

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Tripscout Introduces Instagram Hotel Bookings, and Hopper Brings Flexible Payment Options to Short-Term Rentals

By Greg Duff on 6.10.22 | Posted in Online Travel Update

Last week's Update features stories on two less frequently used social media platforms – Instagram and Snapchat – and details the brewing battle among banking companies for travel industry legitimacy. I hope you enjoy.

Tripscout Introduces Instagram Hotel Bookings

(“Tripscout Raises \$14 million, Launches Hotel Booking Through Instagram,” June 3, 2022 via Phocus Wire)

Tripscout announced plans to launch a hotel booking platform accessed via Tripscout's Instagram accounts. According to Tripscout founder and CEO, Konrad Waliszewski, users of the platform will have access to private / fenced rates 75 percent below best available rates. Users seeking to access the platform send a direct message with the word “hotel” to the applicable Instagram account, which then links the user to the booking platform where the user can search, review and book hotel listings provided via bed banks, OTAs and other suppliers. Tripscout claims to have 30 million regular users of its 100+ Instagram accounts.

Expedia Settles Anti-Trust Probe by the Japan Fair Trade Commission

(“Expedia Settles JFTC Probe into MFN, Ending Japan's Antitrust Case Against Travel Booking Sites,” June 2, 2022 via MLEX Insight)(subscription may be required)

Not a big surprise... Expedia joins Rakuten and Booking.com in revising its contractual rate parity provisions to apply only to suppliers' own platforms (so-called “narrow parity”).

Hopper Brings Flexible Payment Options to Short-Term Rentals

(“Hopper and Expedia's Vrbo Partner on Global Vacation Rentals,” June 1, 2022 via Yahoo! News)

In one of the more interesting developments from last week, Hopper announced that it was entering into a strategic partnership with Expedia Group's vacation rental platform, VRBO, under which VRBO would supply Hopper with vacation rental inventory. With the addition of vacation rentals, Hopper can now extend its industry leading flexible payment alternatives (e.g. cancel for any reason) to short-term rentals. My question... is this it or should this be viewed as a sign of something much bigger? In other words, how long will it be before the two companies

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announce that they are partnering with each other (perhaps even an acquisition by Expedia) on a much broader basis to provide Expedia users access to Hopper's catalog of fintech tools across its entire portfolio of brands?

Chase Takes On CapitalOne

("Chase to Launch Consumer Travel Portal; Claims Top Five U.S. Travel Provider With \$8 Billion in Sales," May 28, 2022 via Yahoo! News)

Last month, Chase announced that it plans to launch later this year a new consumer booking platform – www.ChaseTravel.com – initially for holders of Chase cards and ultimately for all of its banking clients. According to co-C.E.O. of Consumer and Community Banking, Marianne Lake, with Chase's pandemic acquisitions of cxLoyalty (a two-sided travel platform) and Frosch (a top-ten leisure travel agency), the bank is now positioned to provide the booking engine, content and service and support expertise and infrastructure needed to support its banking customers. According to Lake, Chase today is a top five U.S. consumer travel provider (up from a top 15 travel provider in 2019), even before the launch of the new platform.

Other news:

What Agoda's New Tech-Heavy C.E.O. Will Mean for the Booking Holdings Business

June 3, 2022 via Yahoo! News

Booking Holdings announced Omri Morgenshtern as the new C.E.O. of its online travel agency division Agoda, effective July 1. John Brown who after 11 years at Agoda — four years as C.E.O. — will become chairperson.

Snapchat Unveils Dynamic Ads Service for Travel Advertisers

June 1, 2022 via Phocus Wire

Snapchat has launched its Dynamic Travel Ads product to help brands create different ads according to their products and services.