

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Expedia CEO Departure, Google Ends Two Hotel Ad Products and More

By Greg Duff on 2.12.24 | Posted in Online Travel Update

The big news last week of course was Peter Kern's announcement that he is stepping down as Expedia Group CEO in May. Peter's announcement came as part of an otherwise robust quarterly earnings release for Expedia. What Peter's departure means for Expedia and its many partners remains to be seen.

- **Expedia's Peter Kern Is Out and the Numbers Look Good Too.** Peter Kern's announced departure as Expedia Group CEO took front stage during last week's quarterly earning call. Peter's announced replacement is Ariane Gorin. Ariane has been with Expedia for over 10 years serving in many executive roles, most currently as President of Expedia for Business. While the planned leadership change featured prominently during last week's call, Peter and team also presented some strong (even record breaking) results . . . For calendar year 2023, Expedia generated \$104 billion in total gross bookings (\$74 billion of which was in lodging bookings (growing 18% year of year)), \$12.8 billion in revenue and \$2.7 billion in EBITDA (at a margin of 21%). Last year also marked the strongest year yet with Expedia's B2B business, with top and bottom lines growing by 33%. For the fourth quarter, total gross bookings were \$21.7 billion (6% increase year over year), and revenue totaled \$2.9 billion (a record breaking quarter). For those of you wanting additional detail about the recent earnings release or call, we've attached a copy of the earnings transcript.
- **Expedia Must Face Competition Claims of Former Swiss Booking Platform.** A Washington federal court judge refused last week to dismiss the claims of former booking platform Amoma against Expedia. According to Amoma, Expedia Group's metasearch site, Trivago, made changes to its site that decreased Amoma's presence on the site and increased its cost to display rooms. The changes resulted in Amoma's advertised lower rates being obscured from users of the meta search site. According to federal judge, Barbara Rothstein, Amoma made plausible allegations that Expedia abused its market power to harm a competitor.

- **Another Week, Another Announced Settlement on Resort Fees.** On Wednesday last week, Colorado Attorney General, Phil Weiser, announced that it had settled claims against Marriott, Weiser's third such settlement with a national hotel chain (Omni and Choice). Like other previously announced settlements, this latest settlement requires that total price (rate plus mandatory fees) be the most prominently displayed price in any advertisement or offer. Online search results sortable by price must also display total price. The settlement also requires that Marriott require third party managers operating Marriott hotels to comply with the settlement and for Marriott to take actions to enforce the settlement if such managers do not comply.
- **Google Ends Two Hotel Ad Products.** Beginning in October of this year, Google will be canceling its COVID era Commissions Per Stay and Commissions Per Conversion advertising products. According to Google, the cancellations are due in part to Google's planned phasing out of third-party cookies later this year.

Expedia must face bankrupt hotel booker Amoma's antitrust lawsuit

February 9, 2024 via Reuters

Travel booking giant Expedia opens new tab must face a lawsuit accusing it of driving Swiss rival Amoma out of business in the global online hotel search market and costing it more than \$100 million, a U.S. judge ruled.

Just say "no" to hidden hotel fees, Colorado AG advises in settlement with Marriott

February 8, 2024 via Colorado Sun

Getting socked with an unexpected fee while checking into a hotel is annoying. Even President Joe Biden weighed in on such fees last year. But that doesn't mean the deceptive practice has ended.

Peter Kern stepping down, Ariane Gorin to take over as Expedia Group CEO in May

February 8, 2024 via Phocus Wire

Kern has been Expedia Group's CEO since April 2020, a time when the company was focused on dealing with the impact of COVID-19. He will remain as vice chairman and a member of the board of directors.

Expedia and Netflix Enter Into Global Advertising Partnership

February 7, 2024 via Skift Travel News

Booking.com is going big with a Super Bowl ad in 2024. Expedia Group is going global with Netflix.

IHG and Rakuten Travel Sign MOU to Link Member Loyalty Programs

February 7, 2024 via Hospitality Net

IHG Hotels & Resorts (IHG), one of the world's leading hotel companies today announced that they have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Rakuten Group Inc.'s travel reservation service Rakuten Travel, a leading online travel agency in Japan, to collaborate on a seamless travel booking experience linking the two companies' loyalty programs.

Cloudbeds Reveals Highest Revenue-Generating OTAs for Independent Properties

February 6, 2024 via Hospitality Net

Cloudbeds unveils its rankings of the highest revenue-generating OTAs worldwide for independent hotels, highlighting the continued dominance of Booking.com, Expedia, and Airbnb.

Google sunsets two ad products designed to help hotels during COVID

February 6, 2024 via Phocus Wire

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Google said the products are being eliminated in part because they rely on third-party cookies, which will be phased out later this year, and also because usage has declined as travel volumes have picked up.

Booking.com Unveils New Ad Campaign, Featuring Tina Fey

February 5, 2024 via Hospitality Net

Booking.com, the global leader in connecting travelers with the widest choice of incredible places to stay, is launching a new ad campaign to show that you can “book whoever you want to be” on vacation.

Trip.com Group creates travel app for Apple Vision Pro

February 5, 2024 via Phocus Wire

Trip.com Group's Trip.Vision app is intended to bring realistic destination experiences to users at home - enabling them to to virtually explore places including Antarctica, the Maldives, Mount Everest and more.