



**GRADING GLOBAL TRAVEL GROWTH: IT'S A MATTER
OF OPINION**

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“Seriously? You call this ‘luxury’? Not in my opinion.”

And in just a heartbeat and click, a rating of 3 is posted on a 5-star establishment. The e-voice of the traveller has spoken. At precisely the same time but in a timezone half a world away, a 3-star resort is given a rating of 5 for exceptional service, while right next door a local restaurant receives reinforcement of its average rating of 4. Click. Click. Click.

With each and every minute that passes, the voice gets louder and louder. Volume and volumes strengthens as the social opinion sharing space reaches wider and deeper around the travelling world. In the time taken to read these opening lines, over 255 traveller opinions have already been posted in the form of TripAdvisor reviews. Remarkable.

THE POWER OF ONE

Ours is a generation of true social evolution, and at times, revolution. Ultimately, the core DNA of the sharing economy is, first and foremost, the sharing of opinions. One-to-millions connectivity and conversation has become a way of life. Media is now two-way, sharing coming from all directions, all the time, all without filters.

The global Travel & Tourism (T&T) sector, at the heart of this unprecedented advancement of opinion-based community of connectivity, continues, with each click to bring travellers together from near and far. Being a sector valuing traveller feedback, be it bragging or bad news spreading, opinions have become invaluable equity.

At the helm, TripAdvisor, without question the world’s most trusted travel review site. Born just sixteen years ago, the site’s stats tell a remarkable story of the world’s desire to share personally sourced information, insights, and ideas.

As shared by Helena Egan, Director of Global Industry Relations, TripAdvisor, which operates in over 48 markets and through over 28 languages, proudly:

“offers advice from real travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with seamless links to booking tools that check hundreds of websites to find the best hotel prices. TripAdvisor branded sites make up the largest travel community in the world, reaching 390 million average monthly unique visitors, and reached 435 million reviews and opinions covering 6.8 million accommodations, restaurants and attractions. The sites operate in 48 markets worldwide. TripAdvisor: Know better. Book better. Go better.”

The nuts and bolts are nothing but awe inspiring, composed of more than 6.6 million businesses and properties in 135,000 destinations, including:

- 1 million+ hotels, B&Bs, and specialty lodging

- 815,000 vacation rentals
- 4.1 million restaurants
- 690,000 attractions and experiences
- More than 70 million candid traveler photos.
- More than 255 new contributions are posted every minute.
- 110 million marketable members worldwide.
- nearly 2,600 new topics posted every day to the TripAdvisor forums.

In the travel opinion sharing space, necessity was indeed the mother of invention. As shared by Egan,:

“When TripAdvisor started above a pizza shop in 2000, there wasn’t any other place where users could get unbiased opinions from other travellers. Our CEO and co-founder, Steve Kaufer, was planning a trip to Mexico and wasn’t sure which hotel to choose. He went online to look for more information but ended up seeing the same photos and descriptions as in the brochures. He wanted to read about other guests’ experiences, and that’s how the idea for TripAdvisor was born. (Today), the scale of our site allows travellers to get the wisdom of the crowd, and with 255 new reviews submitted every minute our content is never static, giving consumers fresh information whether they are choosing a place to eat around the corner from home, or a place to stay on the other side of the world.”

Just as the social community space has grown and matured, so has its usage. Social connectivity has given voice to hundreds of millions of people, with a multitudes of opinions of experiences they are so excited to get out. 140 keystrokes of fame have become familiar daily information feeds. The technology ecosystem has given life to a parallel egosystem.

The power of the click did, in its early days, cause great pain for many an establishment. Travellers on a mission to find fault and report put the traveller opinion space into serious jeopardy of reputation and bookings. Business were put into positions of great vulnerability, threats of guest ratings turning unfair, unjust demands into exhausting, unnerving tests of deliver...or else.

A 360 DEGREE APPROACH

Recognising the need to channel the exceptional strength of the traveller community towards more responsible usage of views and voice, the over 3400 employees of TripAdvisor worldwide are overtly steering users of their powerful platform towards upliftment of T&T, the world’s fastest growing economic sector, in a truly sustainable, equitable way for both travellers and destinations alike.

Egan explains:

“TripAdvisor was built on three key principles: to give travellers a voice, to promote transparency in the travel industry, and to level the playing field for businesses large and small. By staying true to these principles, we believe we have had a positive impact on the travel industry over the course of the last decade. Reviews are powerful: not only do they strongly influence consumers’ booking decisions, they also help to improve service standards across the hospitality industry. When we consider the impact that reviews have, it’s clear that the integrity of the content on TripAdvisor is fundamental to our company’s continued success, so we take content moderation and any attempts at fraudulent activity on the site extremely seriously.”

In tandem, the power of reach has enabled TripAdvisor to become a critical resource for the industry itself.

THE WORLD AT THEIR FINGERTIPS

The T&T sector, applauded for being the source of over 1 in 11 jobs worldwide, has at its heart the ability to unlock the stability of SMMEs (small, medium and micro enterprises) worldwide, yielding economic, social and environmental sustainability. Working in partnership with disruptors and therefore innovators of the sector such as the world’s richest database of traveller reviews, the sector is able to tap into insight from the front line of evolving traveller needs, concerns and aspirations of experiences.

TripAdvisor sees this partnership with the wider industry as part of its ability to unlock greater good within the sector for both travellers and where they seek to explore.

“We revolutionised the travel sector with user-reviews when we began 16 years ago. However, the sector continues to transform at a fast pace and we must adapt to new consumer needs. We believe that mobile technology is going to become more and more important in making a traveller’s life easier in future. Consumers have an always-on, incredibly powerful computer in their pocket that can turn the in-destination experience into something that is meaningfully better than it is today.”

Embracing new generation T&T partnerships such as with TripAdvisor, Airbnb, and other sharing economy entities widening and deepening the playing field of the industry, ensures that growth of the sector is truly sustainable, at all levels, including embedding the responsibility of both travellers and the travel sector.

Sharing opinions, and information, insights, and infrastructure becomes a powerful fuel to elevate the impact of the T&T sector, reinforcing its rating as a global force for good.

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