

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update - July 21st, 2017

By Greg Duff on 7.28.17 | Posted in OTA Update

Integration of Short-Term Rentals Continues [METASEARCH / SHORT-TERM RENTALS]

("Google Is Testing Vacation Rental Search in Its Hotel Price-Comparison Tool," Skift Travel News, July 20, 2017)

In what was an otherwise quiet week in the distribution industry, Google's decision to include short-term rentals as part of its lodging search results captured most of the attention. While short-term rentals have appeared sporadically on Google's Hotel Ads in the past, Google's recent introduction of a dedicated "vacation rental" filter for users searching accommodations in one of Europe's many major cities is a huge step. Initial searches indicate that Booking.com is the largest participant in the new accommodations category and notably, none of the large, dedicated short-term rental platforms have appeared in test searches. With the addition of short-term rentals on its widely used metasearch platform, Google now joins other large platforms (e.g. Booking.com and Expedia) by offering short-term rentals alongside more traditional accommodations.

NY Legislator Demands Greater Short-Term Rental Transparency [SHORT-TERM RENTALS]

("NY State Law Would Force Airbnb To Share Rental Locations," Law360 - Hospitality, July 19, 2017)

In a further effort to regulate New York's short-term rentals, New York Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal (with the support of the [Sharebetter](#) coalition) introduced revised legislation (the legislation was first introduced back in 2011) requiring short-term rental hosts to identify the exact location of their rental. In its statement announcing the legislation, Sharebetter identifies both travelers (reduction in possible location scams) and neighborhood residents and law enforcement (improved public safety through the identification of strangers residing in the neighborhood) as the primary beneficiaries of the legislation. Opponents of the legislation question the privacy implications for both short-term rental hosts and guests. We will have to wait for New York's next legislative session to see whether this new legislation goes anywhere.

Priceline Group's Most Recent Acquisition Receives Anti-Trust Approval [OTA /

METASEARCH]*("EU Approves Priceline's \$550M Buy Of Online Travel Rival," Law360 - Competition, July 18, 2017)*

With little fanfare, the European Union's anti-trust regulator unconditionally approved last week the Priceline Group's proposed purchase of European metasearch operator, Momondo Group (operator of both Momondo and Cheapflights. According to the regulator's decision, the lack of

any meaningful geographic overlap between the Priceline Group's existing metasearch platforms (e.g. Kayak) and Momondo's metasearch platforms and stiff competition from existing metasearch platforms minimized any competition concerns. If the ongoing consolidation of online travel brands is a likely cause of consumer harm (as suggested in Harvard professor Benjamin Edelman's recent study), one might question this unconditional approval (particularly from the EU).

Other news:

Denver enforcing ban on listing investment properties on Airbnb

Bizwest, July 17, 2017

Officials are cracking down on Denver landlords posting investment properties on Airbnb. Six months ago, the city banned renting out investment properties for less than 30 days and now it's enforcing the regulations by making suspected Airbnb hosts prove they actually live at the property.