Skift

HOTELS

Hotels Shrug Off Airbnb's Push Into Experiences – But They Still Need to Compete

Luke Martin and Sean O'Neill

Yesterday at 11:21 AM EDT

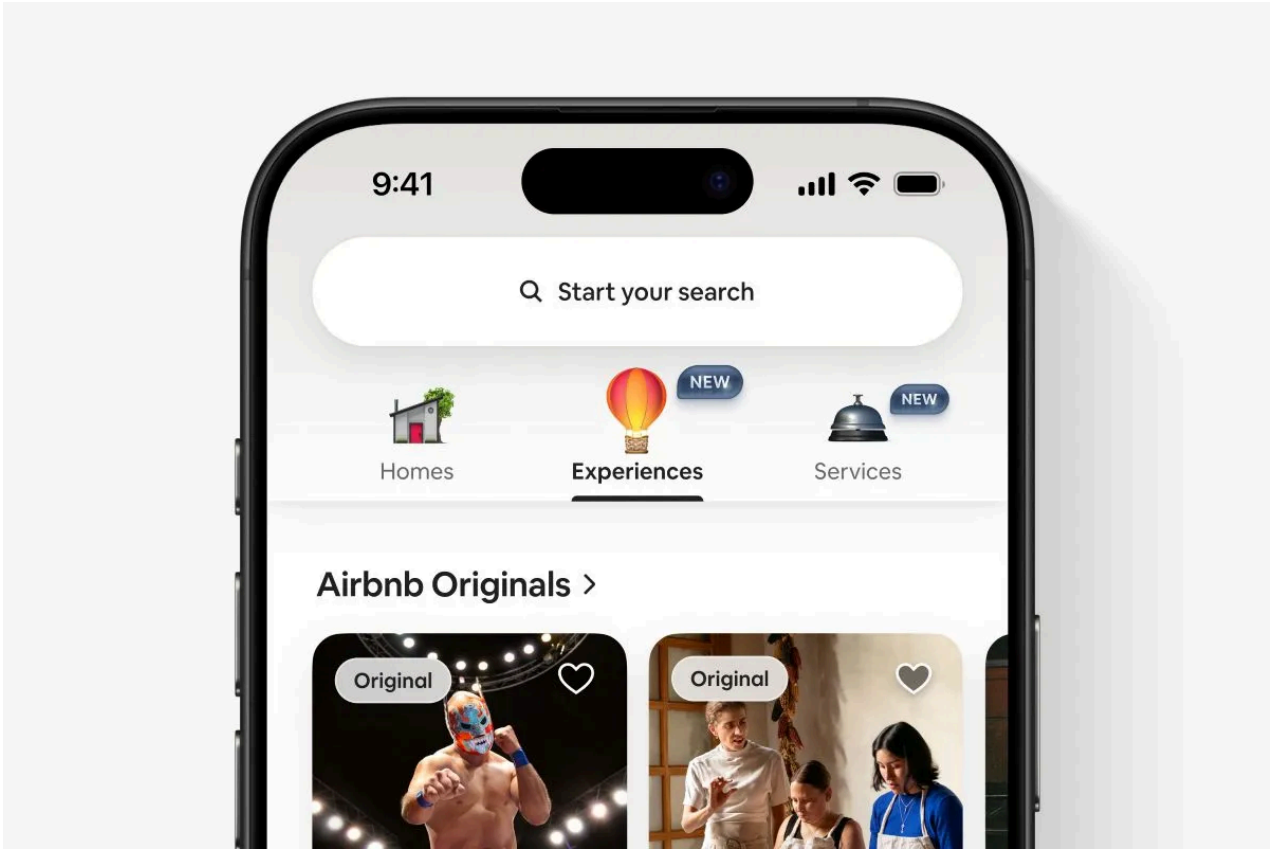

PHOTO CREDIT: AIRBNB'S REDESIGNED APP HIGHLIGHTS SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES. AIRBNB

SKIFT TAKE

Airbnb's relaunch of its Experiences platform and new offering of hotel-style à la carte services might pressure hoteliers. But so far, many hotel execs seem unfazed.

Copyright Notice: No part of this publication may be copied, photocopied, or duplicated in any form or by any means without Skift Inc.'s prior written consent. Copying of this publication is in violation of the Federal Copyright Law (17 USC 101 et seq.). Violators may be subject to criminal penalties as well as liability for substantial monetary damages, including statutory damages up to $100,000 per infringement, costs and attorney's fees. Copyright © 2025 Skift, Inc. All rights reserved. ISSN 1942-2059.

Airbnb's entry into selling experiences and hotel-style services is drawing a muted response from some hospitality industry leaders. A few have minimized the threat, though some analysts warn that hotel companies risk falling behind in the race to capture lucrative ancillary revenue.

Airbnb aims to offer a marketplace for a range of services, including massage, spa treatments, and personal training. These are offerings expected at many hotels but not short-term rentals - "We're eliminating reasons why people wouldn't want to stay in an Airbnb," the company's chief business officer Dave Stephenson told Skift in May shortly after unveiling the new products.

One challenge will be delivering consistent quality.

"They've gone on this journey before, and what they're trying to do is really difficult," said Chris Silcock, president of global brands and commercial services at Hilton.

Silcock said Hilton isn't rushing to copy Airbnb's marketplace model.

"We haven't gone down that route because we're in hospitality, the business of people serving people, and that's much easier to do in a building where we can guarantee a flow of customers and when we can meet or hire or contract with people to deliver the quality of service that our customers expect," he said.

Jean-Jacques Morin, group deputy CEO and premium, midscale & economy division CEO at Accor, acknowledged Airbnb's strategic logic but noted the difficulties in execution.

"They face the difficult challenge of how do you provide consistent, on-demand services on properties you don't own," he said.

"If I were running Airbnb, would I push where they're pushing [in experiences and services]? Absolutely," Morin said.

The hotel exec suggested the platform might be better served addressing basic needs: "Get the Wi-Fi to work right every time you log into the network at every property seamlessly," he advised.

Stephenson stressed the focus on quality: "We don't just let any experience onto Airbnb. We have dedicated people that are reaching out and finding experiences ... We have some amazing, iconic experiences. But we're also bringing them down to local people that know those cities best."

Experiences Boost Loyalty and Revenue

Not all industry voices are dismissive. Michelle Russo, founder and CEO of hotel asset management firm HotelAVE, said major hotel groups are missing an opportunity by not embracing experience-

based offerings.

Hotel groups say they want to forge closer bonds with guests to boost loyalty.

"This would be an excellent way to do that, and it could be a great ancillary revenue source for the brands, too," Russo said.

A persistent challenge for hotel companies has been a mix of regulatory hurdles and operational complexity when trying to offer curated experiences to guests.

"There's so much red tape for a hotel to create or identify or recommend experiences," Russo said. "Why should it be so tough?"

Yet Marriott is the only major hotel group to offer guests a curated set of tours, activities, and similar travel experiences, via an activities portal powered by a tour operator and distributor in the UK, Travel Curious Group.

Old Tech Holding Back Hotels

Several tech experts Skift spoke with said hotel operators' outdated technology prevents them from cross-selling and upselling guests on much besides a mix of room amenities and bed counts.

"Airbnb is reminding hotels that they need to be more limber with their technology offering," said Robert Holland, managing director UK & Ireland at revenue management and distribution services provider HotelPartner Revenue Management. "They should be listing ancillary services and having them bookable online."

Russo said hotels could send guests a pre-arrival message offering a handful of potential experiences, Russo said.

Same Guest, Shifting Expectations?

Hotel companies may underestimate an increased blurring of the distinction between hotels and alternative accommodations.

For example, the Evermore Resort in Florida combines a Conrad Orlando hotel with dozens of separately operated, professionally managed vacation rentals.

It's typically an overlapping set of guests choosing between both the hotel and vacation rentals, depending on the occasion, said Chris Kelsey, president of developer Dart Interests.

Airbnb's latest platform redesign has been built to address those shifting preferences. New guest profiles and social features foster travel planning around shared experiences.

"Travelers want personalized, seamless experiences bookable at the tap of a screen," said Pedro Colaco, CEO of GuestCentric, a hotel marketing software provider. "Hotels absolutely need to respond. But the opportunity isn't just in copying Airbnb, it's in doing it even better."

One way to do things "better" might be through high-quality and distinctive experiences.

"If the platform becomes too broad or inconsistent, it could shift public perception from a provider of unique experiences to something closer to a generic booking tool," said Dulani Porter, executive vice president at creative agency Spark, which advises hospitality brands including Hilton.

One possible example: Marriott on Tuesday announced a dinner series at selected luxury hotels, with rare specialized menus and invitation-only guest lists, which travelers can book to get local flavor with a chef specializing in regional dishes.

Hotels on Airbnb

Perhaps the most dramatic way to prove that hotels have nothing to fear is by listing on Airbnb itself (as opposed to its sister brand HotelTonight). Airbnb offers users the ability to filter listings to see only hotels.

Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky said last month that "almost all the hoteliers in the world would love to have Airbnb as a distribution channel."

Yet hotels' presence on Airbnb is limited. When hotels do distribute on Airbnb, it's often to reach a type of customer who mainly only books their lodging via Airbnb and can't be reached otherwise, said James Bishop, VP, ecosystem and strategic partnerships at Australia-based SiteMinder, which is one of the main connectivity tools hotels can use to distribute via Airbnb.

Airbnb Relaunches Experiences, Adds Hotel-Style Services – Latest Move to Go Beyond Rentals

CEO Brian Chesky has been pushing the idea for a while that he wants to expand beyond the core business of short-term rentals. Now the company is investing upwards of $250 million.

READ MORE

Accommodations Sector Stock Index Performance Year-to-Date

What am I looking at? The performance of hotels and short-term rental sector stocks within the ST200. The index includes companies publicly traded across global markets, including

international and regional hotel brands, hotel REITs, hotel management companies, alternative accommodations, and timeshares.

The Skift Travel 200 (ST200) combines the financial performance of nearly 200 travel companies worth more than a trillion dollars into a single number. See more hotels and short-term rental financial sector performance.

Read the full methodology behind the Skift Travel 200.

Luke Martin and Sean O'Neill
Yesterday at 11:21 AM EDT

TAGS: ACCOR, AIRBNB, EXPERIENCES, EXPERIENTIAL, FUTURE OF LODGING, HILTON, ONLINE TRAVEL NEWSLETTER, TOURS AND ACTIVITIES