

## **FTC Sues Match.com Owner for Alleged Fake Love-Interest Ads**

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The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) announced in a press release on September 25, 2019, that it has filed a Complaint against Match Group, Inc. (Match), the owner of Match.com, Tinder, OKCupid, PlentyOfFish and other alternative dating sites, alleging that it “used fake love interest advertisements to trick hundreds of thousands of consumers into purchasing paid subscriptions on Match.com” and “unfairly exposed consumers to the risk of fraud and engaged in other allegedly deceptive and unfair practices.”

According to the press release, the FTC alleges that Match “offered false promises of ‘guarantees,’ failed to provide services to consumers who unsuccessfully disputed charges, and made it difficult for users to cancel their subscriptions.”

The crux of the deceptive and unfair practices allegation is that although Match allows users to create a profile for free, it allegedly sends messages to users that someone is looking at their profile, like “He just emailed you! You caught his eye and now he’s expressed interest in you. Could he be the one?”

Although Match sends these messages to users, it will not allow the user to respond to any messages or find out more about who is looking at their profile unless the user pays for a subscription. The FTC further alleges that the messages are actually from scammers and not love interests, and that Match knew this when sending the message to the user.

According to the FTC, many consumers fell for the scheme and paid for subscriptions in order to reply to emails of love interests, only to find out that the one on the other end was a scammer. The FTC alleges that “as many as 25 to 30 percent of Match.com members who register each day are using Match.com to attempt to perpetrate scams, including romance scams, phishing schemes, fraudulent advertising, and extortion scams.”

The FTC also alleges that Match conducted deceptive advertising, billing and cancellation practices, and violated the Restore Online Shoppers’ Confidence Act.

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