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Case study: Expedia

S@fer shopping certification



Since 2001, TÜV SÜD's S@fer Shopping Certification has provided Expedia customers with assurance regarding the security of their confidential data, giving them an important advantage in a competitive marketplace.

Business challenges

In a little more than a decade, the worldwide online travel marketplace has grown substantially, and now represents a significant percentage of all travel sales. At the same time, consumers remain concerned about the security of online transactions, and the confidentiality of their personal and financial data transmitted online.

Expedia is one of the world's leading online travel and hospitality companies, operating more than 150 travel booking sites in more than 70 countries. Company executives recognised that consumer concerns about the security of personal data, particularly about providing confidential credit card data through Expedia's websites, could affect the online travel category and the company's prospects for growth.

"When we began, the Internet was quite new, and security was a huge concern," according to Christian Gruenthal, Expedia's Senior Manager, eCommerce and Product, for Germany and Austria. "This was especially true among customers in Germany and other parts of the European Union, where credit card use was not as common as in the U.S. We needed a way to

OVERVIEW

Client name	Expedia Inc.
Industry	Travel and hospitality
Profile	Global leader in online travel. Pioneer in providing consumers with direct access to relevant travel information and reservations services to fit their specific needs
Business challenge	Assure consumers regarding the security of their personal data and the safety of booking online
Our solution	TÜV SÜD S@fer Shopping Certification
Business benefits	Brand reputation for secure, reliable transactions, creating an important competitive advantage in the travel marketplace



communicate to our customers that their personal data would remain safe and secure when booking their travel arrangements online.”

TÜV SÜD's solutions

TÜV SÜD's S@fer Shopping Certification process provides a thorough and systematic assessment of the performance and security of a retailer's website. S@fer Shopping Certification allows an online retailer to display TÜV SÜD's S@fer Shopping Mark on the company's website, verifying their commitment to the provision of a satisfying and secure online shopping experience for consumers. S@fer Shopping Certification is maintained through annual surveillance audits which also identify areas for further improvements. TÜV SÜD's S@fer Shopping Certification has evolved in line with the evolution of the industry, broadening its scope to include best practice in the online retail practices, providing guidance around pre-selection of service and clear information.

As clarity of information and customer protection is a clear priority for the business, Expedia partnered with TÜV SÜD to evaluate the company's German website as part of a broader effort to improve website security and usability. The evaluation included an assessment of the website's structure and navigation, as well as the site's online order entry process. Reviewers also examined Expedia's policies and procedures regarding the protection of consumer data, as well as the systems to ensure the quality and integrity of the online shopping experience.

Expedia's German website was the first online travel site in Germany to be awarded TÜV SÜD's S@fer

Shopping Certification in 2001, which was followed by the subsequent certification of Expedia's Austrian website. The company maintains its S@fer Shopping Certifications through remote surveillance, and through an annual on-site audit at Expedia's offices in London, UK.

Business benefits

TÜV SÜD's S@fer Shopping Mark helps to close the "trust gap" between online retailers and consumers. For Gruenthal, the TÜV SÜD S@fer Shopping Mark creates an important differentiator in a highly competitive market. "The S@fer Shopping Mark signals to customers that we care about the security of their personal data," says Gruenthal. "As a result, we're able to successfully complete more transactions, while also attracting new customers to our sites. With German internet users actively searching for the seal when booking travel online, this is a clear differentiator for Expedia."

S@fer Shopping Certification criteria has also directly influenced Expedia's website development efforts globally. "TÜV SÜD has helped us immensely," says Gruenthal. "Expedia is committed to continually improving the experience for our customers whilst keeping data safe. The S@fer Shopping Certification process has provided us with a data security framework that we have successfully applied to Expedia websites across multiple country platforms. Working with TÜV SÜD has definitely helped up to further improve the quality and security of our websites globally."

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Retail website certification is an important tool in building consumer trust and confidence, and can provide a powerful competitive advantage in the marketplace. TÜV SÜD's S@fer Shopping Certification process can help retailers optimise the online shopping experience of consumers, increasing both consumer satisfaction and retailer profitability.

TÜV SÜD is a premium quality, safety and sustainability solutions provider that specialises in testing, inspection, auditing, certification, training and knowledge services. Represented in over 800 locations worldwide, we hold accreditations in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and Asia. By delivering objective solutions to our customers, we add tangible value to businesses, consumers and the environment.