

## EasyJet founder accuses charity shopping website of ‘falsehoods’

By Luke Barr

THE founder of easyJet has accused a charity shopping website of “falsehoods” in an intensifying legal battle over alleged trademark infringement.

Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou raised concerns about Easyfundraising in a letter sent to Helen Stephenson, the Charity Commission’s chief executive.

The airline billionaire claims that Easyfundraising has misled customers by spreading alleged “falsehoods” about its business model. Easyfundraising has strongly denied wrongdoing.

It forms part of a broader High Court dispute between Sir Stelios and Easyfundraising, centred on claims that the UK’s biggest charity shopping site is a “brand thief” that has infringed the “easy” trademark.

Easyfundraising, founded in 2005 and backed by private equity firm Palatine, works with brands by donating a percentage of every sale to good causes.

The organisation – which operates as a limited company, not a charity – claims to have raised about £50m for thousands of initiatives across the UK.

Sir Stelios alleged in his letter that the company was in potential breach of charity law, attacking both Palatine and James Moir, Easyfundraising’s chief executive. He said: “In preparing for the legal action against Palatine/Moir, I realised that their business model can only be profitable if they seek to propagate two falsehoods.

“One falsehood is that they are a charitable endeavour when they are not, and the second falsehood is that they have something to do with easyJet when they don’t. We call such companies we take to court ‘brand thieves’”

He claims that Easyfundraising has also “exploited the uncertainty around their status as a charity to their advantage”, adding that it has engaged “in activities of significant concern from a charity law and regulatory perspective”.

Mr Moir has hit back at the claims, telling *The Telegraph* that Easyfundraising has never professed to be a charity.

“While thousands of charities and causes benefit thanks to our platform, at no point has Easyfundraising ever claimed to be a charity,” he said.

“This case is a trademark infringement case, although in desperation easyGroup are now throwing as much mud at the wall as they can in a poor attempt to discredit us.

“We have nothing to hide and are more than happy to supply any additional information should the Charity Commission require it.” Mr Moir has said its company trademark was approved in 2010, stressing the brand is not remotely similar to easyGroup. A trial is expected to go ahead in June.

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