

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Booking Holdings announces that it will repay pandemic aid after criticism of bonuses; Trip.com unexpectedly sells shares in Tripadvisor; the travel industry tests the waters of a buy-now-pay-later model

By Greg Duff on 6.11.21 | Posted in Online Travel Update

This week's Update features two stories detailing the role that online buy now pay later companies hope to have in the travel industry's recovery. Enjoy

Booking Holdings to Repay Pandemic Aid

("Booking Holdings to Repay \$110 Million in Pandemic Aid After Dutch Criticism About Bonuses," June 4, 2021 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)

Last week, in a Securities and Exchange Commission filing, Booking Holdings, Inc. announced that it plans to repay \$110 million in government aid (\$78 million of which came from the Netherlands) that it received during the pandemic. The announcement came after the Dutch parliament had raised concerns about the compensation packages that were paid to CEO, Glenn Fogel, and CFO, David Goulden in 2020.

Trip.com Sells a Portion of its Tripadvisor Holdings

("What's Going Wrong Between Tripadvisor and Trip.com Group?," June 1, 2021 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)

Last week in a financial filing, Trip.com announced that it sold approximately 20 percent of its shares in TripAdvisor. No reason was given for the sale, but the two parties described the sale and new commercial agreements as a strengthening of the parties' strategic partnership. One of these new agreements calls for Trip.com to provide Tripadvisor preferential pricing on approximately 10,000 hotels (the majority of which are in the United States) for use in Tripadvisor's new subscription program, Tripadvisor Plus. Time for those Trip.com suppliers to watch carefully when and how their properties might now appear on Tripadvisor Plus.

Are Flexible Payment Options the Key to the Travel Industry's Return?

("Is Buy-Now, Pay-Later the Future of the Travel Recovery?," June 4, 2021 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)

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Fintech providers, Fly Now Pay Later and Uplift, sure think so. In each instance, the buy-now-pay-later company provides travelers the opportunity to book airline tickets, hotel rooms, vacation packages, etc. today, but pay later over time. London-based Fly Now Pay Later currently has partnerships with travel brands Malaysia Airlines, Kayak and Lastminute.com, among others. Another prominent fintech provider, Uplift, has partnerships with several global airlines (notably Lufthansa, United and Alaska Airlines) and every low cost carrier in the United States (including the recent addition of Southwest Airlines). Uplift offers travelers both no-interest and simple interest options. American Express is also entering this space with its “Plan It” feature, which allows holders of its consumer cards to defer payment on airline and hotel bookings made through AmexTravel.com.

Other News:

[Interview: Expedia’s New Leaders From Apple and Verizon Hope to Help Travel Giant Bounce Back](#)

June 4, 2021 via GeekWire

In 2001, Expedia Group embarked on a shopping spree. Over the course of nearly two decades, the Seattle-based travel platform snatched up more than 40 companies with a combined worth of nearly \$13 billion. Among the brands Expedia controls today are Travelocity, Hotwire, CheapTickets, Orbitz, HomeAway, Vrbo, Egencia and Hotels.com, to name just a few.

[The Future of Travel: How Paytech Can Drive the Travel Industry’s Recovery](#)

June 2, 2021 via Fintech Times

The travel industry has been one of the worst-hit by the pandemic. The industry came to a complete standstill during the peak of the pandemic as countries across the globe were demanding their citizens stayed at home as lockdowns became the norm. As these measures are eased and countries give the green light for tourists to visit again, different companies in the travel sector are looking at ways to optimize revenue, outside of the traditional means.

[Why Hotels Are Experiencing a Sweet Moment in Direct Sales](#)

June 4, 2021 via Phocus Wire

Direct selling, both telephone and website, has gained a large share of sales during the pandemic. This huge increase has meant that many hoteliers have changed their passive or neutral attitudes toward direct sales, considering it a strategic pillar in their distribution.