

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **Online Travel Update: Has TikTok Become the Social Media Platform of Choice for Travel Brands and OTAs?**

By Greg Duff on 9.9.22 | Posted in Online Travel Update

Happy Labor Day to those of you in the U.S. celebrating our last gasp of summer. Last week's Online Travel Update features several stories regarding Google's recently announced plan to wind down entirely its "Book on Google" booking platform. I hope you enjoy.

### **Book on Google Winds Down**

*(["Google to Phase Out Book on Google for Flights,"](#) September 2, 2022 via Phocus Wire)*

*(["Google Will No Longer Be a Place to Book Travel as Fewer Travelers Were Using It,"](#) September 1, 2022 via Skift) (subscription may be required)*

Following its discontinuance of Book on Google for hotels back in May of this year, Google announced last week plans to shutter the facilitated booking service entirely with the closing of Book on Google for flights. Users outside the United States will see the service end on September 30, and users inside the United States will see the service end in March 2023. Once the service ends, users of Google's search engine will be re-directed to suppliers' and/or OTAs' sites to make the desired booking directly. According to Google, the decision to end the service was based on users' preferences to book directly on suppliers' websites or via OTAs. Is this the official end to so-called "facilitated" booking platforms? It will be interesting to see whether other meta search sites (e.g., TripAdvisor) soon reach similar conclusions.

### **Has TikTok Become the Social Media Platform of Choice**

*(["Travel Brands That Aren't on TikTok, You're Missing Out!,"](#) August 30, 2022 via WIT)*

Depending on your target demographic, the answer is likely yes. The Chinese-owned video app is fast becoming the platform of choice for travel brands, OTAs and destinations. Videos on the platform using the hashtag #travel have received 890 billion views worldwide. A July 2022 study (source unidentified) found that 77 percent of Asia Pacific users were encouraged to research a destination and 58 percent booked a travel product or service after viewing content on the video app. Suppliers can leverage the app in a variety of ways, including in-app advertising that can be used to re-direct users to in-app offers or discounts, content to create and drive brand-awareness and user contests and challenges that generate user interest and content.

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### **Are Hotelier and OTA Relationships Improving?**

*(“Hotel, Online Travel Agency Relationship Has Improved, Executives Say,” September 1, 2022 via Costar)*

According to Hotel News Now reporter, Bryan Wroten, they are. Interestingly, much of Wroten’s story is dedicated to industry darling, Hopper, which although an OTA, is making its impact on the industry through its many payment platform alternatives (many of which are white labeled and made available through other third-party channels).

### **Hopper Grows Short-Term Rental Offerings**

*(“Hopper Homes Signs Evolve as the App Seeks Out Direct Partnerships,” August 29, 2022 via Phocus Wire)*

Last week, Hopper announced its new partnership with Evolve, through which Hopper will add 24,000 new properties to its Hopper Homes offering. With this new addition of inventory, Hopper Homes will now offer users approximately 2.2 million homes. According to Susan Ho, head of Hopper Homes, the platform intends to soon add its payment alternatives to the growing home rental platform.

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Other News:

### **Google Flights Changes to Emissions Calculations Stir Controversy**

*September 1, 2022 via Skift (subscription may be required)*

Google didn’t bow to airline pressure on this one, nor is it trying to greenwash. Instead, Google is trying to get the data right on the non-CO2 climate impact of flights.