

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update: TripAdvisor continues to defend claims of fake reviews; Booking.com and others create travel sustainability pact; Vacasa strikes direct connect deal with Google

By Greg Duff on 9.13.19 | Posted in OTA Update

Fall has definitely arrived here in the Pacific Northwest. This week's OTA & Travel Distribution Update is below and features stories on TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Vacasa and the soon-to-be-effective, Strong Customer Authentication (SCA). Enjoy.

TripAdvisor Continues to Defend Claims of Fake Reviews

("TripAdvisor defends itself against claim that up to one in seven reviews might be fake," CNN Recent News on Sep 6, 2019)

It seems that every few months we hear claims that some material portion of TripAdvisor's many guest reviews are suspect. The latest claim comes from UK consumer group Which? Travel, which claims that 1 in 7 reviews for the 10 top ranked hotels in 10 global destinations is fake. According to Which? Travel, it evaluated nearly 250,000 reviews for the top ranked hotels and found "blatant hallmarks" of fake reviews. What is perhaps most troubling about this latest claim, is that many of hotels identified by Which? Travel as benefitting from these allegedly fake reviews had been previously identified by TripAdvisor as using fake reviews within the past year (and in some cases, even penalized for the reviews). Hotels located in the Middle East and Las Vegas were identified as likely being some of the worst culprits.

Booking.com and Others Create Travel Sustainability Pact

("Booking.com, Skyscanner, Ctrip and TripAdvisor join travel sustainability pact," Phocus Wire on Sep 3, 2019)

Some of the biggest names in online travel announced last week plans to form a global partnership ("Travelyst") to encourage sustainable tourism. Participants include Booking.com, Skyscanner, Ctrip and TripAdvisor, as well as payment brand Visa. Areas of focus for the newly announced partnership include protecting wildlife, tackling climate change, reversing environmental damage and addressing overtourism. I applaud the initiative being shown by these groups and hope to see soon tangible evidence that this is more than a simple

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marketing campaign.

Vacasa Strikes Direct Connect Deal with Google

("Vacasa integrates with Google to bring its vacation rental properties to the top of search results," GeekWire on Sep 5, 2019)

Vacation rental management company Vacasa announced last week that it had reached agreement with Google to feature Vacasa's 14,000 rental properties within Google's hotel search results. Users seeking to book one of the rentals will be directed to Vacasa's website to complete the booking. Unlike its established hotel business (which is highly monetized), Google's vacation rental business is still in its infancy. For example, according to Vacasa, this newly announced integration is not monetized - Vacasa doesn't yet have to compete monetarily for placement against other distribution channels that may be able to offer the same rental property. This will obviously change at some point. For now, Google is making clear its intention to become a major player in the vacation rental distribution business one step (and one supplier) at a time.

Other news:

The European Hospitality Sector calls on delay enforcement of SCA

The Paypers - Headlines on Sep 5, 2019

The European Hospitality Sector (HOTREC) has called on national authorities to delay enforcement of Strong Customer Authentication as offered by EBA. HOTREC also calls on national competent authorities to agree with the EBA on a common deadline and European roadmap for implementation of SCA by all merchants and Payment Service Providers.