

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **Online Travel Update: Sonesta Moves Small Group Bookings Online**

By Greg Duff on 9.16.22 | Posted in Online Travel Update

### **Sonesta Moves Small Group Bookings Online**

*(“Sonesta Introduces Hybrid Concierge, a Digital Meeting Planning Service,” September 9, 2022 via Lodging Magazine)*

Sonesta announced plans last week to offer groups the opportunity to book small group meetings entirely online through CVENT’s Instant Book platform. The new online platform will be offered initially at approximately half of Sonesta’s managed properties and will allow users to view and book meeting space, select meeting room set ups and review available AV options – all online. Bookings will be handled via a single online, all-inclusive contract. Sonesta’s remaining managed properties will offer the new booking functionality by the end of 2022.

### **Would an Outright End to Rate Parity Forever Change the EU Distribution Landscape?**

*(“Calling Booking.com a Gatekeeper Wouldn’t Have the Impact European Regulators Expect,” September 7, 2022 via Skift) (subscription may be required)*

According to Skift Executive Editor, Dennis Schaal, the answer is likely no. In his weekly Online Travel Briefing last week, Dennis makes the argument that a possible “gatekeeper” designation for Booking.com by the European Commission under the soon-to-be-effective Digital Markets Act (DMA) (and with it, a likely prohibition on all rate parity requirements) might not be that transformative for online distribution. To support his argument, Dennis refers to several findings in the European Commission’s recently published market study on hotel room distribution in the EU (which we featured in one of our recent [Updates](#)). While I question the value of the study generally (Dennis also acknowledges the incredibly small sample size of hotels participating in the study), I also question the study’s findings regarding the effects of outright bans on rate parity (which a few EU member countries adopted). Previous research (and our own experience working with dozens of global hotel brands and management companies) has shown that few brands or management companies fully grasp the effects of critical changes in rate parity laws, and many are completely unaware of such changes. From my perspective, any meaningful change that the European Commission might hope to achieve by designating Booking.com a gatekeeper will only be possible through a widespread education campaign detailing the effects of the designation and the opportunities afforded.

**Sonder Continues its Pursuit of Corporate Travelers**

*(“Sonder Doubles Down on GDS Strategy With Dedicated Chain Code,” September 7, 2022 via Business Travel News)*

In an effort to further strengthen (and legitimize) its presence on traditional global distribution systems (namely, Amadeus and Sabre), Sonder announced this past week the launch of its new dedicated chain code (SS).

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**Other News:**

**Hopper Fills a Gap With JetBlue Partnership**

*September 7, 2022 via Skift (subscription may be required)*

The partnership enables JetBlue to do business with a younger clientele, particularly beyond the U.S. East Coast.

**Tripadvisor Enables Businesses to Display "Identity" Attributes**

*September 6, 2022 via Phocus Wire*

In an effort to recognize and celebrate the diversity of the people who own the hotels and restaurants on its platform, Tripadvisor is adding functionality so those companies can display an “identity attribute.”