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Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Ryanair's OTA Battle Escalates and GDS Evolution

01.08.24

This week's Update features one of several stories published this past week regarding the escalating fight between renegade airline Ryanair and several of the large online travel platforms. We've also included a few stories on GDS platforms - one on Travelport and the other on one airline's well-documented push to modernize GDS' (and their users') practices. I expect to increase our coverage of GDS this next year, as I anticipate seeing a number of changes coming out of the GDS world over the next year or two. Enjoy.

- **Ryanair's OTA War Continues to Escalate**. Readers of our weekly Update are familiar with Ryanair's ongoing battle with certain major OTAs (primarily Booking Holdings' various platforms). In response to recent criticisms by Ryanair over the platforms' allegedly unjustified fees and charges (or perhaps pending U.S. litigation by Ryanair against Booking Holdings), the platforms (Booking.com, Kayak and Kiwi) have removed entirely the airline's flights. According to Ryanair, the airline expected to take a short term hit on revenue as a result of the "pirates" (Ryanair's term, not ours) actions. In response, Ryanair intends to make its lowest fares available on its own booking platform and those of "honest/transparent" OTAs. Is there a lesson here somewhere for hoteliers?

- **ASTA Takes (Again) Its Complaints Over American Airlines to the Department of Transportation**. The ongoing battle between the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) and American Airlines continues. In a December 20 filing, ASTA again asked the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to investigate the airlines' practices and to require American to restore the travel content that it previously removed (and presumably, made available only to travel agents via NDC connections). According to ASTA, many of the same problems that existed immediately following American's transition to NDC in April of last year persist today. American in turn has argued that ASTA and its members need to modernize and move away from legacy technology (legacy GDS systems).

- **Third Party Platforms Voice Their Support for Junk Fee Legislation**. In advance of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce's consideration of proposed legislation on resort fees (the legislation passed out of the Committee on a 44-0 vote), the Travel Technology Association (membership comprised of OTAs, GDSs and other platforms) submitted a letter for the Committee's consideration. According to Association CEO and President, Laura Chadwick, the legislation will help "reign in their [hoteliers] troubling resort fee practices." Interestingly, while the Association favors the proposed legislation, the Association also asked to add provisions holding hoteliers (not the platforms) responsible for failing to display correct resort fee information. A complete copy of the Association's

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letter is available here.

Hopper Has a Hotel Chain Problem

January 4, 2024 via Skift Travel News

Hopper is under pressure to get profitable, and an IPO may be in its long-range plans. Blowback against some of its fintech products and issues with hotel chains, aren't helping. Dennis Schaal Share After Hopper's noisy breakups last year with Expedia Group and Booking.com, Hopper has a major ...

Ryanair Doesn't Want Any Help Selling Seats

January 4, 2024 via Skift Travel News

Ryanair is in a conflict with several major online travel agencies. The Irish-based airline said that "pirates" throughout the sector stopped selling its flights ...

Ryanair lashes out at online 'pirates' after airline removed from booking sites

January 3, 2024 via Sky News

Ryanair has warned its business is likely to be hit in the short term after a string of online travel agents removed the airline from their online listings. The Irish firm accused brands including Booking.com, Kiwi and Kayak of acting like "pirates" after they suddenly wiped its flights from their ...

Travelport Completes New Equity Financing

January 3, 2024 via PR Newswire

Travelport (the "Company"), a global technology company that powers travel bookings for hundreds of thousands of travel suppliers worldwide, today announced that it has completed its previously announced financing transaction with a group of its existing equity holders and lenders who have invested ...

ASTA continues public fight with American Airlines

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December 21, 2023 via travelweekly.com

The public back-and-forth between the American Society of Travel Advisors and American Airlines continues, with ASTA reiterating that it wants the Department of Transportation to investigate the airline's distribution practices and take enforcement action. In a Dec. 20 complaint to the DOT that was a reply to American's response to …

Travel Tech Submits Letter on No Hidden FEES Act Ahead of Full Committee Mark-Up

December 6, 2023 via Travel Tech Association

On Wednesday, December 6th, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce considered H.R. 6543, the No Hidden Fees on Extra Expenses for Stays (FEES) Act. In advance of the markup, the Travel Technology Association (Travel Tech) submitted a letter to the Members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. …

Posted in Online Travel Update

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