



POWERING TRAVEL | SEASON 3 | EPISODE 4

The intersection of tech and travel

What to listen for:

The role of technology in the future of travel is a hot topic — one we're digging deep into in this episode. Press play to hear guest Siew Hoon Yeoh of Web in Travel alongside hosts Richard Kocher and Brandon Ehrhardt as they discuss the rapid evolution of tech in the industry.

In this episode of Powering Travel, you'll learn the different ways Expedia Group is leveraging AI in travel — including the launch of EG Labs, which uses AI to help consumers discover and test experimental beta products. Siew Hoon and Richard also explore the elements of travel best served by the human touch and discuss ways that tech can elevate the human experience.

After listening to this episode, you'll have new insights on all things travel tech, including insider predictions on innovations and tips on keeping up with the ever-evolving industry.

Introduction:

[[00:00:04] Brandon Ehrhardt Travel providers are the backbone of the travel experience in this brand-new season of Powering Travel. We'll dive into industry trends, hot topics, and actionable advice to help business leaders continue evolving and enhancing travel experience one trip at a time. You've landed with the Powering Travel Podcast, brought to you by Expedia Group. I'm your host, Brandon Ehrhardt, and in today's episode, we've got an interesting conversation. Aren't they all? We're going to get a unique perspective on the future of tech and travel by looking at the past from a global lens. Before we get into that, though, now it's time for the big reveal of our guest host. If you're an avid listener — and if you're not, you're missing out — you've heard his voice two other times. This time, he's back at it again. Another stellar job on the mic by my dear friend Richard Kocher. Richard, how are you doing today?

[00:00:53] Richard Kocher Doing very well. Thanks, Brandon. I love being able to step in and do the host chair. Really great opportunity to meet some industry experts. And today's guest in particular is fascinating.

[00:01:02] Brandon Ehrhardt Absolutely. And if you're a new listener to the show, do two things for me. First, click subscribe. Second, get acquainted with Richard. He's our senior director of media insights and planning. He spends the majority of his time looking at data and distilling insights. Richard, you're going to do a much better job describing your job than I will, so why don't you tell us a little bit more about it.

[00:01:21] Richard Kocher Yeah. So, it's twofold, really. We work across global regions with partners to provide data and insights on what we're seeing in the markets, or providing trends on how the world is traveling. Then we do the campaign strategy and planning for a lot of the advertising partners that work with Expedia. So, there's the two key areas, and then lots of reporting on the performance of those marketing campaigns with our partners.

[00:01:45] **Brandon Ehrhardt** Richard, in your role looking at data and distilling insights, you've obviously found your way on to another episode because you have something really interesting to share. So, why don't you tell us a little bit more about it.

[00:01:55] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. So, some of the episode that we did with Sheryl about the path to purchase, this interview was really thought provoking and another cool way to think about travel trends that have changed over time. It's always fun as well. I think you're looking at the future and seeing how what's ahead of us, and I think, you know with our guest today, we had a really good perspective from a veteran in the industry and really good insights into what we've seen in the past and what might be ahead of us.

[00:02:19] **Brandon Ehrhardt** Great insights and a great perspective. So interesting to get the point of view of such a seasoned vet in a world of tech and travel. So, why don't you go ahead and tell us a bit more about Siew Hoon.

[00:02:30] **Richard Kocher** Yeah, sure. So, Yeoh Siew Hoon has been covering the travel industry in Asia-Pacific for decades, starting off as a rookie reporter and going on to lead and launch the region's key industry media titles. In 2005, she founded Web in Travel, also known as WiT, to tackle how technology was changing travel in Asia-Pacific. We got to dive into the early days of her time with WiT. Over the years, she took WiT to new places, launching editions in Tokyo, Seoul, Middle East, and Europe to keep the world's attention focused on the three pillars of travel technology in Asia. Following the acquisition by Northstar Travel Group in 2014, she led the launch of Travel Weekly Asia and MNC Asia and formed the editorial team to execute the entry of Northstar to Asia. Her work has been recognized by numerous institutions, including the Singapore Tourist Board, which recognized her as Tourism Entrepreneur of the year in 2014. The WiT Singapore Conference, which remains its tentpole event, has won several awards, including Most Innovative Marketing Initiative and Trade Conference of the Year. Other than writing about travel, Siew Hoon is also a published author of several books and hosts two podcasts, including The WiT Podcast and A Life in Travel podcast.

[00:03:36] **Brandon Ehrhardt** Wow, we're sure super envious of the opportunity you had to speak directly with her. I'm sure our audience is eager to hear the conversation. Here is Richard and Yeoh Siew Hoon.

Inspiring loyalty One Key:

[00:02:48] **Brandon Ehrhardt** And some exciting things happening all across that business, one of which this year was the launch of the One Key loyalty program. It's been a huge focus of the business of late. In fact, we dedicated a season finale of last season to the topic of loyalty. With something as innovative as One Key, a true first in the industry to bring these categories together and have the ability to earn on air and hotel and vacation rentals, can you clarify for the audience today how One Key is complementary and not a competitor to our partners' loyalty programs?

[00:03:24] **Ariane Gorin** We've been very pleased with the launch of One Key. It's been recognized by a few publications. It won the Simplicity and Loyalty award with the Points Guy. It was the winner of the Good Housekeeping 2024 Family Travel Award. So, we know the program is gaining traction, and this is really a program where the focus is for the everyday traveler. The reality is that 83 percent of travelers only take a few trips a year, and they may never earn status or meaningful rewards from existing loyalty programs. And that's really where One Key fits in. What it means is that our partners — our supply partners, hotels, and airlines and the like — now have access to this new segment of travelers. It's travelers who maybe aren't the road warriors, but it's people who maybe are going to book a vacation rental on Vrbo and then want to use the One Key cash they earn to stay, for example, a short stay at a hotel or to book an air ticket. So, we think it's really it can be complementary, as you said. One Key launched in the U.S. in July of 2023. And during 2024 there are going to be additional markets. And so we're excited to bring this rewards program outside of the U.S.

[00:04:41] **Brandon Ehrhardt** So, speaking of One Key, in that global approach outside of the United States, what's the strategy right now for the brand to penetrate markets where it traditionally hasn't been a large part of the market share? And how does One Key play a role in that?

The acceleration of travel tech:

[00:03:50] **Richard Kocher** So, Siew Hoon, we need to talk a bit about the early days of travel tech. You started Web in Travel in the early 2000s, and Web in Travel continues to publish news, host events, and create content focused on travel tech, distribution, and marketing. What inspired you to start Web in Travel?

[00:04:06] **Siew Hoon** Well, actually, Web in Tavel started in 2005, to be exact. And I guess I started it because I was curious about how technology was going to change customer behavior, and therefore how travel suppliers had to keep up and adapt to capture the new traveler, right? You know, with the new customer behavior. So, I think I started out of curiosity, really, to really learn how technology was going to change the traveler behavior, particularly in Asia-Pacific. I had seen there was research done in the U.S. and Europe, but there was very little done in Asia. So, I was curious about that. And I guess that's why I started it.

[00:04:56] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. And, back then into 2005, what would you say were the sort of headlines around how technology had changed consumer behavior in travel, things that really stood out to you at that point?

[00:05:08] **Siew Hoon** Well, I mean, I'm dating myself. Those were the early days of the internet. I was trying to figure out how I could, how that would apply to travel journalism and what we had called out the internet as this thing that would completely change everything and change the media and how the media had to get closer to the audience and how there was this great space that came along. So, those were very, very early days. And, at that time I don't think there was any research, but I remember, you know, the online travel penetration was probably like below 10 percent. You know, there were some beginnings of the early startups. I mean, booking Expedia, you know, had been started in the late 1990s, right? And we were beginning to see early movers in Asia, like MakeMyTrip, Cheeno, which started in 2005. WeGo started in 2005. So, you could see these early movers coming in. So, definitely it was really, really early stage. You talk about trends then. And so it was the beginning of everything. It was the beginning of everything. So, there weren't really any big trends, but there was definitely a shift towards online. And I wanted to be part of that shift.

[00:06:30] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. And I suppose online made travel more accessible to audiences, around the world.

[00:06:36] **Siew Hoon** Well, more than the distribution. I mean, online travel is not only the distribution but the whole infrastructure too, right? You had to bring travel online, and low-cost airlines were beginning to start and really bringing travel to masses. And so you were seeing this mass movement of travel already, right? Low-cost airlines, a much more fragmented hotel industry landscape, more entrepreneurs beginning tours and activities. So, yeah. Very nascent and the beginning of everything.

[00:07:09] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. I like the way you've collected travel technology with evolution there and human behavior. And I think we can come back to that. I just wanted to, going back to those early days and thinking about how things are done today, what has changed in the way that you cover travel? And what is the same when compared back to 2005?

[00:07:27] **Siew Hoon** It's nearly 20 years, right, since we started WiT, and so much has happened in two decades, let alone one decade. But yeah, I mean the biggest change is this acceleration on to online. Right? And now you're probably seeing across APAC maybe 50 percent. I remember when we started, it was really, really hard, really hard to convince people that there was going to be this movement online and they had to be part of Web in Travel, and now we don't have to do that much convincing. So, that's the biggest change, right? But it was a long, hard slog in the beginning. I remember my friends saying, "Siew Hoon, are you sure you want to do this?" Because I had given up a full-time stable job in a publishing company where I was the editorial director, like five publications and had given all that to do this. And they said, "Are you crazy? But do you know that if you ever run out of food, you can always have dinner at my place, you know?" So the good comfort I had was I knew I had friends if I actually went broke. But, thank goodness that didn't

happen. But I think in the beginning, yeah, it was hard to convince, you know, there were very traditional travel agents. And remember that Asia is very varying degrees, right? Singapore is ahead, but Indonesia is way behind. And then we have Vietnam. And so very, very fragmented and different levels. So, it was challenging. But it was absolutely fun. It was absolutely fun. And so what's changed is, well, the pace of news now is much bigger. And, you know, I get a lot more. I have to cover a lot. The team's grown. Yeah. So, the pace of news has changed. And then you've got startups entering the game. So, definitely just the sheer volume of news has changed. And you know the topics have changed greatly, too. Yeah. And the players, and the players. It used to be, in the early days, the only people who were willing to talk with the big brands, so, the Expedias, you know, and the hotel chains like InterContinental, Hilton, and all that. And now we've got a lot more people in the ecosystem that you can cover. So, it makes it much richer and way more interesting right now at this stage, really does capture the diversity and the dynamism of Asia-Pacific right now.

[00:09:53] **Richard Kocher** And you talked a bit about moving out of publishing into your role that, Web in Travel, or founding Web in Travel. Was that more traditional print publishing that you were part of?

[00:10:04] **Siew Hoon** Yes, yes. You know, we were publishing travel trade magazines, and the audience were travel agents and suppliers and all that. And I had started dabbling in the online space while I was the editor there, and we think we were the first to have a tribal technology beat, and we were the first to have a website, but it was really slow, too slow for my impatience. And so I thought it would be better if I actually did it on my own so that I could set my own pace and really keep up with the changes in the market.

[00:10:40] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. And so you could see the newspaper industry as a kind of a mirror image of that in some respects. Looking back to that point of the sort of early mid-2000s, that's when a lot of the big newspaper publishers started to migrate more online and get global audiences and really become effective in that space. Was there a tipping point for you that you noticed in, you know, we talked about how the coverage may have changed for you. Was there a tipping point where you really started to see an acceleration in consumption of your online content?

[00:11:11] **Siew Hoon** I think when social came in, you know? I think in before pre-social and then we had mobile, it was always Asia looking to the West on how to mirror the customer trends. Right? So, this happened in the U.S. You know, five years ago, eight years ago. And this might likely happen here. And that was probably true in the early days. But I think the tipping point came with social. And then with mobile, because basically Asia just kind of leapt ahead in those two. And I remember in the early days bringing speakers who were just talking about social, and I was comparing the content that we were having versus content with travel conferences in the West. And Asia was way more on social, a lot of social. And I remember one speaker who was the co-founder of Tujia, Melissa, was a super-smart woman, and she's now basically in the field of AI, so she's always ahead of the game. And she said that all social is not travel, but all travel is social. And that kind of woke me up to the really importance of social and how it would change travel in Asia, because Asia was such a social and such a young market as well. So, this was going to be a big, big game changer for Asia. And then mobile came along, right? Which, when you think about it, with all the different degrees of development of markets, you have countries like Indonesia and Philippines and all that, and Cambodia and Laos, and they really didn't have very good telco infrastructure. But if you went there when mobile first started, you went into the remote villages, they were all having phones and iPads. So, they skipped one generation. Right? So, you could see therefore the convergence of mobile social demographics, young people and access just changing everything at that point, and another comment made by Ram of Phocuswright at that time, and he said that video would be the new text. And he said this when we started, in the early days, maybe three years of the Web in Travel has started and that video is going to be a new text in Asia because of the different languages that we have, right? And therefore video would be able to overcome all the language differences, right? And so the combination of the social mobile video, to me, was the beginning of this big transformation in Asia. And that's how I feel that we started deferring from trends in the West.

[00:14:11] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. And it's a network effect as well, I think of social and mobile where mobile goes with the traveler. The traveler is then able to communicate with their network about where they are, what they're seeing.

They can use video, they can use images. And then that then gradually builds, and you create, as I said, sort of a network effect around what it's like to travel to different parts of the world and raise awareness of those places.

[00:14:35] **Siew Hoon** Well, I mean, it creates a huge web in travel.

Milestones in travel tech:

[00:14:38] **Richard Kocher** Yes, it does. Yeah. Absolutely does. Yeah. So, tell me a bit more about some of the breakthroughs or milestones that you think really redefine the way that people travel. And I think what we can, you know, we've touched on social there, but I would like to maybe look at now is AI. I suppose from your perspective, how do you see that being this sort of breakthrough or milestone, if we can call it that?

[00:15:00] **Siew Hoon** Yeah, I don't see it as a milestone yet. I think it is the same, for me, it's like the same point as when social came in and mobile came in. So, we're just at the beginning of the beginning, right? You know, and the difference I think is that supply is now faster. Right? With it almost in tandem with the consumers. Right? In maybe in Asia, using Asia as an example. I mean, the consumers drove the change, right? The consumers can use social, use mobile, you know, love videos. And then the travel industry kind of adapted. Right? Scrambled to adapt. But I think with this one, it seems to me covering the industry is like almost the industry is in tandem with the consumers with this technology because this is really a consumer tech, is a mass consumer tech way, way more than you know that that mobile was. Right? So, I think we're just at the beginning of it and I certainly cannot predict how it will turn out, but it's definitely, as a journalist, I'm just so fascinated by the implications of this technology. And, as with everything, just as when I started Web in Travel, I'm curious about it. And therefore I start learning myself about it. And so I'm using it a lot in my work as a journalist. And then that relates to then how I can see other people using it. So, I begin to understand the consumer behavior as well. And so I think we're just at the beginning of beginning of everything. So, I'm sorry, Richard, I don't have any answers as to how this will impact travel. But I can tell you it's going to change even faster than social and mobile, and I think you're going to see a lot more people, I mean it's going to be a bigger web than before.

AI in travel:

[00:17:03] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. No, I think I think you've answered that. I think the question that surfaced in the great debate was around whether or not AI makes travel less human, and I don't know what you would think there in response to that question.

[00:17:14] **Siew Hoon** Actually, I'm in the middle of preparing a talk on the Human Revolution. And it's interesting. I mean, I thought of that theme because I felt that this new technology, we should question, really, what are the qualities that make us human because this new technology is challenging certain notions. Right? You know, there were certain presumptions made by humans that, you know, there are certain things that machines can never be better at, for example, originality of thinking, creativity. Right? But there have been surveys done that say that ChatGPT, for example, scored in the 1 percent and that they were better, if not as good as humans in originality and creativity. So that's one sort of sacred cow gone. Right? And then the other human quality that we pride ourselves in is that we are social animals. And that's why after the pandemic, we all wanted to get together and hug and bond with each other, and that we have this sort of social engagement skills that were superior. They are now, they have been working on social robots for the last two decades, and social robots are the ones now, with AI, could become, could learn to be more emotional, have emotional intelligence and all that. At the same time, the human race has become less social, right? Because we're spending our lives, and perhaps, maybe even with a new generation, not the new generation, but millennials and all that, who grew up as digital natives. We spend a lot of our lives virtually like we are doing now. Yeah. Right? And so we've lost a lot of social skills. So, I started thinking about what are the qualities that make us human and what are the qualities that we really, really need to dial up if we really want to take advantage of this new technology that could sort

of really change travel. And travel fundamentally is still a very human industry because we're still at a stage where it's only humans who can travel, right? We don't have robots traveling yet. We kind of have avatars traveling. So, humans are still traveling. So, I started thinking about this thesis and said, so what are the qualities that really, really make us human?

[00:19:40] **Richard Kocher** But I quite like the idea of AI will, in this space, there's two sides. It's kind of the industry side. I think AI will help make businesses more efficient, and they will enable us to enable businesses to offer more relevant experiences to customers. But I also like this idea that on the consumer side, it's this idea of AI being a consumer or a traveler's copilot.

[00:20:03] **Siew Hoon** Yeah, I think the transition is from assistant to companion, right? You know, so it's about intimacy, actually, is about building intimacy with, it's the ability to build intimacy if you know how to do it in not a creepy way, but in a very empathetic and intuitive way, you know. So, that is the shift I think that we will see. But it is important that when the I mean the, as you say, you know, we travel because we want to meet other humans, right? And we want to understand different cultures and all that. And it is important that that is absolutely kept. And that it shouldn't be commoditized, right? It shouldn't become robotic. And that's why it is important for people working in travel to really think about what makes us human, right? Our smiles, our hugs, and those things are really important. So, sincerity and hospitality become even more critical, right? And you know that because consumer expectations have become super high, because people are paying a lot more. So, you see a lot more demanding, you know. And so are we ready? Are we ready to rise to the challenge? Because we have a lot of problems that we have to solve in travel. Right? So, are we ready? Can we use tech to solve those things that may make the human travel experience not as pleasant?

[00:21:31] **Richard Kocher** So, what parts of travel and hospitality remain untouched by tech and AI? What are the things only humans can do in travel?

[00:21:39] **Siew Hoon** I mean, I always talk to my tech friends, and my tech friends always say, humans should not do the three D's, right: down, dirty, and dangerous work.

[00:21:49] **Richard Kocher** Okay. Yeah.

[00:21:51] **Siew Hoon** So, so if I if we use that, then let's all think about the elements of hospitality or travel that's down, dirty, and dangerous. And we should let machines do that and let's do the fun bits. But you know, you think about it. Then I start to think, okay, you know, maybe it's the reception, the warm smile, the hospitable greeting. But then you have robots doing that now, and robots with huge eyelashes that look human. I had a friend from Dublin who came to Singapore for Christmas, and she was eating in restaurants, at airports. And then she said, you know, it feels like science fiction because she's sitting next to like a machine that is basically cleaning up the plates. And then at the airport, there's a machine like who walks next to you. And so it's like we are living in sci-fi land already. So, yeah.

[00:22:47] **Richard Kocher** And it actually, maybe it's just the very act of traveling is the thing that will remain human because that anticipation of a trip, that experience when you're leaving the airport, when you're in the destination and you're able just to finally switch off. They're all very unique human experiences, I think, which will make travel, I think, such an overtly human thing.

[00:23:13] **Siew Hoon** Yeah. I think human emotion cannot be replaced, right? You know, like human emotion, anticipation. Yeah. You know, and dreaming and frustration, anger, those, you know, and then the thrill and the sensation of different foods on your palate. And yeah, I think those cannot be replaced, for sure. And that's why we have to make sure that those things are amplified. And actually brought to people so you know, hyper-curation, for example. Right? Or hyper recommendation that, you know, those are even more important. And, especially, I was speaking to a tour company in Singapore yesterday, and he was talking about how everything has become a lot more local, right? So, you now have the ability to maybe even do less planning. And, but when you're sitting in, say, Kampong Glam in

Singapore, you happen to be visiting the malls and then you say, "Oh, I feel like some lunch." And then you can actually go, "Okay, places near me to actually eat." So, everything has become a lot more local. And that gives travelers confidence, I think, to actually get more local and deeper into the destination without going through the list of places that I must eat, you know.

[00:24:44] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. And actually, all the web enabled that, that's a precursor to what then AI is hopefully going to make even more tailored and streamlined for.

[00:24:53] **Siew Hoon** Yeah, yeah, more intense. Right? More intense and more intimate, I think.

New tech predictions:

[00:24:57] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. So, you cover a lot of travel companies. Who, in your opinion, is poised to be the next powerhouse of travel tech and who are the startups or small and medium businesses that have really caught your eye?

[00:25:09] **Siew Hoon** I think, every I actually wrote an article about this, you know, but I think that every one of the giants, you know, from Expedia to booking the trip to Airbnb, the big ones are already executing relentlessly on this, you know, so I, for me, I think the next couple of years is going to be just fascinating to watch that race because the giants are already on it. So, I think everybody is doing things that, like most people spent the last three years just kind of preparing, I mean, like really working behind the scenes, you know, because there wasn't a lot of travel around you. Right? So, there was a lot of work behind the scenes. And I feel like this year is just sort of come-up moments for everyone. And we're going to see some really super-duper features that will be introduced by all the big, big players. So, the big guys are already on it. So, therefore the fear is that this game favor the giants. So, what about the long tail of travel and the reasons why people travel? Yeah. It's not for the big guys. You know. It's not for the big chains but for all the little wonderful businesses that make travel so interesting. And so how do they survive in this world, which is going to be a lot more consolidated, a lot more commoditized, you know, and a lot more tech heavy? And so, I think we're going to see extreme specialization, and you've got to make sure that you actually do one thing and do it really, really well, you know, and that's something that Web in Travel has to think about. So, I've got to think about one thing that I do really, really well above anybody else.

[00:27:10] **Richard Kocher** And then just, witnessing a ton of change in the industry. But you certainly have over the last 20 years outside of AI, what predictions of new tech innovation would you have for travel providers in the near and long term?

[00:27:23] **Siew Hoon** Is there anything else other than yeah. I don't know. I'm, as a traveler myself, I have been quite curious about augmented reality. Right? I mean, not so much virtual reality, but augmented reality in terms of how it is blended with the physical experience. So, how technology and how it can transform art and augment that experience and technology in how it can make us rethink spaces, the use of spaces.

[00:27:58] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. And do you mean, augmented augmentation of experience as a sort of a guidebook as well? So, being able to point your phone, for example, that's an area within a destination and then information about what you're pointing your phone out there on the screen and give you a sense of what it is you're saying and some history and facts.

[00:28:19] **Siew Hoon** Yeah. I mean, there's almost too basic, right? You know, I don't want to look at a building and know when it was built. I would love stories, you know, and I'm beginning to see some application of that using audio. You know, I don't know. Who knows, maybe audio tours are going to make everybody who's been saying that for years, but maybe audio, you know, everybody's got their own headphones now. But I think the storytelling is interesting. Right? In Singapore there is a tour called the New World Tour and basically is a walking tour where it's a love story. It's a

love story set in the area. It's about loss, it's about grief and you feel the story as you're walking through the streets and you feel like you're walking through a movie set. And it's very intimate. It's very immersive. Yeah. And it's very personal. So, I feel storytelling. I think we need to have voices come to us from the past or, you know, and telling us stories about the places rather than, oh, this building was built in 1880.

Final thoughts and key takeaways:

[00:29:19] **Richard Kocher** Yeah. And that comes back, I think, a little bit to the human centricity of travel that we touched on earlier. Is there going somewhere? Yes. Of course. You want to understand the history and the facts and, and figures around, around that place. But actually, you know, hearing human voices and understanding human experiences and how those experiences shaped the history of the place or the current environment, I think. Yeah, it would really, it really has an impact on the traveler. So, yeah, I love that other idea. And just a final question to sort of wrap things up. What are your few tips to our listeners on how they can keep up with trends in the travel tech space?

[00:29:51] **Siew Hoon** Yeah, not just read about it, but to actually play with it and have fun with it. You know, this is probably the funnest time to be trying new technology. And so just have fun with it, you know, and do it yourself. And then when you're traveling, look out for people or places that are doing those fun things, right? You know, because that kind of spins out new ideas.

[00:30:17] **Richard Kocher** And then obviously read Web in Travel as well and keep up to date with that.

[00:30:21] **Siew Hoon** But of course, which is brilliant. And attend our conference as where we're going to new places this year. We're going to Africa. We're going to Cape Town in March. Great. You know, so that's a new frontier. I love emerging markets. I love markets with bat traffic and chaos. So, I love this. Yeah.

[00:30:39] **Richard Kocher** Excellent. Thanks so much. And of course, listeners can also continue listening to Powering Travel by Expedia Group for the latest trends. So, yeah, thanks so much, Siew Hoon, and speak to you again soon.

[00:30:49] **Siew Hoon** Thanks, Richard. It's been a pleasure.

[00:30:53] **Brandon Ehrhardt** What a visionary. Imagine having this kind of foresight to start something like Web in Travel from nothing, and now hosting one of the largest travel conferences in Asia, and a valued resource for all things travel tech, and to be able to be in the front seat of all of this change. So glad that you got to bring her onto the show and conduct such a thoughtful interview with great insights.

[00:31:14] **Richard Kocher** Yeah, absolutely. There was something really refreshing about the conversation, especially when we started talking about AI, when she brought up her thoughts on the human elements that AI just can't replace in travel. I think we have been talking about generative AI in the tech world for years now, and it has recently hit the pop culture zeitgeist, if you will. So, I'm sure there is fatigue, but her perspective really injected some new optimistic energy into the topic for me. I hope that came across to you, too.

[00:31:39] **Brandon Ehrhardt** Absolutely. I mean, be able to hear you two think about the future in real time. Like such a fun thought experiment and pushed me to think a little bit harder about what's coming down the line, not just the immediate future. You know how it can be in the day-to-day. You just, you're so wrapped up in the inertia of what I need to deliver in the next minute, the next hour, or the next day. So easy to lose sight of that horizon. And I think the lessons learned here were many. And as we look to our future, it's great to just zoom out and reorient ourselves of where we want to go. And Richard, I want to take this chance to make a quick plug. In the later part of last year, the Powering Travel Podcast and Siew Hoon's WIT podcast collaborated on a series of episodes. These featured Expedia Group leaders

like Greg Schulze and Hari Nair. If you're interested in listening to those, they're in our Powering Travel feed for you to enjoy at your leisure. Nice, snackable, digestible insights and episodes and a great partnership.

[00:32:34] **Richard Kocher** Yeah, love the continued string of podcasts this year, Brandon.

[00:32:37] **Brandon Ehrhardt** It's great. Like, you literally can log on to our feed and find a topic that's relevant to you. We've covered so many, and I want to thank you, Richard, for stepping into the big chair and hosting three of them.

[00:32:49] **Richard Kocher** Yeah, thanks. Anytime, Brandon. Really enjoying this, and I look forward to hopefully joining again in the future.

[00:32:54] **Brandon Ehrhardt** You're an absolute pro, my friend. You're always welcome. As always, let us know what you think of the podcast by emailing us at PoweringTravel@Expediagroup.com That's poweringtravel, all one word, at Expediagroup.com. We also have a new form on the website that you can fill out easily. You can find that at [Partner.Expediagroup.com](https://partner.expediagroup.com). Do you have a few seconds, be sure to rate and review on your podcast platform of choice. Helps people like you find our show. Thanks a lot for listening. We'll see you next time on the Powering Travel Podcast, brought to you by Expedia.