions of reviews submitted to Tripadvisor in 2020, our team spends countless hours combatting and catching those who attempt to submit fake reviews. Combatting fake reviews is especially important for Tripadvisor and the travel industry because Tripadvisor believes travellers – who are often travelling to parts unknown – should have access to the most relevant, useful, and accurate information available as they plan their journey.

WHAT ARE FAKE REVIEWS?

A **fake review** is any review submitted by someone who is either biased in some way (say, the owner of a competing business) or did not have a personal experience with the business they reviewed. This includes but is not limited to:

- **Biased positive reviews:**
When someone connected with a business – such as an owner, employee, or even a friend or relative – attempts to post a positive review of that business, or when a business offers its customers incentives, such as a free meal or a discount, to post positive reviews. This is also sometimes referred to as review boosting.
- **Biased negative reviews:**
When someone submits a deliberately malicious review about a property in an effort to unfairly lower its ranking position or improperly discredit the property in some way. This is also referred to as review vandalism.
- **Paid reviews:**
When a business, either knowingly or unwittingly, employs the services of an individual or a firm to boost its ranking position on Tripadvisor with positive reviews.

DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY-BASED FRAUD



COMBATTING MISINFORMATION & FAKE REVIEWS

As a result of the layered approach to pre-posting moderation described in Section Two, the majority of fake reviews submitted to Tripadvisor in 2020 (67.1%) never made it live onto the platform.

To catch fraudulent reviews, Tripadvisor employs sophisticated review fraud detection technology – paired with our expert investigative team – that uses best practice techniques from the banking and credit card industry to map hundreds of discrete pieces of online information that help to detect the review's origin and circumstance, as well as its potential connection to other reviews or reviewer accounts.

This includes establishing patterns of suspicious behaviour from paid review operations.

In fact, as a result of the team's efforts, Tripadvisor has put a stop to the activity of over 120 different paid review companies around the world in recent years.

WHERE DO PAID REVIEWS COME FROM?

Paid reviews originate from everywhere in the world and are sometimes tied to major events, like the spike in fake reviews we spotted during the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, where our team shut down 18 different paid review companies attempting to capitalise on the huge increase in visitors that attend and participate in the event.

In 2020, we removed paid reviews from 131 different countries, though paid review submissions were more prevalent in some countries than others. For example, we identified a spike in paid reviews originating from India. Note that this does not mean properties in India were necessarily more prone to paid reviews than properties in other countries – paid reviewers from India, or indeed from any country in the world, will typically attempt to 'sell' review submissions to hospitality businesses all over the world, not just those in their home country.

Our investigators work hard to stay ahead of shifting behaviours of paid reviewers so that however they attempt to infiltrate our platform, we're ready for them. We take fake reviews extremely seriously – because we want to support the vast majority of travellers and business owners that do play by the rules.

TOP TEN COUNTRIES BY VOLUME OF PAID REVIEW SUBMISSIONS IN 2020

- INDIA 01
- GERMANY 02
- BRAZIL 03
- UNITED STATES 04
- PAKISTAN 05
- GREECE 06
- ARGENTINA 07
- BANGLADESH 08
- TURKEY 09
- ITALY 10

PENALTIES:

UPHOLDING COMMUNITY STANDARDS

When we find evidence of activity in opposition of our community standards our team may opt to apply a range of penalties to protect the platform:

- **CONTENT BAN:**

Individual members who persistently breach our community standards may face a content ban, which removes their ability to post reviews and content. As well as banning the user's account, we take measures to prevent the user from being able to create new accounts.

- **RANKING PENALTY:**

If individuals associated with a business are caught submitting fraudulent reviews, the first step – after removing the fake content – is to impose a ranking penalty on that business's listing page on Tripadvisor. A ranking penalty is a reduction of a property's position within Tripadvisor's popularity or traveller ranking for a period of time.

- **RED BADGE:**

In the most severe cases (typically involving repeated attempts by a business to unfairly manipulate reviews of a property or properties), Tripadvisor instituted 199 red badge warnings in 2020. A red badge warning is a highly visible notice on a business's Tripadvisor profile that warns travellers of that business's suspected activity. A red badge warning is also accompanied by a significant enforced ranking penalty.

In 2020, we penalised 34,605 properties for fraudulent activity and banned 20,299 members for failing to abide by our community standards. We also identified 65 new paid review sites in 2020 and blocked paid review submissions from a total of 372 different paid review sites.

SECTION 04

PROTECTING TRAVELLERS & BUSINESSES

BY THE NUMBERS

323

lockdown notices prevented
review bombing behaviour

10,598

non-first hand review
submissions blocked as a result
of these lockdowns

In addition to the extensive moderation processes described in Section Two and Section Three, we also take additional steps to ensure review submissions describe **first-hand customer experiences or interactions.**

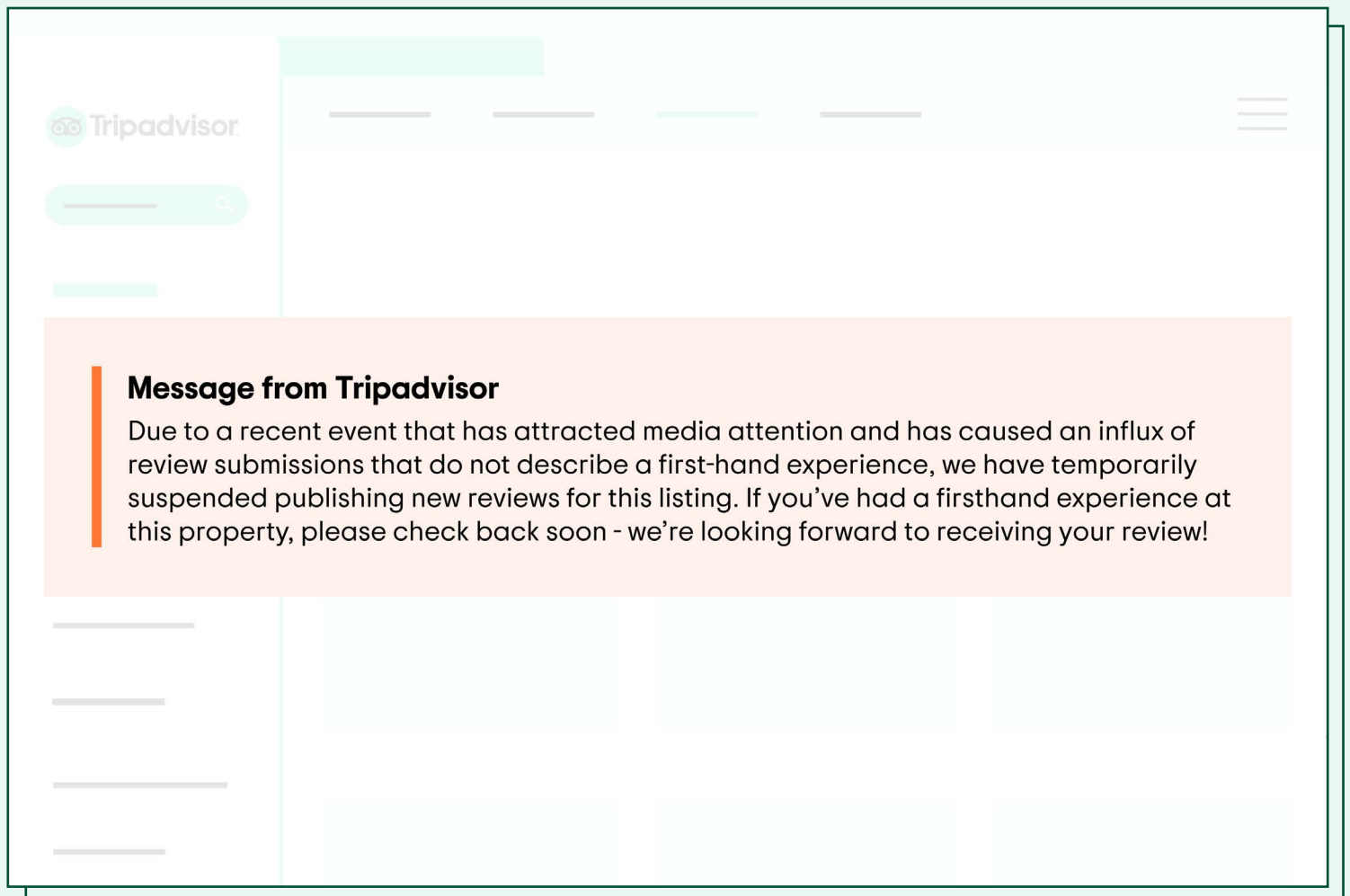
PREVENTING REVIEW BOMBING

High-profile incidents that occur at properties, such as political activity or protests, ‘viral’ social media activity, or news media attention often result in an influx of review submissions that do not describe a first-hand customer experience – and as such do not comply with our community standards. We call this phenomenon **review bombing**.

While our automatic system catches most instances of review bombing, the sheer volume of reviews in such cases requires additional action. In these situations, we institute a **lockdown notice**.

A lockdown notice prevents anyone from submitting a review for that business for a set period of time. In 2020, we placed lockdown notices on 323 properties listed on Tripadvisor, preventing 10,598 non-first hand review submissions from reaching the site during that time.

Lockdown notices aren’t permanent, but they do maintain the integrity of the site, preventing submissions that detract from the first-hand customer experiences our platform is intended for.



CONCLUSION

2020 was a year unlike any other for the travel industry, and our review volumes and trends reflect that. With flights grounded and borders closed, it is no surprise that review volumes dropped. Yet, as soon as customers were able to travel and dine out again, average ratings on Tripadvisor increased, suggesting travellers were excited to reward their favourite hospitality businesses after a year of enormous challenges facing the industry.

We also learned that even during a pandemic, there are those that would try to game the system. While our overall review contributions dropped in line with the slowdown in travel, fraudulent submissions – which of course are not predicated on real customer experiences – did not follow the same trend. Our team remained vigilant and effective at catching would-be fraudsters, and as a result the proportion of reviews we rejected or removed increased compared to pre-pandemic 2018 figures. Our investigators also identified shifting trends in where paid reviews originate from – with India overtaking Russia at the top of the list of countries from which paid reviews were submitted.

Finally, the pandemic itself influenced how our moderation processes took shape – with new community guidelines introduced to ensure reviews did not spread misinformation, and to protect from unfair commentary businesses that have been keeping customers safe.

WHAT'S NEXT

Tripadvisor remains committed to maintaining a safe, responsible and useful platform for all. In pursuit of this, and in the spirit of transparency, we are prioritising a number of new initiatives set to launch in the coming months, including:

- A new dedicated website designed to provide more information on Tripadvisor's Trust & Safety efforts, including but not limited to:
 - Expanded content and community guidelines – now with more detail than ever about what we do and do not allow to be posted on our site
 - Tripadvisor Says NoMore - a first-of-its-kind programme providing hospitality businesses with employee training materials aimed at preventing sexual harassment and assault in the hospitality sector
- A project championing greater transparency around how and when we apply penalties to a property in order to deter fraudulent submissions in future. This includes updates to our communication process to those properties impacted by such penalties so that businesses and consumers can feel confident our penalisation policies are being applied fairly, consistently and proportionately.



BETTER TOGETHER

To say that 2020 was an incredibly challenging year is an understatement. But more than ever, we're in this together.

Tripadvisor has a responsibility to protect the platform that we built for the benefit of everyone in the travel community – businesses and consumers alike. That responsibility is even more true after a year of travel shutdowns, border closures, and lost travel opportunities.

With this 'new normal', ensuring high-quality travel guidance remains a key priority, and one that our team takes very seriously.

Even as we proactively seek out paid review companies and fraudulent activity, we need your help. Our passionate community is a valuable partner in protecting the content on our platform, and we encourage any user with a concern about a review to report it to us for further investigation. We act on every report we receive.

We also welcome the opportunity to work more closely with other platforms to root out paid reviewers. We know from our investigations that paid review firms rarely target a single platform – if someone is trying to infiltrate Tripadvisor with fake reviews, the chances are they are doing the same to Google, Facebook, Amazon and others. And while we have seen progress in the last two years as more and more platforms have followed our lead towards greater transparency around their review moderation practices, there is still more that can be achieved if we work together.

Similarly, we are open to working closely with hospitality businesses, consumer rights organisations, regulators and law enforcement agencies to identify and prosecute paid review fraudsters.

If you want to join the fight against paid reviews, please contact our team directly at paidreviews@tripadvisor.com.



GLOSSARY

A

After-posting moderation:

a process of determining whether content complies with the Tripadvisor guidelines which takes place after a piece of content has been posted to the platform.

Assessment, or human assessment:

an assessment carried out by a member of the Tripadvisor content moderation team to determine whether or not a review complies with the content guidelines.

B

Bubble rating, or rating:

a score from 5 (Excellent) to 1 (Terrible) that Tripadvisor users are asked to provide whenever they submit a review of a business or point of interest. A rating is intended to represent a reviewer's level of satisfaction with their customer experience.

Business representative:

a business owner or member of staff who is registered as such on Tripadvisor.

C

Content guidelines, or guidelines:

a set of rules that every piece of content must abide by, ensuring that user-generated content is useful and relevant to travellers.

Content moderation:

the process by which Tripadvisor assesses whether reviews and other user-generated content comply with its content guidelines.

Content moderation team, or moderation team:

a dedicated team at Tripadvisor tasked with ensuring reviews and other user-generated content comply with its content guidelines.

Content removal:

the act of removing any content found to violate the Tripadvisor content guidelines. Note that once a review is removed, any ratings associated with that content no longer factor into the property's average rating or ranking position on the platform.

Contested review:

any review which a traveller or business representative has notified Tripadvisor about in relation to its potential non-compliance with the platform's content guidelines.

F

Fake review:

any review that is written either by someone who is not an unbiased traveller (such as a business representative or competitor) or by someone who is deliberately trying to influence a property's average rating or ranking position even though they did not have a personal customer experience with the business they are reviewing.

L

Listing:

a page on Tripadvisor that profiles a specific business or point of interest, and which displays user-generated content relating to that place, such as reviews and photos.

Lockdown notice:

a protective measure designed to stop an influx of non-first hand reviews on a given business' profile, see also **review bombing**

M

Management Center:

a dedicated section on Tripadvisor that registered business representatives can access.

Management response:

a reply from a business representative submitted in response to a particular review. Management responses found to be in compliance with the content guidelines are posted below the review in question and are thus visible to all users of the platform.

P

Posted / hosted:

the description given to any piece of content that is hosted live on Tripadvisor and therefore visible to other users.

Pre-posting moderation:

a process of determining whether content complies with the Tripadvisor guidelines which occurs prior to that content being posted to the platform.

Property:

a general term given to any business or point of interest listed on Tripadvisor.

R

Ranking:

the Traveller Ranking of a property on Tripadvisor. The traveller (or popularity) ranking reflects a business's popularity based on the quality, quantity, recency and consistency of reviews on Tripadvisor.

Ranking penalty:

the reduction of a property's position within the popularity or traveller ranking for a period of time.

Red penalty badge:

the Traveller Ranking of a property on Tripadvisor. The traveller (or popularity) ranking reflects a business's popularity based on the quality, quantity, recency and consistency of reviews on Tripadvisor.

Rejected review:

a review that was found to be in breach of the Tripadvisor content guidelines at the pre-posting stage and at no stage was posted live to the platform.

Removed review:

a review that is removed from Tripadvisor after being posted.

Report:

an online form hosted on Tripadvisor which allows travellers or business representatives to notify Tripadvisor about a particular review if they believe that review may not comply with the platform's content guidelines.

Review analysis system, or analysis system:

the technology that Tripadvisor uses to track and analyse review submissions.

Review bombing:

a sudden and typically short-lived spike in non-first hand review submissions for a particular business or property, often triggered by commentary in editorial media relating to that property

Review fraud:

any deliberate attempt by an individual or group of individuals to post false, biased or misleading reviews.

Review submission:

any review that has been submitted to the platform by a registered Tripadvisor user but is not yet posted or visible. Note that a submitted review is not immediately visible to other users on the platform, and must first go through a pre-posting moderation process to determine whether or not the review will be posted for others to see.

U

User-generated content, or UGC:

any piece of content (such as a review, photo or forum post) that has been submitted to Tripadvisor by a registered user.

METHODOLOGY & ENDNOTES

All statistics are based on reviews submitted to Tripadvisor between (and inclusive of) January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020, along with any further moderation actions that may have been taken on those reviews through January 31, 2021.

All references to 2018 data are sourced from the [2019 Review Transparency Report](#).

The metrics in the report focus on traveller review content only. Unless otherwise stated, the data does not cover other content types on the platform, such as management responses, forum posts, photos, videos, and Q&As. For example, if a photo submitted alongside a review was queued for manual moderation, the review would not be counted as manually moderated in this report because the issue was only with the photo, not the review. However, if the review was also flagged for manual moderation by the technology system or reported by the community, it would be included in the data in this report.

The data collection methodology and its results have been vetted for accuracy and confirmed by multiple teams across Tripadvisor, including data analysts, review moderation managers and fraud investigators. Every possible effort has been made to ensure the data in this report is accurate; however, it is not possible to completely eliminate every margin of error.

By the same token, there is always the potential for human error in human content moderation, particularly on complex decisions where there is a degree of subjectivity – such as whether a review includes offensive language, as some words and phrases may be offensive in some contexts and not in others. There is also the possibility of a margin of error resulting from unforeseen technical errors, such as software bugs or tool outages, although given the scale of data included in the report and the rigor with which it has been analysed, any impact on the figures included herein would be minimal.

As a global report, the metrics are presented in aggregate across all 28 languages that Tripadvisor supports globally. With English being the largest language by review volume, the aggregate metrics are most representative of English-language reviews. Data related to smaller-volume individual languages might experience deviations from the aggregate averages, for example in areas such as processing times or removal rates. Occasionally, a review may be reported more than once. For example, multiple users could dispute a single review or an owner could disagree with a decision to keep a review posted and may report the review a second time.

For the purposes of this report, such a review is counted as ‘reported’ only once. However, the measure for turnaround times considers all reports, whether it is the first report of the review or a duplicate.

