Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Biden Administration Announces Plan to Tackle "Surprise Fees"

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This week's Update delves back into resort fees and includes a story detailing planned future regulation of the fees by the FTC. While resort fees may not technically be an "online issue," potential federal regulation will definitely affect hoteliers' online efforts and the efforts of the many online travel distribution platforms they use. Enjoy.

Biden Administration Announces Plan to Tackle "Surprise Fees"

(President Biden Targets Hotel Resort Fees in Larger Crackdown," October 27, 2022 via Skift (subscription may be required)

In comments last week, President Joe Biden noted that his administration planned to crack down on "surprise fees," which according to Biden, included specifically hotel resort fees. Earlier this month, the Federal Trade Commission issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to initiate an administrative rule making process to address junk fees. The FTC is now seeking comment on the issue. Copies of the FTC press release and ANPR are attached. We will continue to keep our readers apprised of the FTC's activities going forward.

Cruise Travelers Are Moving Online

("Cruise Chiefs Hail Comeback, Urge Travel Agents to Embrace Digital - It's Now or Never - WIT," October 26, 2022 via Web in Travel)

For years, the cruise industry has been slow to embrace the digital transformation that has occurred with airlines and hotels. The explanation was that cruises (e.g., itineraries, vessels, cabins, excursions, etc.) were far too complicated and presented far too many variables to distribute effectively online. Not surprisingly, that view is beginning to change as prospective passengers progressively move to online channels for travel inspiration, travel planning and searching and now, booking. At a recent cruising conference held in Singapore (Cruise World 2022), executives from several cruise companies encouraged travel agents to embrace the transition to online platforms - social media, search, online travel agents, etc. Research presented at the conference also detailed passengers' increasing reliance on online channels (over historical channels like travel agents).

Booking.com to Add Emissions Information

("Booking.com to Add Emissions Info to Bookings Through New Partnership," October 24, 2022 via Skift) (subscription may be required)

Last week, Booking.com announced a new partnership with Oslo-based climate technology firm, CHOOOSE. With the partnership, Booking.com plans to provide users with emission-related information

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about planned trips, including selected accommodations. Ultimately, Booking.com hopes to provide users alternatives for offsetting their identified emissions. No timing for the rollout of emissions related was given.

Other News:

Travel Apps Have Work to Do in Improving Customer Satisfaction

October 24, 2022 via Phocus Wire

Travel and hospitality apps have some room for improvement when it comes to user satisfaction, according to a recent global survey by IT consulting firm Applause.

Understanding the Digital Markets Act (DMA) - FAQ Sheet

October 12, 2022 via Foster Garvey Legal Alert

The Digital Markets Act (DMA was published in the Official Journal on October 12. The DMA aims to create a level playing field for EU businesses by regulating big tech.

Posted in Online Travel Update

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