

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **Online Travel Update: Expedia dominates early 2021 television advertising; powerhouse technology and health care companies join forces to create vaccination passport; Apple moves forward with controversial privacy requirements**

By Greg Duff on 1.29.21 | Posted in Online Travel Update

This week's Online Travel Update features updates to a number of stories that we covered previously – online vaccination records, Apple's privacy policy and the many challenges associated with regulating online platforms' algorithms.

### **Expedia Dominates Early 2021 Television Advertising**

*("Vrbo and Expedia Dominate Online Travel TV Advertising in the U.S. So Far in 2021," January 21, 2021 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)*

Although overall television advertising spending by OTAs (online travel agencies) is dramatically down this year (approximately 81 percent lower), there has been a change at the top of the television advertising leaderboard. At this time last year, Booking.com, dominated U.S. television advertising among its OTA competitors. This year, Expedia Group companies, Vrbo and Expedia.com, have dominated U.S. television advertising spending with their common "togetherness" campaigns. Some may say that the effort at a time when COVID-19 infections across the country are an all-time high is a crazy waste of money. I disagree. I believe the campaign is entirely consistent with Expedia Group's previously announced plans to re-focus its efforts on its core travel businesses by ramping up advertising while its largest competitors lay low.

### **Well-Known Technology and Health Care Companies Join Forces on Digital Vaccination Passport**

*("Microsoft, Oracle, Salesforce to create standards for storing, sharing vaccination records," January 18, 2021 via Phocus Wire)*

In the ongoing effort by many to provide individuals easy electronic access to their COVID-19 testing and vaccination credentials (and thereby accelerating their return work, travel, school and other "normal" activities), powerhouse technology companies Microsoft, Oracle and

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Salesforce have joined forces with The Commons Project Foundation and Mayo Clinic (and seven others) to create the Vaccination Credential Initiative. The objective is straightforward – provide individuals with the ability to store and access encrypted copies of their testing, immunization and other important medical credentials via a variety of widely used digital wallets (e.g., Apple Wallet or Google Pay). The Initiative is working in tandem with other digital passport efforts, including the Common Pass, which is being developed by The Commons Project in partnership with the World Economic Forum and is currently being tested by airlines, JetBlue, Lufthansa and United.

**Apple Seeks to Move Forward with Controversial Privacy Requirements**

*(“Apple to start policing privacy update for app developers’ ad tracking,” January 18, 2021 via MLEX Insight) (subscription may be required)*

Last fall, we featured a [story](#) detailing Apple’s plans to update many of its privacy requirements as part of its release of its newest operating system (iOS 14). Among other things, the new requirements would require applications to obtain users’ express consent (via pop-up messaging) to applications tracking their online activities. Responding to industry concerns over the new requirements and their likely effect on personalized online advertising, Apple agreed to delay rollout of the new privacy requirements until early 2021. Early 2021 is here, and Apple has announced plans to proceed with the rollout this spring. The approaching requirement has now prompted online advertiser industry groups in France to file claims with the French antitrust authority to enjoin the rollout alleging that Apple’s changes are not motivated by a desire to better protect its users’ privacy (as claimed by Apple), but instead a desire to assert even more control over access and use of its platform. More information is sure to come.

**Tags:** travel, Travel and Technology