

Duff on Hospitality Law

The Future of Online Travel in an AI-Driven World

By Greg Duff on 9.14.25 | Posted in Online Travel Update

Good Sunday morning from Seattle . . . Our Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, September 12, 2025, is below. This week's Update features a heavy dose of AI-related stories, including reports on the major OTAs' ongoing AI efforts. Enjoy.

- **Major Platforms Endorse EU Online Ratings Code of Conduct.** This past week, several major online travel platforms (TripAdvisor, Expedia Group and Booking.com) endorsed the EU's '[Code of Conduct for Online Ratings and Reviews for Tourism Accommodation](#).' The voluntary Code is open to suppliers, industry associations, online platforms and consumer associations, and those that endorse the code commit to ensure genuine online reviews and ratings.
- **Researchers Release Report on Effect of AI Agents on Traditional Customer Loyalty.** Researchers at Florida Atlanta University have released an interesting report on the anticipated effects of AI-enabled agents on customer loyalty in the hospitality and travel industry. As AI agents become increasingly skilled (and trusted) at making consumers' decisions, travel industry members will have to re-think traditional loyalty strategies (e.g., loyalty to a particular algorithm or ecosystem vs. loyalty to a brand). A copy of the report is available through the link below.
- **Anything and Everything Is Now Possible at Airbnb.** I'm paraphrasing of course, but Airbnb co-founder and CEO, Brian Chesky, is quite bullish on the possibilities that AI and AI native applications might mean for the short-term rental platform and its future businesses. In remarks at an investor conference last week, Chesky noted that mature businesses that Airbnb had previously dismissed were now back on the table because of the new interface possibilities associated with AI. Although Chesky did not go into detail about what these businesses might be, commentators suggest that they likely include hotels (which Airbnb announced in August of this year) and may also include flights, experiences and, according to Chesky, additional services for rental hosts.

- **Social Media and AI Playing an Increasingly Important Role in Online Booking Platforms' Marketing Efforts.** Yes, online booking platforms continue to increase their marketing investments. Nothing new there. But the story here is where those investments are now being made. Yes, traditional search remains important (at least for now, but likely less so), but investments in social media (think Booking.com's recently announced partnership with TikTok) and artificial intelligence (think the OTAs' almost weekly announcements of new partnerships with the major AI platforms) are increasingly the focus. According to Expedia CEO, Ariane Gorin, for Expedia, traffic generated through its investments in AI is still small, but it is growing rapidly and converts at a much higher rate.
- **How Do Travelers Really Use AI Platforms?** This past week I sat in on [Propellic's](#) presentation of results from its recent behavioral study of how travelers use Google's AI Mode when searching for travel. For me, the study revealed some key findings, including the (likely short term) advantage that suppliers may have over third party online platforms. I'd encourage everyone to take the time to read the summary report that is available on [Propellic's](#) website (or watch the associated webinar).

Have a great week everyone.

[Tripadvisor, Expedia, Booking, Eu Travel Tech Endorse EU Online Rating Code](#)

September 11, 2025 via PhocusWire

The European Union's new code of conduct is directed at improved transparency and online review reliability for consumers and travel businesses.

[FAU Study: Hotels Must Rethink Loyalty as AI Agents Take Over Travel Planning](#)

September 11, 2025 via Hospitality Net

The rise of artificial intelligence agents will introduce a new layer of complexity in how the hospitality industry navigates customer loyalty, according to a conceptual paper, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) Agents and the Future of Customer Loyalty," from four researchers at Florida Atlantic University. Before consumer reliance ...

[Booking Holdings Bets on Agentic AI to Challenge Big Tech](#)

September 11, 2025 via Skift

Booking Holdings Chief Financial Officer Ewout Steenberg said the company is betting that it can develop agentic AI in a way that can give it an edge in travel.

[Airbnb's Brian Chesky: AI Opens New Markets, 'Everything Is Now Back on the Table'](#)

September 10, 2025 via Skift

Airbnb's Brian Chesky said the emergence of native AI apps — there currently aren't any in

travel — changes the ballgame, and the company can consider entering new businesses that it previously thought were off limits. Airbnb Flights, anyone? Airbnb co-founder and CEO Brian Chesky told investors Tuesday ...

Study Tracks How Travel Shoppers Use Google's AI Mode

September 9, 2025 via PhocusWire

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a more prominent aspect of travel planning and booking, with the rise of natural language search and large-language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT. But Google is also gearing up for the future of search, which will likely include its AI Mode feature, launched earlier this ...

OTAs' High Hopes for Social, AI Channels as Q2 Marketing Spend Hits \$5B

September 8, 2025 via PhocusWire

OTAs are looking to drive efficiency as they diversify from performance marketing to other channels, including social and AI-powered search.