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Google launches hub to aid destinations, hotels and partners in recovery

By Jill Menze (/Jill-Menze) | December 7, 2020

As the travel sector eyes recovery in some markets while navigating fluctuating regulations in others, Google is launching a new suite of tools designed to help industry stakeholders make better data-informed decisions.

The search giant's new website - called Travel Insights with Google - is built around three tools geared toward destinations, hotels and Google's commercial partners.

The first tool, Destination Insights, is a public resource for governments and tourism boards that details top sources of demand for a destination, as well as the destinations within countries that travelers are the most interested in visiting.

With the data, destinations can map out possible resumption of travel on specific routes and decide where to communicate with potential future travelers.

The second public tool, Hotel Insights, packages Google hotel search data to help hotels - namely small and independent hotels - understand how to target their marketing as they plan for recovery.

In addition to real-time insights, it also includes a resource guide to help hotels leverage tools like Google My Business and Google Reviews.

The final component, available to Google's commercial partners, is the Travel Analytics Center, which enables organizations to combine their own Google account data with broader Google demand data and insights. The insights will help travel partners manage their operations and find opportunities to reach potential visitors.

In an interview with PhocusWire, Richard Holden, Google vice president, product management for travel, calls the site a "one-stop shop for a number of different products and links."

Although Travel Insights with Google will be available globally, the site is launching with a focus on Asia Pacific, where "lockdowns have worked well and COVID rates have gotten under control," Holden says.

"We're certainly not focused on trying to encourage travel at a time when travel may still be unsafe in various parts of the world."

Recovery efforts

Holden adds that the new tools are an extension of other initiatives Google has put into place to help the industry recover.

"[Google] has been looking at what's been going on in the industry, which has been unprecedented. ... Travel is probably 10% of global GDP, and a massive amount of businesses depend upon this. We see estimates of 120 million tourism jobs that could be at risk across the globe," he says.

"We spent a lot of time thinking about the data that we have, the data we're able to collect and the insights we have from users as well, and what can we do to help the industry recover?"

On the consumer front, Holden says Google pivoted to helping travelers understand travel advisories as well as hotel and flight rates and refund policies. It also promoted "hero rates" to support first responders.

For businesses, in June, Google launched Flights Demand Explorer to provide search data to airlines. Holden says Demand Explorer data will be bundled into the Travel Analytics Center.

Amid the pandemic, the search engine has also heavily pushed its **pay-per-stay program** (<https://www.phocuswire.com/google-pay-per-stay-hotel-ads-mirai>), which was in limited release prior to COVID-19. “What [pay-per-stay] effectively does is shifts the burden of cancellation risk to us at Google, away from hotels,” Holden says, noting that hotels and big OTAs like Agoda “have leveraged this heavily and found it particularly useful.”

Holden says there are no plans to pull back on the pay-per-stay program at this time, and there is no intention to discontinue Travel Insights with Google in the future – “to be honest, the data is useful for these businesses in any shape or form going forward.”

And, given the **billions of dollars** (<https://www.phocuswire.com/booking-holdings-expedia-group-marketing-spend-2019>) its travel partners spend with the search giant, Holden says Google is continuing to evaluate how it can add more value to its partners.

“I genuinely think we’ve been very helpful and we’re continuing to try and be as helpful as possible.”

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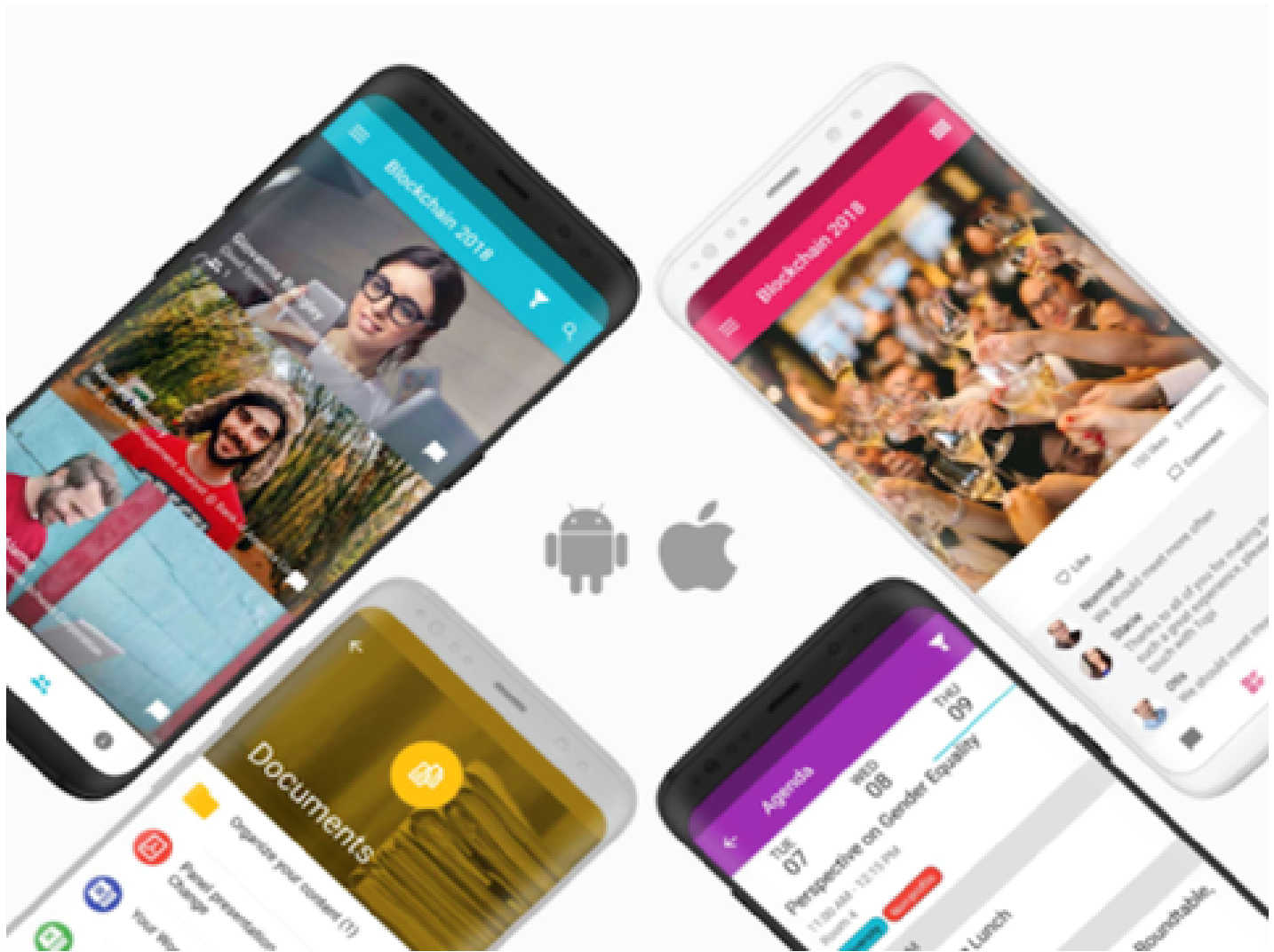
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