

The Great Online Holiday Hijack - Survey Findings

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The following information comes from a recently completed survey looking at some of the methods certain companies are using to grab customers away from their competitors. The travel sector was used in the survey for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the size of the sector on the internet and that the number of people using the internet to plan and book their holidays and other travel is one of the fastest growing.

Findings: More than 50% of the UK's leading tour operators, travel portals and travel agencies have their brand names used by others - often direct competitors and major companies at that - in Internet pay-per-click advertising campaigns. As pay-per-click advertising has rocketed in the last 12 months and shows no sign of slowing, advertisers use this practice of 'brand name interception' to divert searches for known brand names to their own websites.

These potentially explosive findings are the result of an extensive survey run by new media agency, Nucleus.

The practise of 'brand name interception' is not the exclusive domain of the travel industry, however. Pay-per-click providers (such as Google) are coming under increasing pressure and facing mounting legal action from a number of industry sectors for not preventing the sale of registered trademarks as keywords. Yet, the victims seem powerless to stop it; even the courts seem to be against them.

The issue of copyright and trademark infringement on the internet is still a grey area but one that impacts not only on the owners of the trademarks but, more importantly, the people who are unwittingly deceived by the practise of 'brand name interception'.

A copy of the full report plus comments from a trademark attorney and from organisations whose brand names have been "nicked" are available.