

Duff on Hospitality Law

Regulatory Challenges for OTAs in Indonesia, Spotnana's Innovative Booking Tool, and OTA Marketing Records Shattered

By Greg Duff on 3.19.24 | Posted in Online Travel Update

This week's Update features a variety of topics including the latest on Indonesia's efforts to regulate OTAs, Spotnana's new "event" travel booking tool and new record marketing spending by the largest OTAs (no surprise).

Booking.com and Expedia May Face Indonesian Bans. As of this past week, several large OTAs (including Booking.com and Expedia) had still not complied with Indonesia's requirement to register as Private Scope Electronic Systems Operators (PSE). The requirement is part of a regulation passed in November 2020 that requires digital platforms to obtain licenses to operate in Indonesia. Recently, Indonesia has stepped up enforcement efforts around the regulation including blocking PayPal and other gaming websites temporarily in 2022. Earlier this month, the remaining unregistered travel booking platforms (Airbnb, Agoda, Expedia, Booking.com, Trivago and Klook) received letters from Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information asking that the platforms complete their registration by the end of the month. Airbnb and Agoda have since registered.

Spotnana Releases "Spotnana Events," a Group Travel Booking Tool. Despite its name, Spotnana Events isn't a meeting booking tool. Users of the platform won't be able to book meeting rooms and associated food and beverage. Instead, the new corporate tool allows users – both profiled and, notably, unprofiled - to book travel that is tied to a particular event, event dates, event booking parameters, etc. The new technology will be made available to both regular corporate users of the Spotnana travel management tool as well as standalone users. The tool will also be made available to channel partners and as a white label solution.

OTA Annual Sales and Marketing Records Are Broken, Again. In 2023, Expedia Group, Booking Holdings, Airbnb and Trip.com spent collectively \$16.8 billion in sales and marketing (which represents a 20% increase over their 2022 combined total). Of the four, Trip.com saw the largest spending increase – increasing 2022 amounts by 117% (and roughly equally pre-pandemic amounts). Not surprisingly, the two largest spenders were Expedia Group (\$6.9 billion in sales and marketing (including B2B commissions under its growing B2B platform)) and Booking Holdings (\$6.8 billion for marketing). For Expedia, the amounts spent on sales and marketing equate to 54% of total revenue. For Booking Holdings, its expenditures

represent 32% of total revenue.

Gemini, Google Travel and the threat to OTAs

March 15, 2024 via Phocus Wire

Google Gemini, combined with Google Travel, could completely change the way consumers do their searching and planning for trips.

Indonesia may block several foreign-owned OTAs this week

March 14, 2024 via Tech in Asia

As of March 14, Agoda and Airbnb are registered, while the other four - Booking.com, Expedia, Klook, and Trivago - are not.

Spotnana Launches 'Events,' but It's Not a Meetings Booking Tool

March 13, 2024 via Business Travel News

Spotnana today announced the rollout of what the company is calling 'Spotnana Events,' but don't get the wrong impression—it doesn't allow users to book meetings or events. There's no venue search, no breakout rooms and no food and beverage parameters. This is squarely a travel management tool.

A TikTok Ban Would Disrupt Tourism Marketing: What You Need To Know

March 13, 2024 via Skift Travel News

The push to ban TikTok in the U.S. has again gained momentum – a move that would have enormous consequences for the travel industry. TikTok is one of the most popular marketing channels in the world.

Indonesia Asks Booking, Expedia and Others to Register to Avoid Ban

March 13, 2024 via Skift Travel News

According to a regulation passed in November 2020, digital platforms must obtain licenses to operate in Indonesia. Srividya Kalyanaraman Share Six online travel agencies received warning letters from Indonesia's ministry of communication and information asking the companies to immediately register as 'Private Scope Electronic System Operators (PSE).'

Online travel giants set new record for marketing spend in '23

March 13, 2024 via Phocus Wire

Expedia Group, Booking Holdings, Airbnb and Trip.com Group collectively spent \$16.8 billion on sales and marketing in 2023 as they compete with one another and with suppliers enticing travelers to book direct.

See Why Google's Competitors Think It's Violating Europe's Digital Markets Act

March 7, 2024 via Skift Travel News

As with privacy concerns, the European Union is ahead of the U.S. when it comes to regulating

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digital platforms such as Google. European online travel companies aren't satisfied with Google's changes — but hotels think they go too far.