

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update - April 28th, 2017

By Greg Duff on 5.5.17 | Posted in OTA Update

This week's OTA & Distribution Update for the week ending April 28, 2017 is below. Loyalty program updates feature prominently in this week's Update as well as story on some important changes at Airbnb to lure corporate travelers. Enjoy.

- **TripAdvisor Continues to Evolve [METASEARCH / OTA].** Several important updates from TripAdvisor this week . . . First, TripAdvisor announced that Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) (one of the last major brands to feature its properties on TripAdvisor's Instant Book) finally joined the booking platform. Second, TripAdvisor may be returning to its metasearch roots – at least for some users. According to TripAdvisor, TripAdvisor may no longer give preference to its own Instant Book listings over metasearch links to its partners' sites. Priority is now given based on a number of factors including rate, a user's booking history and other user attributes. Maybe it is again time to ask whether TripAdvisor a metasearch site or a booking engine – the answer may now depend on who's asking.

TripAdvisor Instant Booking Gets Very Personal

Skift Travel News, April 27, 2017

TripAdvisor is getting more sophisticated about prodding customers to book hotels on TripAdvisor or to more effectively refer them to partner sites. In an apparently modified strategy, TripAdvisor is finding religion in being agnostic about where its users book hotels.

- **Points Pooling Now Available at Hilton [LOYALTY].** In a break from tradition, Hilton announced this past week that up to 11 members of its loyalty program, Hilton Honors, can now pool their program points into a single account for redemptions. This recent update (as well as the many program changes made earlier this year by Hilton) is emblematic of the many changes being made across the travel industry to allow loyalty program members (presumably, younger members) the ability to redeem points for more immediate small-scale awards. Perhaps other lodging awards programs will soon make similar changes.

Hilton Launches Points Pooling for Its Honors Loyalty Program

Skift Travel News, April 27, 2017

Hilton's Honors Loyalty program just got bit more powerful with new functionality that allows for pooling of points among parties of 11. - Grant Martin

- **Wyndham Rewards Now “Blue Thread” Among Wyndham’s Core Businesses**

[LOYALTY]. As part of its recent quarterly earnings release, Wyndham announced plans to leverage its recently re-vamped Wyndham Rewards program across each of its key business units – hotels, timeshare and vacation rentals – to drive hotel stays, timeshare purchases and vacation rentals. An example of how this “blue thread” might work include Wyndham’s decision last fall to allow Wyndham Rewards members to redeem points at Wyndham’s vacation rentals and timeshares.

Wyndham Is Finally Harnessing Its Global Scale Via Loyalty

Skift Travel News, April 27, 2017

Wyndham might not have 30 hotel brands like Marriott, but it does have the world's largest timeshare business and a pretty robust vacation rental business, too. Leveraging the power of all three of its businesses just makes us wonder: Why haven't they tried to do this before?

- **Airbnb Continues Campaign to Lure Corporate Travelers with New Search Tool**

[SHORT-TERM RENTALS]. In one of the more interesting announcements coming from Airbnb in some time, Airbnb announced last week a new search tool that allows corporate users to see only those rentals that cater to corporate travelers. According to Airbnb, these corporate rentals will feature Wi-Fi, laptop working areas and self check-in. Airbnb claims that more than 150,000 of its rentals worldwide meet this criteria.

Airbnb makes it easier for road warriors to find a room

Engadget, April 28, 2017

Airbnb is becoming a more popular option for business travelers. Employees from more than 250,000 companies around the world have signed up to use it for work, the company says. So, Airbnb caters to these road warriors with a new search tool.

Other news:

Airbnb agrees to let California conduct fair housing tests on hosts

HousingWire, April 28, 2017

California homeowners who rent out their properties on Airbnb could now potentially be the

target of fair housing investigations, thanks to an agreement between the short-term rental website and the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing. Here are the details.