

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Groups360 Raises an Additional \$50 Million; Uber Continues Push to Super App Status; and Google's Rob Torres Returns to Expedia

By Greg Duff on 4.15.22 | Posted in Online Travel Update

This week's Online Travel Update features a variety of stories, including a follow up story on Uber's ongoing transition from ride hailing app to super app. Enjoy.

Groups360 Raises an Additional \$50 Million

("Groups360 attracts \$35 million, plots group travel platform expansion," April 8, 2022 via Phocus Wire)

Groups360 announced recently that it raised an additional \$50 million in funding. The group booking platform was started in 2014 and in 2019, received a \$50 million investment from hoteliers Accor, IHG, Hilton and Marriott. Groups360 plans to use this latest investment to further its expansion across EMEA and APAC. Groups360's main offering, GroupSynch, allows users to book guest rooms and meeting rooms entirely online – similar to competing online offerings from CVENT (Instant Book), Hotelplanner and others. From our perspective, the first company to offer reasonable contracting terms that recognize hoteliers' concerns generally regarding online distribution, will likely have a huge advantage.

Uber Continues Push to Super App Status

("Uber goes full super app, adds planes, trains and hotels," April 6, 2022 via Phocus Wire)

Early last month, we featured a [story](#) detailing Uber's planned roll out of events and activities on its mobile app. Uber's ultimate plans for its app became a little clearer. This summer, Uber users in the United Kingdom will be able to book rail tickets and rental cars on the app. In the fall, U.K. users will have access to flights and hotels. Uber plans to rely on third-party partners to provide the required inventory (via API connections). In the words of Uber's U.K. Regional General Manager, Jamie Heywood, the service and product additions allow Uber users a "seamless door-to-door travel experience." Sounds like someone has been listening to Booking Holding's Glenn Fogel and his plans for Uber's soon-to-be competitor, Booking.com.

Google's Rob Torres Returns to Expedia

*("Expedia Hires Google Travel Advertising Director Rob Torres," April 4, 2022 via Skift)
(subscription may be required)*

Meet Expedia Media Solutions new Senior Vice President, Rob Torres. The announcement

Online Travel Update: Groups360 Raises an Additional \$50 Million; Uber Continues Push to Super App Status; and Google's Rob Torres Returns to Expedia

marks Rob's return to Expedia after nearly 15 years at Google. While no one is saying much about Rob's new role and whether Expedia's hire was motivated primarily by its desire to reduce further its reliance on third-party marketing, Rob did share that he believed he could contribute to Expedia's efforts to better leverage first-party data (particularly now, given important privacy changes by Apple and Google), help improve automation and focus Expedia's efforts on various travel "sub-segments" like destinations and cruise. Congrats Rob, we look forward to seeing the changes you bring.

Next week, we will include an important update on the U.S. Department of Justice's recent announcements regarding website accessibility.

Other news:

Booking pays Russia \$16.7 million for 2021 competition law breach - anti-monopoly service

April 8, 2022 via Reuters - Legal News

Online travel agency Booking Holdings Inc (BKNG.O) has paid 1.3 billion rouble (\$16.66 million) fine to Russia for violating anti-monopoly law, Russia's federal anti-monopoly service (FAS) said on Friday, April 8.

The state of online travel agencies

April 8, 2022 via Phocus Wire

The online travel market is expected to grow 18 percent in 2022 to \$76.7 billion, a figure just shy of 2019 gross bookings, new research from Phocuswright reveals.

SiteMinder consolidates products to create holistic platform for hoteliers

April 5, 2022 via Phocus Wire

SiteMinder is launching a comprehensive update to its platform that helps hoteliers maximize their digital commerce capabilities. The company describes its next-generation platform as putting "hotels at the center of their own purpose-built ecosystem."

Tags: booking, hotel development, online travel companies