Foster Garvey

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Google Shutters "Book on Google" feature; Booking Holdings' Earnings Release Reveals Insight on Profit Margins Strategy; and Amadeus Brushes Off Concerns About Airlines' Direct Connectivity Push

03.04.22

This week's Update includes two stories detailed Booking Holdings' recent earnings release and a surprise story regarding Google's hotel booking platform. Enjoy.

Google Shutters Book on Google

("Book on Google for hotels to shut after low take-up," February 25, 2022 via Phocus Wire)

Citing low usage by both suppliers and users, last week, Google announced that it was shutting down its "Book on Google" feature on May 25. The facilitated meta search platform (my phrase) allowed users to begin the booking process on Google (reservations and payment details) and then complete the booking on the supplier's (hotelier or OTA) website. The announced changes should have no effect on Google's hotel search products, including the free booking links implemented last year.

Takeaways from Booking Holdings' Earnings Release

("Booking Holdings Looks to Pull Away from Airbnb on Profit Margins," February 24, 2022 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)

While much of last week's news regarding Booking Holdings' fourth quarter earnings release focused on Booking's improving financial metrics, I was particularly interested in Skift's story detailing Booking's plans for improving its profit margins (particularly in comparison to its rental platform competitor, Airbnb).

© 2026 Foster Garvey PC. All Rights Reserved.

According to Booking's CEO, Glenn Fogel, and CFO, David Goulden, achieving the desired profit margins will depend largely on Bookings' success in pursuing its well-publicized "connected trip" strategy. The strategy involves several components, including building out Booking's verticals (airline and activities), improving customer loyalty and making payments easier (note that use of Booking.com's lauded payment platform remained relatively flat over the fourth quarter), among others. Interestingly, Booking also suggested that it was in a position to convince its partners (including hoteliers) to provide substantial discounts and other benefits to drive incremental bookings. I'll be anxious to watch suppliers' response to this ongoing effort, particularly around adoption of Booking.com's payment platform, use of the anticipated wholesale distribution platform (via Priceline) and now, the response to these so-called "discounts and benefits."

Should Global Distribution Systems Worry About Airlines' Direct Connectivity Push?
("Amadeus Waves Off Concerns About Airlines' Direct Distribution Push," February 25, 2022 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)
Amadeus says no. Will that change as airlines continue to explore and adopt new forms of connectivity, like new distribution capability (NDC)? Amadeus still says no. When compared to its other GDS competitors, Sabre and Travelport, both of whom appear to lag behind in the development and distribution of new airline focused technology, Amadeus may be right.

Other news:

Wego Acquisition of Cleartrip Middle East Would Create Online Travel Group
February 23, 2022 via Skift Travel News (subscription may be required)
Singapore-headquartered Wego has traditionally been a regional metasearch business, where travelers search for trips and book them elsewhere, but the pending acquisition it announced this week of Cleartrip's Middle East business from India e-commerce giant Flipkart Group would create a more diversified online travel group.

Bookings Still Far Below Pre-Pandemic Levels: New Travel Health Index
February 23, 2022 via Skift Travel News (subscription may be required)
The travel industry in its prime has a healthy balance between demand and supply, with travel players looking to find that equilibrium between rates for airline seats, hotel rooms or any other travel commodity, and the amount of bookings coming in. Data from our improved Skift Travel Health Index (formerly the Skift Recovery Index) shows that the industry is far from this equilibrium as it continues to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tripadvisor Plus Is Case Study in Online Travel Hype
February 23, 2022 via Skift Travel News (subscription may be required)
It was only a little more than a year ago that Tripadvisor Co-Founder and CEO Steve Kaufer touted the company's fledgling - and since all but obliterated - Tripadvisor Plus subscription membership program for

© 2026 Foster Garvey PC. All Rights Reserved.

discounted hotel rooms as potentially a billion-dollar business.

Posted in Online Travel Update

Tagged as financial reporting, Online Travel Agencies, travel

Authored by

Greg Duff

Principal|Seattle

206.816.1470 greg.duff@foster.com

© 2026 Foster Garvey PC. All Rights Reserved.