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Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: EU Regulators Eye Booking Holdings' Acquisition & Hopper Introduces Airline Fintech

08.22.23

This week's Update features two stories on Booking Holdings' pending acquisition of eTraveli, which remains under EU review. Enjoy

1. **Booking Holdings' eTraveli Acquisition Remains Under Review**. It's been a few weeks since we last updated the status of Booking Holdings' long proposed acquisition of flight platform, eTraveli. With the month of August rapidly coming to a close, it is crunch time for both Booking Holdings and the EU Commission regulators who are scrutinizing the proposed transaction. Regulators are expected to issue their decision at the end of the month. Regulators have expressed concern that the transaction will further cement Booking.com's dominant position in the EU, particularly for hoteliers. In response, Booking has recently proposed offering users who book flights on Booking.com a "carousel" of hotel options - featuring hotels available not only on Booking.com, but other platforms as well. While some speculate that sister-company Kayak might be source of this alternative hotel inventory, it isn't clear yet where the additional inventory might be sourced (e.g., competing hotel platforms, hotels' own booking channels, etc.).

2. **Hopper Launches Hopper Cloud for Airlines and Announces First Airline Partner**. On Wednesday this past week, Air Canada announced that it was partnering with Hopper to offer passengers booking on Air Canada's website the option to purchase policies allowing them to cancel their flights at any time for any reason on eligible fares. Hopper referred to the new partnership as the launch of Hopper Cloud for Airlines, extending the full array of fintech products and services to airline partners.

3. **Major Accommodation Platforms Increase (Again) Quarterly Sales and Marketing Spend**. It has been a refrain often repeated in our weekly Updates. Another quarter, and another quarter of increased spending by the major accommodation booking platforms on sales and marketing. While spending increased for each of the big three platforms (Airbnb, Expedia and Booking) for various reasons, all three were quick to point out the growing percentage of bookings coming through lesser expensive direct channels - loyalty programs, mobile applications, etc.

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Hopper adds Air Canada as first airline partner for Hopper Cloud

August 16, 2023 via Phocus Wire

For a fee, travelers can add Hopper-powered "Cancel for Any Reason" to eligible non-refundable fare types booked on the Air Canada website.

Booking Hopes Its Kayak Brand Can Help Save eTraveli Deal

August 16, 2023 via Skift Travel News

Skift Take Booking Holdings' proposed remedy to push through its pending deal to acquire eTraveli Group may not be enough. Perhaps additional concessions or litigation are in the offing. Dennis Schaal Share Booking Holdings has proposed a remedy to a hotel issue that is threatening European Commission approval of its …

Online travel giants seeking to mix up marketing channels

August 15, 2023 via Phocus Wire

Online travel giants Booking Holdings, Expedia Group and Airbnb increased marketing investment marginally in Q2 as all strive to make the most of direct channels.

Trends, product updates and launch news from GBTA

August 14, 2023 via Phocus Wire

The gathering of the global business travel industry is getting underway in Dallas, and we've rounded up some of the key announcements from travel management companies and technology players.

Booking holds its breath over EU review of eTraveli deal, as other digital giants watch closely

August 14, 2023 via foster.com

Booking holds its breath over EU review of eTraveli deal, as other digital giants watch closely 14 Aug 2023 | 15:45 GMT | Comment By Nicholas Hirst Booking Holdings is nearing a decision by the EU merger regulator on whether its takeover of flight reservation service eTraveli should be …

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