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Duff on Hospitality Law

Booking Holdings Under Scrutiny and the Rise of AI Trip Planners: This Week in Online Travel

09.12.23

This week features a heavy dose of Booking Holdings' updates, including updates on the story we featured last week regarding Hungary's recent decision to launch a formal investigation into the country's online travel industry. Enjoy.

- **AI Trip Planners Are Everywhere**. While we all have read stories detailing the major booking platforms' adoption of generative AI for trip planning (some of those stories have been featured in our weekly Update), smaller AI powered niche planners are now popping up everywhere. This past week, *Skift* featured three new planners - Troupe (short term rentals), GenixGPT ("hidden gems") and JetAI (private plane charters). What's obvious is that not all of these planners will make it – fall out is inevitable. What will be interesting to watch is how many, if any, will be acquired by the major booking platforms.

- **Booking.com's Payment Delays - Part II**. Last week we featured a story detailing the decision by the Hungarian competition authority to open an investigation into the country's online travel booking industry, driven in large part by Hungarian hoteliers' multiple complaints regarding delayed payments (room rate less commission) via Booking.com's payments platform. Apparently, the problem was a little more widespread than just Hungary (affecting hoteliers throughout Asia), may have dated as far back as April of this year (and continued through the heavy tourist seasons for many) and may have even affected commission payments to members of Booking's affiliate network (though Booking claims these delays were part of planned maintenance of its systems). Meanwhile, back in Hungary, Hungarian officials raided the Budapest offices of Booking.com on Wednesday (September 6) as part of its ongoing industry investigation.

Posted in Online Travel Update

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