BRICS COMPETITION LAW&POLICY CENTRE

July 26 – August 1, 2026

Chinese antitrust.

Review №25 (2026)

QUOTES

"Trip.com places merchants in a dilemma: *if they refuse to cooperate, they lose customers; if they agree to cooperate, they end up under the platform's control.* The requirement to offer the lowest price on the Internet may appear to benefit consumers, but in reality it is unsustainable. When merchants' profits are squeezed to the point where they can no longer maintain normal operations, service quality declines and investment in innovation falls, ultimately harming consumers themselves."

Shi Jianzhong, Deputy Head of the Expert Advisory Group on Anti-Monopoly Law and Unfair Competition under the Legislative Affairs Commission of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, commenting on the antitrust penalty imposed on Trip.com[1]

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[1] Source: WeChat

Trip.com Hit with US$765 Million Antitrust Penalty

China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) has imposed administrative sanctions on online travel platform Trip.com for engaging in anticompetitive practices. The total amount of fines and disgorgement reached **US$765 million**.

According to the investigation, since 2020 Trip.com has abused its dominant position in China's online hotel booking market by:

1. Requiring certain accommodation providers to cooperate exclusively with the platform;

2. Requiring certain categories of hotels to offer the "lowest price on the Internet." Whenever prices on Trip.com exceeded those offered by competitors, the platform forcibly lowered them either through technical tools or manual intervention.

These practices constitute an abuse of market dominance prohibited under Article 22 of China's Anti-Monopoly Law, including unjustified restrictions on transactions, the imposition of unreasonable trading conditions, and the use of data, algorithms, technologies, and platform rules to abuse a dominant market position.

SAMR ordered Trip.com to cease its illegal conduct, disgorge US$245 million in unlawful gains, and pay a US$520 million fine (equivalent to 7.5% of its 2025 China turnover). In addition, the regulator required the company to reimburse US$18 million that had been improperly withheld from accommodation providers through reserve funds.

The Trip.com case marks the first antitrust enforcement action in China's online travel booking sector, the first case involving a "lowest price on the Internet" requirement, and the first application of a three-part penalty consisting of a fine, disgorgement of illegal gains, and reimbursement of improperly collected fees.

Trip.com has already responded to SAMR's decision by announcing 19 measures to restore competition, including the immediate termination of exclusive cooperation arrangements and the complete shutdown of its price adjustment tools.

Sources: SAMR 1, SAMR 2, WeChat

Airlines Ordered to Address Overbooking Violations

In early July, consumer associations from Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei jointly investigated unfair practices in airline ticket booking. Based on the findings, they held a joint meeting with representatives of 10 airlines, including Air China, China Southern, and Hainan Airlines, as well as five online ticketing platforms: Tongcheng, Trip.com, Fliggy, Qunar, and Meituan.

The violations identified included misleading ticket information displays (such as important information shown in small, low-contrast font), poor customer service, unfair compensation policies in overbooking cases, and inadequate channels for consumer complaints.

The associations required airlines and ticketing platforms to conduct internal compliance reviews and rectify the identified violations by 31 August 2026.

Source: WeChat

Draft Anti-Cyberbullying Law Released for Public Consultation

The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) has released the draft PRC Anti-Cyberbullying Law for public consultation. Comments will be accepted until 28 August.

The proposed legislation is expected to establish a comprehensive legal framework for combating cyberbullying by assigning responsibilities to online platforms, government

authorities, courts, and society as a whole.

Particular emphasis is placed on the responsibilities of internet platforms. They would be required to establish dedicated monitoring and rapid-response mechanisms, introduce accountability systems for violations, and actively deploy AI tools to detect and address cyberbullying. The draft law also provides for support measures for victims of online harassment.

Sources: Xinhua, CAC

SAMR Launches Overseas Antitrust Compliance Campaign

SAMR has launched a nationwide campaign to strengthen antitrust compliance among Chinese companies operating overseas.

The approximately one-year campaign will focus on overseas investment, cross-border mergers and acquisitions, and exports of Chinese products. Its key objectives include:

- Enhancing Chinese companies' knowledge and capabilities regarding compliance with foreign competition laws;
- Embedding antitrust compliance throughout the business processes of Chinese companies operating in international markets;
- Increasing the involvement of industry associations in compliance efforts through consulting services, risk assessments, and related activities;
- Strengthening international exchanges of knowledge and best practices in competition law enforcement.

Source: SAMR

Overseas Antitrust Series: Colombia

In 2026, SAMR launched an infographic series introducing the competition law frameworks and enforcement systems of foreign jurisdictions.

The latest installment focuses on Colombia, outlining the country's principal competition laws, merger filing thresholds, and key types of anticompetitive conduct.

Previous editions have covered the competition law regimes of the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, Canada, Italy, Germany, Australia, Chile, France, Mexico, and Turkey.

Source: WeChat