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Duff on Hospitality Law

Subtle Shifts in Online Travel: Hopper Lands RBC, AI Hiring Reveals Priorities & Booking.com Changes Course in Chile

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Good Sunday morning from Seattle . . . Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, April 10, is below. It was a relatively quiet week in the online travel industry as evidenced from this week's stories. Enjoy.

Hopper Scores Desperately Needed Victory with RBC. Last week's newly announced partnership between Hopper and the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) couldn't have come at a better time for Hopper, which recently announced significant changes with its key financial partner, Capital One. According to last week's announcement, Hopper will soon power travel for members of RBC's loyalty program, Avion Rewards. For years, Expedia has served as RBC's travel partner, but it elected to walk away from the relationship when RBC sought to prohibit Expedia from powering travel for any other Canadian financial institution. I guess exclusivity is a concept that makes Expedia nervous.

Who's Actually Advancing Technologically? Look to the Job Listings. Skift's founder, Rafat Ali, posted an interesting story this past week on *Skift*. In the story, Ali posits that job postings provide a strong indicator of which companies are actually "building" AI solutions for travel. A few takeaways from Ali's review of 170 postings from 13 major travel companies . . .

- The technical specificity of listings, not the volume of listings, was the key differentiator for Ali. Five companies stood out for their postings' technical specificity - Expedia, Booking Holdings, Airbnb, Agoda and Marriott.
- Not surprisingly, OTAs accounted for the majority of listed AI positions - 105 of the 170 total positions.
- Also not surprisingly, Sabre represented the largest "AI gap" (my term, not Ali's) between AI narrative (advertised "AI first platform") versus actual AI hiring.
- Generative AI has been replaced by agentic AI as the key concept/desire in travel AI hiring.

I recognize that Ali's approach may not be a perfect indicator of a company's AI prowess, but it may be a leading indicator of what direction a particular company might be heading (or perhaps, hopes to be heading).

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Booking.com Agrees to Lift Rate Parity Requirements in Chile. Time to add Chile to your list of "no parity" countries in your Booking.com agreements. The Chilean Court for the Defense of Free Competition (TDLC) announced this past week an out-of-court agreement with Booking.com that ends an investigation that began in 2024 with regard to Booking.com's contracting requirements. As part of the settlement, Booking.com agreed to remove all rate parity provisions from its contracts and to eliminate price controls from its preferred and Genius program participation requirements. The effect of these changes is likely limited to hotels located in Chile.

Have a great week.

The Trust Gap in Agentic Commerce and AI Booking
April 9, 2026 via PhocusWire
Travel companies are staring down a trust gap on the road to artificial intelligence (AI)-powered booking that is both technical and behavioral.

Hopper Takes Over Canadian Bank Deal From Expedia
April 9, 2026 via Skift
The RBC contract is a significant B2B win for fellow Canadian company, Hopper. Exclusivity may have been a precedent that Expedia saw as too limiting.

What 170 AI Job Listings Reveal About Who Is Actually Building in Travel
April 6, 2026 via Skift
When Marriott's job listings are more technically specific than some OTAs, the old assumptions about who leads in travel tech are up for grabs in an AI-flattened landscape.

TDLC Approves Out-of-Court Settlement Signed by the FNE with Booking.com
March 23, 2026 via Fiscalia Nacional Economica
The Court for the Defense of Free Competition (TDLC) approved an out-of-court agreement signed by the National Economic Prosecutor’s Office (FNE) with Booking.com BV, to end an investigation initiated in 2024 in relation to ...

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