



The new reality of flight shopping.

A unique open industry summit.



What do flight shoppers care about now?
We had an animated conversation on evolving customer needs during the pandemic with our own Seth Anagnostis, Director of Global Sales, and product leaders from influential sales channels Expedia, Hopper, and Skyscanner.

FEATURED PARTICIPANTS



Janet Hsiao,
Director of Product Management, Expedia



Linda Abraham,
Product Manager, Hopper



Phil Donathy,
Sr. Product Director & Search Tribe Leader, Skyscanner



Seth Anagnostis,
Director, Global Sales, ATPCO

Q: What demographic and booking trends are emerging during the pandemic?

Q: What content is working and what is still needed?

Solution: Sales channels are adjusting the information they display and how they upsell to fit what flight shoppers are looking for right now.

PANDEMIC FLIGHT SHOPPERS ARE THINKING ABOUT THINGS THEY NEVER WOULD HAVE CONSIDERED WHEN BOOKING TRAVEL IN 2019.

Consumers are looking for new information to support their travel decisions: purchase flexibility, safety throughout the journey, and the ability to actually get to a destination. It's very important for travelers to be able to rebook their flights easily and without penalty if conditions change. It's a challenge to present the many different types of policies and fares. **At the beginning of the pandemic, Hopper saw 60% attachment to their own flexibility products, a significant increase.**

Channels are struggling with fulfillment refunds because of the complex policies, while customers don't understand and just want their money back. Customers want to know specific information about cleanliness and safety, including on-board social distancing, disinfectants, and how often aircraft are cleaned.

Airport health safety information has not been a focus because the data is too large, complex, and difficult to obtain—channels do not want to provide incorrect information and mislead travelers to wrong decisions. Skyscanner mentioned they would implement airport data if ATPCO provided it.

Booking trends have changed and are more erratic. Channels are seeing an increase in domestic and short-haul travel. They are not finding significant customer demographic shifts, beyond an increase in friends-and-family visits with longer stays. A three-month booking window was common previously, but now, more than half of travelers are purchasing trips one month ahead or less, some only one or two days in advance. Hopper's customers, which are primarily millennials, are more willing to travel during the pandemic.

"More than half of travelers are buying trips 1 month ahead or less," said Hopper's Linda Abraham.



Sales channels need to get crucial safety and refund information to travelers in a clear and transparent manner within limited display space. Domestic friends-and-family travel is rising while booking windows are shortening.

CHANNELS ARE MAKING CUSTOMERS FEEL INFORMED AND CONFIDENT INSTEAD OF PUSHING THEM TO TRAVEL BEFORE THEY ARE READY

Although online sites have ways to persuade customers toward purchases, like "hurry, only 2 seats left," all participants agreed that they should not influence travelers toward a purchase that would be wrong for them. Instead, the goal is to make customers feel informed and confident about their purchase decision and travel plans.

Structured and standardized data is very important for communication and integration on channels. If airlines and GDSs make it easier to understand and describe airline products, then the demand will come. The loss of business traffic may create opportunities for more airline retailing and segmenting for leisure customers.

Skyscanner and Hopper have found success in understanding and presenting different fare families and upsell products though work with airlines and ATPCO's Next Generation Storefront™. Adding clear and transparent options has created better value, happier customers, and higher returns for channels and airlines.

Hopper's Linda Abraham said, **"Airlines have been doing a lot of great work to provide customers the flexibility they are looking for like cancellation fee waivers, etc., so as an OTA, it's our responsibility to make sure... these provisions made by carriers are clear and well communicated to our users and they are aware of it when they are in the booking process."**

"The Reassurance info that ATPCO pulled together earlier in the year was great because in the past rules and restrictions...have been very opaque.... Travelers love simplification," said Skyscanner's Phil Donathy.



Demand will return over time according to passengers' attitude toward risk. Providing the right relevant, transparent, and concise information on safety measures will help passengers understand the experience they can expect.

HOW DOES CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR TOWARD OTHER TRAVEL PURCHASES SUCH AS HOTEL OR CAR RENTAL COMPARE WITH AIR TRAVEL?

It all comes down to cleanliness. Customers are looking for sanitation measures across all touch points in their journey. Investments will continue in areas that can provide full transparency on product opportunities and aids to help customers clarify their options.

People still want to travel, but they are thinking about it in a different way. In some cases, a flight and hotel itinerary has changed to a car and home rental. **Car rentals are up on all platforms: Skyscanner, historically a flight search focus, had a 233% increase from May to June in the US market. Expedia is actively communicating hotel cleanliness policies too.**

"9 out of 10 customers are looking for information on how a plane or property is cleaned," said Expedia's Janet Hsiao.



Cleanliness counts in every aspect of travel: plane, car, and lodgings.

Take a deeper dive into the [core themes](#) industry partners are focusing on right now

During the expected slow, staggered recovery, the opportunity to provide COVID-19 content continues. Best value products and upsell are still possible by reaching for travelers with offers attuned to their needs.

Reach out to ATPCO for ways to add travel advisory, health, hygiene, or safety content to your flight shopping platform.



Routehappy Rich Content can help with upsell and conversions. [Contact us](#) for more information.