

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: TripAdvisor's AI Partnership & Corporate Travel Merger Developments

on 1.21.25

Good Sunday morning from Seattle . . . Our Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, January 17, 2025, is below. Other than Perplexity's newly announced partnership with TripAdvisor (readers, **please read the story below**), this past week was relatively quiet as the industry (and the world) waits with anticipation (or for some, bated breath) for the soon arrival of the Trump administration. What changes might we see on Monday or in the weeks ahead remains to be seen. Many of the stories we've been following over the past weeks or even months – including a story or two featured in today's Update - may soon disappear only to be replaced by entirely new and unexpected stories. Enjoy.

- **CWT and AmexGBT Merger Drama Continues.** On the heels of the U.S. Department of Justice's recent decision to file suit to block the planned merger, the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has announced a delay in the delivery of its final decision regarding the proposed merger. According to the announcement, the CMA needs more time to review the 1500+ surveys of travel managers submitted by Amex GBT and CWT and to better define the appropriate "market" for considering the anti-competitive effects of the planned merger. The final decision is now not expected until March 9. In the meantime, Amex GBT has responded to the DOJ's suit, arguing that the entire case (filed in the waning days of the Biden administration) was a "blatant politicized effort." According to Amex GBT, the DOJ's understanding of the current corporate travel market is flawed, arguing that the market has changed considerably in recent years with the entrance of corporate travel platforms, Navan, Kayak for Business and Spotnana and that the merger would actually be pro-competitive (citing the example of Amex GBT's adoption of NDC). Whether the DOJ's effort survives the upcoming presidential transition remains to be seen. Rumors suggest that UK and EU competition regulators may also soon scale back their competition efforts to gain favor with the incoming U.S. administration, which could affect the CMA's efforts. More to come.

- **TripAdvisor and Perplexity Announce Partnership.** It was just last week that we identified Perplexity as one of the first generative AI platforms to feature paid advertising and encouraged readers to give consideration as to how their direct booking efforts (and contracts) may need to be updated to account for AI's growing influence. This past week, Perplexity made industry headlines with its announced partnership with TripAdvisor. According to the announcement, TripAdvisor plans to share its data with Perplexity, including TripAdvisor's listings (content, photos, etc.), links to hotels, restaurants and experiences and AI generated summaries of its billions of user reviews. With this robust industry data, Perplexity hopes to deliver better, more personalized responses to users' travel queries. Where might this partnership ultimately lead? TripAdvisor hopes to use the sharing arrangement to ultimately drive bookings. For example, if TripAdvisor's data is used to produce a response, the response may include TripAdvisor's logo and a link to TripAdvisor's page for booking (**and necessarily away from the supplier's own website**). The partnership may also include TripAdvisor's participation in Perplexity's advertising program, which to date has not featured any travel company.

Have a great week everyone. I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming HEDNA Conference in San Diego next week. Safe travels everyone.

U.K. CMA Delays Decision Deadline for Amex GBT, CWT Merger

January 16, 2025 via Business Travel News

The U.K. Competitions and Markets Authority has pushed back the deadline for its final decision on American Express Global Business Travel's acquisition of CWT to March 9 from the original Jan. 26, the CMA announced Thursday.

Amex GBT Labels DOJ Lawsuit to Block CWT Merger a 'Blatant Politicized Effort'

January 15, 2025 via Skift

They've had some wins, for sure, but does Amex GBT overstate competition from the likes of Navan, Spotnana, and Kayak for Business? Amex GBT characterized the Justice Department's lawsuit to block its proposed merger with CWT "a blatant politicized effort" that failed to recognize the robust and evolved

U.K. regulators to investigate Google's search dominance

January 14, 2025 via Phocus Wire

The organization will look into how Google's position is impacting businesses such as advertisers, the media and alternate search engines and also the effect on consumers.

Tripadvisor's New Partnership With ChatGPT-Competitor Perplexity

January 14, 2025 via Skift

The Tripadvisor brand has been struggling, but there could be value in its huge dataset for AI search engines that want to deliver personalized results. Tripadvisor has begun a trial to power

some travel-related answers on the AI search engine Perplexity. Perplexity is a startup competitor to platforms ...

Warning issued after £370,000 lost due to Booking.com fraud

January 10, 2025 via Caterer, The - Latest News

Action Fraud said scammers were posing as hotels to request payment from customers. bookmark_border A warning has been issued after hundreds of Booking.com customers lost a total of £370,000 in a hotel payments scam. Action Fraud, the national reporting centre for fraud and cybercrime, said it received 532 reports between