Duff on Hospitality Law

Global OTA Scrutiny and Airline Distribution Battles: This Week in Online Travel

03.25.24

This week's Update features a variety of topics, including Italy's newly announced investigation of Booking.com, American's ongoing battle with ASTA and Qantas' new TMC portal:

- **Italy Launches Investigation of Booking.com**. Just weeks ago, Booking Holdings announced as part of its fourth quarterly earnings release that Spanish competition authorities were considering levying an unprecedented $530 million fine against its Booking.com platform. Now, Italy is joining the fray. On Friday, the Italian Competition Authority announced that it had opened an investigation into Booking.com and its alleged abuse of its dominant market position. At issue are the alleged advantages given to hotels that participate in Booking's Preferred Program in exchange for higher commissions and Booking's automated price matching tool (the so-called "Booking Sponsored Benefit"). According to the Authority, the two practices could have the effect of excluding competing online travel agents from the market. The investigation was triggered by complaints from Italian hotel associations.
- **ASTA Launches PR Campaign Against American Airlines**. As the war between ASTA (American Society of Travel Advisors) and American continues over American's campaign to transition advisors to NDC (and thereby reduce overall distribution costs), ASTA has taken its position to lawmakers and the public via a new ad campaign and consumer-facing website. New ads running in Politico direct readers to ASTA's new website, which includes messages for both travelers and travel advisors and encourages both groups to contact their legislators. Both sections also encourage a congressional investigation into American.
- **Concur Travel Expands Hotel Offerings**. This past week Concur SAP announced that it was making several changes to its booking and travel management platform, Concur Travel. The changes include expanded hotel content (via new integrations with Amex GBT, CWT, Flight Centre and HRS), rail content, emissions data (hotels, air, rail and rental car options) and itinerary sharing.
- **Qantas Launches New TMC Booking Platform**. Travel management companies and agencies have a new platform (Qantas Distribution Platform) for booking Qantas flights using NDC content. Access to the platform is limited to TMCs that have an existing commercial agreement with Qantas and are connected to one of Qantas certified technological partners, including Sabre, Travelport and Amadeus. Users of the platform will have access to special offers, discount pricing and shopping capabilities not otherwise available through traditional channels. According to the Qantas website, the new portal is best "suited for simple bookings" with complex customers and system requirements best supported through Qantas'

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certified technology partners. Sounds like a statement intended to calm Qantas' legacy GDS partners' concerns as Qantas seeks to move customers to a new alternative platform.

ASTA launches ad campaign against American Airlines

March 22, 2024 via Travel Weekly

ASTA has fired another shot in its war against American Airlines, launching an ad campaign in Politico and a consumer-facing website where travel advisors' clients can send messages to legislators asking for a congressional investigation into American.

Booking.com probed in Italy over suspicions of exclusionary conduct, watchdog says

March 22, 2024 via foster.com

Booking.com is now under investigation by the Italian competition agency to see if the online hotel reservation platform abused its market power through a strategy aimed at reducing the ...

Booking's price-parity strategies trigger Italian dominance-abuse probe (update*)

March 22, 2024 via foster.com

Booking's web-scraping strategy to match lower accommodation prices in other sites, along with its program to offer greater visibility to hotels for a higher fee, are under investigation in Italy over ...

Homes & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy Unveils Revolutionary AI Search for Personalized Travel

March 21, 2024 via Travel and Tour World

Homes & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy is introducing an AI-powered search tool that allows travelers to find the ideal home and destination by simply describing The post Homes & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy Unveils Revolutionary AI Search for Personalized Travel appeared first on Travel And Tour World.

American Accuses ASTA of Self-Serving Interests in Technological Dispute

March 21, 2024 via Eckert Seamans

On February 5, 2024, American Airlines ("American") filed its Surreply and Motion for Leave to File with DOT in an ongoing dispute with The American Society of Travel Advisors ("ASTA"). As American and other major airlines transition to the New Distribution Capability ("NDC") model from the traditional ...

Qantas goes live with new NDC portal for TMCs

March 21, 2024 via Business Travel News Europe

Australian carrier Qantas has today launched a new platform for travel management companies and travel agencies to access its NDC content. Sign up for more... News • analysis • podcasts • reports I accept the Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy. TMCs can now register to access the Qantas Distribution ...

Concur Travel adds hotel content and Thrust emissions data

March 20, 2024 via Business Travel News Europe

SAP Concur has added several new features to the new booking experience in Concur Travel, including

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expanded hotel content, in-app emissions data and itinerary sharing via Microsoft Teams. The upgrades will be introduced globally as part of the wider roll-out of the re-platformed Concur Travel, the company announced on Tuesday …

Posted in Online Travel Update

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