

Research Shows Reducing Friction Matters; Expedia Group Prioritizes for Travelers and Partners

Expedia Group on a quest to provide stress-free, frictionless travel powered by AI and ML

LAS VEGAS, Nov. 13, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Technology can improve travel experiences by reducing pain points and stressors along the journey. Today, [Expedia Group](#) and business strategy Firm [Magid](#) released the Online Travel Friction Index¹, finding travelers want suppliers to offer a seamless travel experience, and to quickly and effectively handle any challenge during their travels. The research is aligned with Expedia Group's priority focus to unleash the power of its platform to build out traveler and partner solutions that can help knock down the barriers to travel, making it easier, more enjoyable, more attainable, more accessible and in doing so, ultimately bring the world within reach for billions of people around the globe.

What is a Frictionless Travel Experience?

Removing travel friction requires a deep understanding of customer pain points. Expedia Group's Innovation Lab tests new products continuously, leveraging advanced technologies including artificial intelligence and machine learning, eye tracking and face reader technology to understand travelers' focus on a web page and the emotions they experience while booking travel.

These tests recently uncovered the attributes travelers value the most that provide an easy-to-use, or frictionless online booking experience. Friction reduction occurs through the creation of extensive end-to-end user experience research, highly efficient coordinated processes, iterative product development, and obsession with customer and partner centricity.

The Online Travel Friction Index research identified key factors that reduce traveler friction through a 'friction reduction index;' a weighted average numerical score rating over 15 experience attributes that nearly 850 online travel users, ages 18-55, used to rate their experiences related to research, shopping and booking of travel products on various travel websites. Results from this research identified the top five most impactful friction reduction attributes as:

1. An easily navigable booking website
2. Inventory that is the best value
3. Ability to filter and sort a specific room type
4. Option to redeem special offers
5. Ability to quickly filter and sort specific hotel location criteria

Expedia Group brands consistently ranked higher in all five areas than other OTAs or branded chain sites that were included in the research. Expedia Group is also rated at least as well as, if not significantly higher, than hotel direct booking sites on every attribute in the 'friction reduction' index.

Friction Reduction Index Score Results	
Expedia Group	816
Other OTAs	799
Hotel Direct Sites	792
Meta Sites	788

Expedia Group's two-sided platform approach meets customer demands while simultaneously building innovative technology solutions, and infrastructure for its partners. These tools include examples such as white label packages that offer hotel partners better website monetization by integrating air and car bookings into their branded sites.

In 2018, Expedia Group spent more than \$1.6 billion in technology, with a focus on making its platform seamless for both partners and travelers. Expedia Group's massive efforts and investment in research and development over this decade have resulted in significant benefits for both travelers and partners, including reduction in distribution costs.

"Expedia Group is focused on connecting the world, by enabling discovery, search and booking of flights, hotels, transportation and activities - in a low stress, low friction manner," said Cyril Ranque, Group President of the

Travel Partners Group, Expedia Group. "Our technology-first platform is dedicated to providing a one-stop, easy and convenient experience for travelers to discover and book their trip with all the information they need to make the best and most informed selection. While we are obsessed with customer centricity, it also means a laser focus on partner success including helping our partners maximize productivity, visibility, conversion, revenue, and delivering to them the tools and experiences that they want and need."

Removing Partner Friction

Today, Expedia Group's partners' and suppliers' expectations on speed of service, and efficiency of processes are higher than ever before.

Expedia Group's platform solves partner pain points through different tools, such as the new Partner Central Chatbot, powered by the next generation of the company's AI Lab's Centralized Conversational Artificial Intelligence Platform (CCAIP) architecture. This chatbot is a virtual assistant experience providing contextual help and support to partners.

Personalized opportunities for partners generated by a new recommendation engine driven by dozens of Machine Learning algorithms intertwined together. This central intelligence computes, organizes, and passes revenue opportunities to partners, constantly evaluating the state of each partner to identify potential actions they can take and the return reward in doing so. Currently, this engine is generating 2.5 million recommendations and will continue to evolve to be more precise.

Removing Traveler Friction

This week, Brand Expedia announced the launch of a trip assistance function on [the app](#), that will alert the hotel a traveler will be checking in, if the traveler is experiencing a flight delay of 8+ hours, regardless of where the flight was booked. Brand Expedia is also piloting a shuttle tracking technology program built by Track My Shuttle into the [Expedia App](#), allowing hotel guests to see exactly where to find shuttle pickup for their hotel, and follow along with a live route map.

[Egencia](#), Expedia Group's corporate travel brand is creating a frictionless booking experience for business travelers by tapping into powerful algorithms and applied machine learning. The business travel management company recently launched Smart Mix, a feature that intelligently analyzes data and complex scenarios, factoring in the personal preferences of each traveler and their company's travel policy to deliver smarter search results out of hundreds of hotel and flight options. This week, Egencia announced the number of flights selected in the top ten North American search results improved by 13 percent, since Smart Mix for air was launched this summer. Smart Mix for hotel has helped Egencia customers save hundreds of thousands of dollars by optimizing search and sort results, estimating that customers could save over a million dollars by mid 2020 through the service.

The conversations platform is a perfect example of how Expedia Group is removing friction for both travelers and partners. One feature of the platform is the virtual agent (bot) which seamlessly offers self-service experiences, all dynamically supported and altered by artificial intelligence/machine learning through a configuration console, resulting in reduced effort and quicker process for making changes to bookings or completing queries. It is currently being used by Expedia Group agents and partner agents, reducing their cognitive load, delivering operational efficiencies and improving satisfaction. The overall travel experience is elevated.

About Expedia Group

Expedia Group is the world's travel platform. We help knock down the barriers to travel, making it easier, more enjoyable, more attainable and more accessible. We are here to bring the world within reach for customers and partners around the globe. We leverage our platform and technology capabilities across an extensive portfolio of businesses and brands to orchestrate the movement of people and the delivery of travel experiences on both a local and global basis. Our family of travel brands includes: Brand Expedia®, Hotels.com®, Expedia® Partner Solutions, Vrbo®, Egencia®, trivago®, HomeAway®, Orbitz®, Travelocity®, Hotwire®, Wotif®, ebookers®, CheapTickets®, Expedia Group™ Media Solutions, Expedia Local Expert®, CarRentals.com™, Expedia® CruiseShipCenters®, Classic Vacations®, TravelDoo®, VacationRentals.com and SilverRail™. For more information, visit www.expediagroup.com.

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¹ Expedia Group and Magid established an online study of 847 travelers between the ages of 18-55 from the United States and United Kingdom. Respondents must have booked at least one hotel stay using any OTA (online travel agency) within the past year. An index ranging from 100 (most friction) to 1000 (least friction) was

created from a comprehensive list of weighted attributes using a Partial Least Squares regression model.

SOURCE Expedia Group

For further information: industryrelationsteam@expedia.com

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