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OTA & Travel Distribution Update: Tensions between Google and Booking.com become public; Google confirms recent Expedia research points to increased OTA reliance

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Last week was relatively quiet on the distribution front. Enjoy.

Tensions Between Google and Booking.com Become Public

("Booking.com and Google Clash in Europe as Regulators Target Both," October 29, 2020 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)

It is somewhat of an understatement to say that Google's growing interest in travel has garnered the attention of a few of its largest advertisers. Over the past year, representatives of the largest OTAs, namely Expedia and Booking, have been increasingly vocal with their "concerns" about Google and its practices. Recently, Booking made its views about Google even clearer, when it declined to lend support to Google's campaign to oppose EU regulatory action directed at online "platforms." In the words of Booking, "Our interests are diametrically opposed." While Booking's recent comments may have been motivated primarily by its effort to avoid being viewed by EU regulators as an online "gatekeeper," it is quite clear that Booking would like nothing more than to sit on the sidelines while its former "partner" faces the scrutiny of regulators alone.

[Google Confirms Recent Expedia Research Pointing to Increased OTA Reliance](#)

("Google says COVID boosted OTA usage in APAC," October 26, 2020 via Phocus Wire)

Roughly two weeks ago, we featured a [story](#) detailing the results of a recent Expedia Group study of travelers' anticipated booking habits during the post-COVID period. Not surprisingly, the study predicted that as travelers began traveling again, they would increasingly rely on OTAs over direct booking options at all stages of the traveler's funnel (from inspiration, to booking and beyond). Recently, Google's Asia-Pacific

leader in the travel and vertical search sector echoed similar refrains in remarks made at ITB Asia's travel trade show. According to Google, Chinese travelers' preference for booking through an OTA more than doubled over this past year (Expedia reported a 57 percent increase generally in its study.) Google attributed the growth to OTAs' ability to provide greater transparency into existing travel restrictions and opportunities, and steps taken to better protect travelers' health and safety.

Other news:

[Tripadvisor, OTA Insight partner to boost hotel data intelligence](#)

October 27, 2020 via Phocus Wire

Tripadvisor is launching two new subscription products to its suite of solutions for hoteliers. Spotlight is a new business intelligence solution created in partnership with OTA Insight, to help hoteliers forecast demand and set appropriate rates.

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