

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update - Nov. 17th, 2017

By Greg Duff on 11.22.17 | Posted in OTA Update

This week's OTA & Travel Distribution Update is below and features stories on both traditional OTAs and short-term rentals. Enjoy.

[TripAdvisor to Add Questionable Guest Warnings \(METASEARCH / OTA\)](#)

("TripAdvisor to flag hotels with reports of sexual assault," BBC News - Technology, November 9, 2017)

Much has been written this past week about TripAdvisor's recently announced decision to include conspicuous warnings on its website listing about properties reported by reviewers to present health and personal safety concerns. The decision comes after an investigation by the *Milwaukee Sentinel* that found that TripAdvisor had removed repeatedly (and without explanation) a reviewer's post regarding her alleged assault by an employee at a Mexican resort property. According to TripAdvisor, decisions whether to add such warnings about properties will be made by a group of unidentified TripAdvisor employees. One can only hope that these employees conduct appropriate investigations (including affording suspected properties due process to respond to these devastating allegations) before posting these "scarlet letter" warnings.

[UK's CMA Gets Serious \[OTA\]](#)

("It's 2017 and the UK's competition watchdog just got a data-tech team," BBC News - Technology, November 9, 2017)

Weeks ago we featured a [story](#) on the UK's Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) decision to re-open previous investigations into the practices of several large OTAs operating in the UK. This past week the CMA made news again, this time regarding the CMA's plan to assemble a group of dedicated data scientists to review subject industries' use of algorithms, artificial intelligence and big data and the likely effects on consumers as a result of such use. According to the CMA, the decision to bring this expertise in-house is in recognition of both the increasingly important role that data is taking in its investigations and the need to match the increasing level of expertise in the companies it investigates.

[Japanese Trade Regulators Raid Airbnb's Japan Offices \[SHORT-TERM RENTALS\]](#)

("Japanese regulators raid Airbnb over suspected antitrust practices," Reuters Company News, November 17, 2017)

Airbnb shared details last week of raids last month on its offices in Japan. According to reports,

Japan's Fair Trade Commission raided the offices to seize documents on suspicion that Airbnb contractually limited hosts' ability to list rentals on sites other than Airbnb. Airbnb denies the allegations.

Seattle Acts Solely in Self-Interest [SHORT-TERM RENTALS]

("Seattle approves tax on Airbnb, short-term rental operators," Washington Times Headline news, November 14, 2017)

Earlier this month we featured a [story](#) on Seattle's efforts to regulate short-term rentals. At the time, the Seattle City Council was considering three separate bills, two of which were expected to pass this past week. The first bill would allow the City to collect occupancy taxes on each stay. The second bill would impose a cap on the number of short-term rentals in most areas of the city. As the title of this story might indicate, this past week the Seattle City Council passed only the first of the two bills (assuring itself of additional tax revenues) but delayed vote on the second bill until further consideration of the bill can be completed at committee level. I'm disappointed Seattle.

Other news:

Online Travel Sites Hit with South Korean Order to Revise Contracts

MLex, November 17, 2017

Online travel agencies including Agoda, Booking.com, Hotels.com, and Expedia have been ordered by the Korea Fair Trade Commission to clauses in their contracts that the regulator deems unfair, in particular clauses relating to refund policies, the KFTC says in a statement.

Airbnb acquires Accomable to offer home rentals for disabled travelers

Reuters Technology, November 16, 2017

Airbnb said on Thursday it acquired London startup Accomable to expand home-renting opportunities for people with disabilities, the latest expansion as Airbnb grows its global travel business.

Vancouver, B.C. cracks down on Airbnb with tough new short-term rental regulations

GeekWire, November 16, 2017

Vancouver, B.C. has passed a set of stringent regulations in an attempt to curb the proliferation of Airbnbs and free up more long-term housing supply for residents, the New York Times reports. The new regulations only allow hosts on sites like Airbnb and VRBO to rent out rooms in properties...