

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Kayak Grows Development Team, and Fareportal's Use of "Dark Patterns" Results in \$2.6 Million Payment

By Greg Duff on 3.25.22 | Posted in Online Travel Update

This week's Update features a variety of topics, including Fareportal's deceptive sales tactics and Expedia's self-proclaimed collaborative approach. Enjoy.

Kayak Grows Development Team

("People on the move at KAYAK, ESA," March 18, 2022 via Hotel Business)

While some of us might have thought that Kayak's foray into brick and mortar locations was going to be short lived, Kayak's announcement last week that it had hired industry veteran Indy Adenaw as Kayak Hotels' new managing director to lead Kayak's global expansion suggests otherwise. According to the announcement, Kayak expects to add 10 new Kayak "powered" properties this year.

Fareportal's Use of "Dark Patterns" Results in \$2.6 Million Payment

("Attorney General James Secures \$2.6 Million From Online Travel Agency for Deceptive Marketing," March 16, 2022 via New York - Attorney General – News)

New York Attorney General, Letita James, announced last week that her office had secured a \$2.6 million payment from Fareportal, operator of several discount booking platforms including CheapOair.com, related to FarePortal's use of deceptive and misleading sales ("dark patterns") tactics since 2017. The offending tactics were far reaching and included, among others, falsely representing the number of rooms that had been booked in a particular market, fabricating information about consumer demand for travel products and services, and posting misleading statements regarding service fees and cancellation policies. In addition to paying \$2.6 million, FarePortal agreed to ensure that all future online messages, price comparisons and product disclosures would use only accurate and real time data.

Other news:

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Google adds new tools to help hotels reach travelers

March 16, 2022 via Phocus Wire

The updates include free hotel booking links on Google Search and Maps.

Direct bookings reflect traveller demand for choice and flexibility

March 15, 2022 via Business Travel News Europe - News & Features

Employees today have the world in the palm of their hands. In some ways, this makes the travel manager's job easier but it can also make it more complicated. One of the most controversial topics for travel managers over the years has been supplier direct bookings (SDBs), also known variously as open booking, invisible spend, leakage, out of system bookings, non-compliant spend etc.

Groupize Expands Language, Currency Capabilities

March 14, 2022 via Business Travel News

Meeting and event management platform Groupize has broadened its language and currency selections, along with time zone management, according to the company. Languages in the tool now include Czech, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Ukrainian. Additional languages are in development, according to Groupize.

Expedia Exec Believes His Company is on a More Collaborative Path with Hotels

March 14, 2022 via Costar (Includes Hotel News Now) - Top Stories

The relationship between hotels and online travel agencies has been built as an uneasy alliance, with hoteliers regularly complaining about the cost of commissions for bookings through third parties. But Greg Schulze, Senior Vice President of strategic travel partners for Expedia Group, said the two sides have a clearer path to a more holistic partnership than ever before.

Sonder Exec Claims Direct Traffic Is Not a Primary Objective

March 14, 2022 via Skift Travel News (subscription may be required)

Hotel and short-term rental brand Sonder stated it generated 45 percent of its bookings on Sonder.com last year, but its Chief Financial Officer said direct traffic has never been a primary objective.