

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **OTA & Travel Distribution Update: Parity commitments extended by Expedia and Booking.com; Google adds pandemic details to travel search**

By Greg Duff on 8.21.20 | Posted in OTA Update

### **Parity Commitments Extended by Expedia and Booking.com**

*("Expedia, Booking.com voluntarily extend 'price parity' antitrust commitments, Aug 14, 2020 via MLEX Insight)*

While the European Commission continues its re-examination of Expedia's and Booking.com's parity practices, both platforms recently announced their decision to extend their so-called "narrow" parity commitments (the commitments by both Expedia and Booking.com were set to expire in July). While the extensions were welcome news for many regulators, hoteliers throughout Europe continue to challenge the effectiveness of the commitments and demand an outright ban on all parity requirements. I doubt we will see much movement on this issue by regulators as the world continues its struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, and regulators are caught up in their ongoing investigations of larger online platforms like Google and Facebook.

### **Google Adds Trip Planning Functionality**

*("Google Adds Trip-Planning Features for Pandemic-Weary Travelers," Aug 13, 2020 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)*

In an effort to assist travelers with navigating the many COVID-19-related challenges, Google recently added information on flight and hotel availability for select destinations. A new filter introduced by Google this past week allows users to identify hotels and short-term rentals that offer fully refundable rates. Combined with already available information on pandemic-related advisories and restrictions, this latest addition by Google will likely cement Google's position as travelers' first, and perhaps only, stop in their online travel planning.

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Other news:

### **AirAsia and Trip.com Group Unite in Digital Travel Services Pact**

*Aug 10, 2020 via Phocus Wire*

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Trip.com Group and fellow travel giant AirAsia are forming a partnership to collaborate on product and services on their respective websites. AirAsia has spent the last two years talking about its intention to become a wider e-commerce player in the Southeast Asian region, bringing in other travel and retail products into its site. The new agreement will see the pair share content and cooperate in areas including transit information, membership benefits and product marketing.

### **What Is the Future for Metasearch in Corporate Travel?**

*Aug 10, 2020 via Skift Travel News (subscription may be required)*

An early lesson to be learned from the pandemic was that, actually, a company's travel operation is important, regardless of that organization's size. During the evacuations and repatriations earlier this year, many companies without a program would have quickly realized they didn't know exactly where employees were as countries shut their borders. Fast forward, they may also be regretting not having access to a simple way to claw back airline refunds, instead having to approach airlines individually.