

Duff on Hospitality Law

OTA & Travel Distribution Update - Dec. 1st, 2017

By Greg Duff on 12.8.17

Our weekly OTA & Travel Distribution Update for the week ending December 1, 2017 is below. This week's Update features a variety of distribution stories as well as a report on the latest rankings of the large hotel loyalty programs.

Ryanair Tires of Expedia's Unauthorized Scraping [OTA]

("Ryanair sues Expedia, accusing online travel giant of illegally scraping its site to sell flights," GeekWire, December 1, 2017)

European discount airline, Ryanair, brought suit last week against Expedia in Washington Federal District Court alleging, among other things, that Expedia repeatedly scraped information off Ryanair's website and then used that information to sell the airline's tickets (at times, at fares greater than those available directly through Ryanair), all without Ryanair's approval and in contradiction to Ryanair's express requests. A copy of Ryanair's District Court complaint is [available](#). According to the complaint, Expedia's actions constitute a violation of the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, which prohibits the use of certain computers without authorization (or exceeding authorized access). Those that follow Expedia's periodic disputes with its suppliers will recall that Expedia and Ryanair were parties to a 2008 lawsuit over the unraveling of the parties' package partnership. Rumors of this latest skirmish surfaced earlier this year in February. We will continue to monitor this litigation as it proceeds further and will provide periodic updates.

Amazon Pushes "Alexa" for Hotels

("Amazon Wants More Hotels Using Alexa Voice-Powered Services," Skift Travel News, November 30, 2017)

Continuing the Seattle theme . . . Last Thursday, Amazon's Chief Technology Officer, Werner Vogels, made the case for expanding Alexa's influence in the hotel guest room. Speaking at Amazon's AWS re:Invent Conference, Vogels introduced the Amazon for Business Initiative and pointed to hotels as an example of the type of service provider that would benefit from the Initiative's efforts to expand businesses' use of the virtual assistant. For those of you who have seen or heard one of my many [presentations](#) this past year on virtual assistants and the disruptive force they represent to the travel industry (not just hotels), this news should come as no surprise. Look for similar efforts in the coming year from the other major players in the virtual assistant world – Apple (Siri), Google (Home) and Microsoft (Cortana), many of whom are already being considered or tested by major hotel brands to provide in-room or back of house

solutions.

Google Continues Travel Push [OTA]

("Google Hotels Revamps Mobile Features as Its Ambitions Expand," Skift Travel News, November 29, 2017)

This past month, Google rolled out a number of design related changes to its mobile hotel metasearch platform in select countries (as of today, outside of the U.S.), which now give it the appearance of a dedicated travel website. These latest changes culminate a series of changes to the platform, which in the eyes of some industry members, provides further evidence of Google's intentions to one day soon become a fully-functional booking channel. The linked story from *Skift* provides a good overview of these many important design changes – instant booking, loyalty rate promotion, etc.

Other news:

Ex-Amazon and Microsoft employees raise \$1.1M for hotel-focused smart speaker Roxy

GeekWire, November 30, 2017

Roxy, a Seattle startup that offers a customizable voice assistant and touch screen smart speaker for the hotel industry, said it raised \$1.1 million. Hotel and real estate investment firm AJ Capital Partners invested \$1 million and Cooper Manning, the older brother of famed NFL quarterbacks Peyton and Eli Manning.

Marriott Edges Out Hyatt for Top Honors in J.D. Power's Hotel Loyalty Survey

Skift Travel News, November 29, 2017

Should other hotel loyalty programs follow World of Hyatt's lead in being much more revenue-based and geared toward high-end travelers? This survey's findings seem to suggest it, but we have some reservations. -Deanna Ting