

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **OTA & Travel Distribution Update - China prepares unprecedented online tourism regulation; Hilton reinforces direct booking messaging with Anna Kendrick campaign; Another platform featuring short-term rentals**

By Greg Duff on 10.5.18 | Posted in OTA Update

### **[And You Thought Today's Health and Safety Requirements Were Tough](#)**

*("China Prepares Unprecedented Online Tourism Regulation," Stories, September 28, 2018)*

Those of you who have negotiated online travel agency agreements likely recall the dreaded "Health and Safety" provisions mandated by most online travel agencies. As proposed, these provisions allow online travel agencies to reach deep into participating hotels' operations to evaluate the hotels' preparedness for handling health and safety emergencies. Those provisions are likely to get much tougher – at least for those of you with properties or other operations located in China. According to a report issued by Bloomberg last week, the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism is poised to issue sweeping new regulations targeting online travel agencies and platforms. According to Bloomberg, the new regulations would require online travel providers to "improve rescue and emergency plans, better vet and manage their on-ground service providers, purchase liability insurance and protect clients' personal information." The regulations are likely to take effect later this year following a mandatory 60-day public comment period.

### **[William Shatner, Kaley Cuoco, Creepy Trivago Guy, Captain Obvious and Now Anna Kendrick](#)**

*("Hilton doubles-down on 'book direct' messaging with Anna Kendrick campaign," Advertising Age, September 28, 2018)*

Through the years, the online travel industry has featured its share of interesting TV spokespeople – some famous and some not. Hilton and its aggressive direct booking campaign have now joined the spokesperson wars this past week with TV spots featuring Anna Kendrick. The spots feature Kendrick demonstrating the many virtues of booking direct as both a warm, friendly Hilton reservations agent and as a gum-chewing (and spitting), arrogant agent for an unnamed online travel agency.

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#### **Yet Another Platform Featuring Short-Term Rentals**

*("Thomas Cook Looks to Expedia For Vacation Rental Access," Skift Travel News, September 24, 2018)*

Late last year we featured a story on the newly announced partnership between Thomas Cook and Expedia. That partnership is now expanding as the parties look for new ways to incorporate each other's products and services on their distribution platforms, including adding short-term rentals to Thomas Cook's vacation package business via Expedia's vacation rental platform, Homeaway. It may not be long before Thomas Cook's traditional tour products feature vacation rentals or other forms of alternative accommodations instead of hotels.

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Other news:

#### **How Booking Holdings Is Plotting the Next Decade of Online Travel Innovation**

*Skift Travel News, September 27, 2018*

The Booking Holdings CEO is taking the long view, which can be difficult for the leader of a public company to accomplish while growing stock value. The opportunity is there, though, for the online booking leader to improve its offerings with data-based personalization. After years of impressive growth, online booking sites like Booking.com and Expedia have suffered a slight slowdown in growth and pulled back on online marketing in a search for a more cost-effective way to acquire customers.

#### **TripAdvisor wants to become your Facebook for travel**

*Fast Company News, September 17, 2018*

With its new social network, the online review site hopes to leverage its vast user base and build something that looks more like a community. TripAdvisor is starting to look a lot more like Facebook.