

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **OTA & Travel Distribution Update: Sales principles introduced for online booking sites in the U.K.; AirAsia.com the next large online travel agent?**

By Greg Duff on 3.8.19 | Posted in OTA Update

### **Sales Principles Introduced for Online Booking Sites in the UK**

*("Hotel Booking Sites Get Consumer-law Compliance Principles from CMA," MLex, March 1, 2019) (subscription required)*

By September 1, 2019, hotel booking sites operating in the UK must implement mandatory “[sales principles](#)” released last week by the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The release of principles follows the CMA’s months-long investigation into the sales practices of certain online booking sites and the sites’ recent agreement to improve transparency on the sites to avoid further regulatory scrutiny. The principles, which apply not only to OTAs and search engines, but also to hoteliers’ own booking sites, cover sort order, reference prices (e. g., “discount” or strikethrough pricing), hidden charges and pressure selling. According to the CMA, sites that fail to implement the principles by the September 1, 2019 date may be subject to further enforcement action.

### **[AirAsia.com the Next Large Online Travel Agent?](#)**

*("AirAsia Emerging as an Unlikely Online Travel Agency Competitor," Skift Travel News, March 1, 2019)*

AirAsia.com’s previously announced plans to transform the airline’s website and application are well underway. Beyond airline tickets, the platforms now offer consumers a wide range of travel services including hotel rooms, tours and activities, insurance, itinerary planning and other ancillary items (all of which are powered through Vidi (50% owned by AirAsia) and AirAsiaGo (Expedia)). In addition to expanded travel offerings, the platforms have improved the consumer experience by adding, among other things, an application chatbot that can respond to user inquiries in 8 different Asian languages and offering expedited airport security clearance for those who enroll.

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Other news:

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#### **Bookingkit calls European first on Ctrip partnership for tours and activities**

*Phocus Wire, February 28, 2019*

Ctrip's global expansion brand Trip.com included in deal to integrate tours, activities and events content into the China-based online travel agency's listings.

#### **Booking and Airbnb Are Now in a Homesharing Dead Heat**

*Skift Travel News, February 27, 2019*

Which is the biggest, baddest company offering alternative accommodations? It has been hard to tell because Airbnb is a private company and its largest competitor, Booking Holdings, didn't break out its sales from vacation home and apartment rentals — until now. Booking Holdings made a series of first-ever disclosures about its alternative accommodations business in tandem with the release of its fourth quarter and full-year 2018 earnings Wednesday. Among them, Booking reported that in the third quarter, it notched “over \$1 billion” in revenue from its homesharing business, including vacation homes, apartments, and unique properties that aren't hotels.

#### **Yelp Takes Larger Bite Out of Restaurant Reservation Market**

*Bloomberg Quint - Stories, February 26, 2019*

Yelp is continuing its evolution from a user-generated review platform to meeting the needs of diners who want to plan ahead, walk in for seating, or get food delivered. The review and business-listing company managed 22 million diners booking directly through the Yelp app, a threefold increase year-over-year, according to internal data released on Tuesday.