

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update - Nov. 22nd, 2017

By Greg Duff on 12.1.17 | Posted in OTA Update

This week's Update for the shortened week ending Wednesday, November 22, is below.

Ctrip Launching English-Language Booking Platform [OTA]

("Ctrip Relaunches Trip.com as Its English Language Travel Agency Brand," Skift Travel News, November 20, 2017)

Ctrip, often referred to as one of the big three global online travel agencies, rolled out last week its English language booking engine. On the heels of its acquisition of Trip.com (the former S.F. based trip recommendation start up), Ctrip has relaunched Trip.com as its booking platform for English speaking travelers. In conversations this past summer, Ctrip executives hinted at plans to incorporate online bookings into its traditional metasearch platform. While Skyscanner already provides limited direct booking capabilities, Trip.com may ultimately become the platform that Ctrip uses to combine the businesses on a global platform.

Airbnb and Hoteliers Trade Barbs on Taxes [SHORT-TERM RENTALS]

("Airbnb and hotel group skirmish over tax claims," Travel Weekly, November 21, 2017)

In an interesting and unprecedented exchange between Airbnb and the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), Airbnb executives accused the Association and its members of using occupancy taxes (including "billions" in taxes collected from Airbnb hosts and their guests) to advance the industry's own interests by, among other things, subsidizing new hotel development. Airbnb further argued that increasing hotel automation and hoteliers' battles against rising minimum wages provide additional evidence of why Airbnb is better for local communities. The AH&LA was quick to respond to the accusations, arguing that Airbnb's comments were "downright shameful and pathetic," underestimated the amount of tax revenue generated for the U.S. economy and overlooked the return on investment enjoyed from hotel subsidies. It will be interesting to see whether these latest accusations by Airbnb are a sign of things to come.

Other news:

Inside Priceline Group's Diss of Trivago — The Backstory

Skift Travel News, November 20, 2017

What do a debate over landing pages, the acquisition of Momondo, a shift into hotel software services, and regulators forcing changes in online travel agency contracts have in common? Each of those seemingly unrelated things may have pushed Priceline to toggle back its spending on Trivago.

Airbnb Growth Story Has a Plot Twist — A Saturation Point

Skift Travel News, November 15, 2017

As Airbnb tries to become the only brand in travel that you'll ever need, it's not just the hotel industry that the company has to contend with, but online travel agencies, too.