

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update: Lufthansa partners with AI-powered predictive platform; Priceline corners military market; Airbnb seeks to expand its corporate business

By Greg Duff on 2.1.19 | Posted in OTA Update

This week's Update features a heavy dose of Airbnb as it celebrates a milestone. Enjoy.

Lufthansa Partners with AI-Powered Predictive Platform

("Lufthansa invests alongside Hopper, plotting collaboration on artificial intelligence-led tools," Phocuswright, January 23, 2019)

The Canadian company, Hopper, has been the subject of several previous Updates. The application-based booking platform, which uses predictive analytics to forecast airfares and room rates, announced last week a "multi-million dollar" partnership with European airline, Lufthansa. According to the two new partners, the benefits of the newly announced partnership include giving Lufthansa access to Hopper's AI to identify traveler preferences and predict demand and providing Hopper a much needed entrance to the European market.

Priceline Corners Military Market

("U.S. Department of Defense and Priceline team up to create travel booking site for military," USA Today - Top News Stories, January 22, 2019)

Priceline and the US Department of Defense announced last week the launch of American Forces Travel, a leisure travel website for current and former members of the US military (and their families). The site will feature discounted hotels, flights, rental cars, cruises, apartments and rental homes on a (non-opaque) standalone and package basis. Transactions booked on the new website will generate a commission to be used to support quality of life programs. Hoteliers that may have previously agreed to extend discounted rates or other benefits to members of Priceline's "closed groups" should anticipate seeing those rates and benefits being made available to users of this new website.

Airbnb Seeks to Expand Its Corporate Business

("Airbnb acquires Gaest.com for booking offsite meetings," ZDNet - News, January 25, 2019)

In an effort to expand its Airbnb for Work user base, Airbnb announced last week its acquisition of Danish company, Gaest.com. Gaest.com connects corporate users on 6 continents with

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spaces they can rent for meetings, team building or social events. While Airbnb has made great strides growing its Airbnb for Work program (nearly 700,000 companies are represented), adding third party owned meeting and event space to the platform allows Airbnb to appeal to the 75% of corporate employees who do not travel on a regular basis.

It was great seeing many of you last week in NYC at HSMIA's annual Digital Marketing Conference and Chief Digital Officer Roundtable.

Other news:

Airbnb and hotel distribution - (almost) one year in

Phocuswire, January 23, 2019

It's been almost a full year (on February 7, to be exact) since Airbnb unveiled its partnership with SiteMinder, officially opening up the platform to a third-party hotel distribution network for the first time. While previously, boutique hotels and bed and breakfasts could list independently on the site, SiteMinder became the first platform to act as a channel manager on a global scale, allowing its portfolio of properties (that meet certain Airbnb-style criteria) to be featured alongside existing Airbnb homes. Nearly 365 days since the deal was announced, Airbnb is reporting a 152% increase in the number of hotel rooms available - or, more specifically, rooms available in properties categorized by hosts as "boutique hotels, bed and breakfasts and other hospitality venues like hostels and resorts."

Travelstart adds business travel feature

ITWeb - News, January 23, 2019

Online travel agency Travelstart has introduced a new service aimed at making it easy for businesses to make travel bookings on the platform. The online travel agency says its new business travel booking and reporting tool, Travelstart for Business, offers a dashboard, allowing companies to create a business account and add all employees to one unified platform. Users can toggle between their personal and business travel accounts within the Travelstart site, separating personal and leisure bookings from those which are work-related.