

Booking Holdings Inc. (BKNG)

\$1,659.85 (As of 02/27/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$1,743.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 11/20/19)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: C

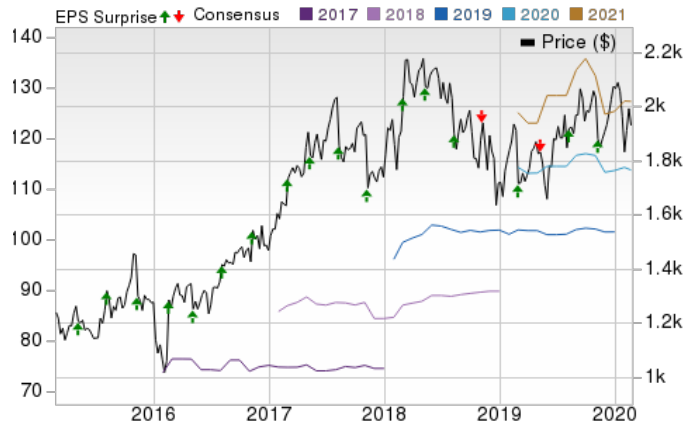
Growth: C

Momentum: D

Summary

Booking Holdings reported strong fourth-quarter results wherein both earnings and revenues have improved year over year on the back of improving gross bookings. Moreover, solid growth in the booked room nights and strong momentum across global accommodation space contributed to the results. Moreover, strong efforts toward ramping up of merchant business drove the top line. We believe secular growth trend in the online travel booking market and growing mobile usage penetration are tailwinds. The company's strong position in international markets and growth opportunities in the domestic market are major positives. However, continued softness in agency business remains a headwind. Further, the company has provided weak bookings guidance due to the coronavirus outbreak. The stock has underperformed its industry over a year.

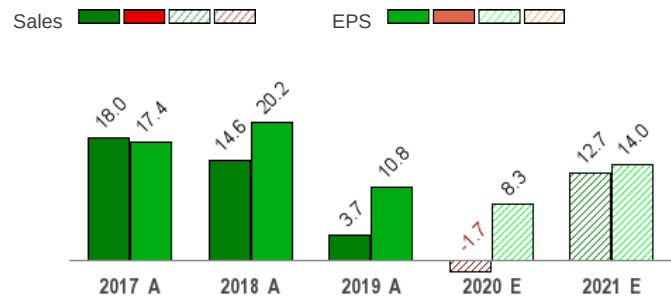
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52 Week High-Low	\$2,094.00 - \$1,592.45
20 Day Average Volume (sh)	555,763
Market Cap	\$68.2 B
YTD Price Change	-19.2%
Beta	1.07
Dividend / Div Yld	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Internet - Commerce
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 31% (80 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	5.4%
Last Sales Surprise	1.5%
EPS F1 Est- 4 week change	-2.9%
Expected Report Date	05/14/2020
Earnings ESP	-5.1%
P/E TTM	16.1
P/E F1	14.9
PEG F1	1.2
P/S TTM	4.5

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	3,317 E	4,443 E	5,886 E	3,808 E	16,698 E
2020		3,941 E	5,394 E	3,546 E	14,810 E
2019	2,837 A	3,850 A	5,040 A	3,339 A	15,066 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	\$14.91 E	\$30.81 E	\$58.07 E	\$30.02 E	\$126.62 E
2020	\$11.03 E	\$25.13 E	\$50.60 E	\$25.19 E	\$111.11 E
2019	\$11.17 A	\$23.59 A	\$45.36 A	\$23.30 A	\$102.57 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 02/27/2020. The reports text is as of 02/28/2020.

Overview

Norwalk, Connecticut-based Booking Holdings Inc. is one of the largest online travel companies in the world. The company's travel-related offerings cover hotel rooms, airline tickets, rental cars, vacation packages, cruises, "things to do" at customer destinations and travel insurance.

The company has agreements with hotels, airlines companies, cruise ships, transport companies and vacation providers, which enable it to accept bookings on their behalf. Information on these offerings and customer reviews are available on the company's owned or operated websites, thus helping customers take informed decisions.

Services in the U.S. are provided through the Booking Holdings.com website. The company employs two marketing strategies in the U.S.—"price-disclosed" and "name your own price" or "opaque".

International revenues are generated through Booking.com and Agoda. Booking.com is older and therefore, has more patrons. Agoda is an Asian company acquired in 2007. Booking Holdings's investment in Chinese travel company Ctrip facilitates the use of each other's inventories in China and the U.S.

International results are comprised of revenues from rentalcars.com and Kayak. While rentalcars.com allows it to take rental car reservations, Kayak enables comparative shopping of Booking Holdings inventories.

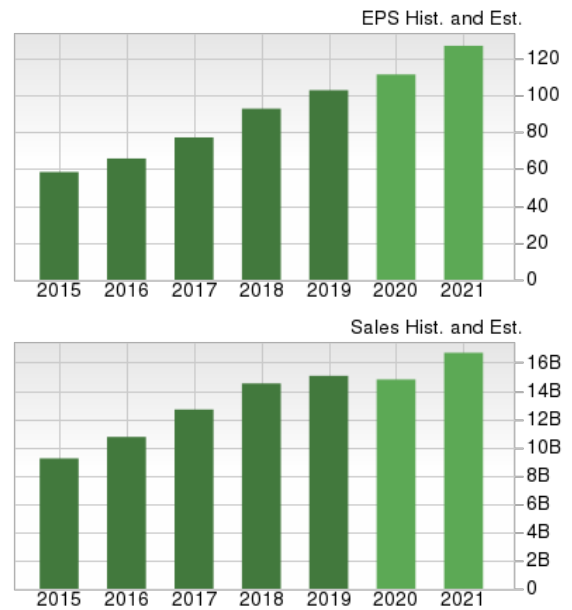
The acquisition of OpenTable that has allowed it to expand into restaurant reservations space, also contributes to the international revenues.

Booking Holdings distributes its services through merchant (31.4% of 2019 bookings, 25.4% of 2019 total revenues) and agency (68.6%, 67.2%) channels. It also generates around 7.4% of revenues through advertisements on its websites, classified as the Advertising & Other category.

The agency model is more lucrative for the company. It generates revenues from travel-related transactions which include travel reservation commissions, GDS reservation booking fees and certain travel insurance fees.

Merchant model revenues are also derived from travel-related transactions which include ancillary fees, credit card processing rebates, customer processing fees along with the ones included in agency model.

Advertising & Other revenues are generated from KAYAK and Open Table.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ The online travel booking segment has **secular growth drivers**. The biggest of these is the shift from offline to online booking challenges. The strong growth rates might lead one to believe that growth through this channel is reaching its zenith especially given the proliferation of mobile devices. But the travel market is actually extremely fragmented, so significant growth opportunity remains. Second, many international markets have significantly lower penetration rates than the U.S. Third, there is a growing middle class in many geographies that increasingly lives online. This is a segment companies like Booking Holdings are extremely well positioned to tap. And fourth, the company does have a world-class platform which helps it win this business.
- ▲ Booking Holdings generates the bulk of its business from international markets where growth prospects are greater than in the domestic market. According to PhoCusWright, online travel booking in Europe is growing at a faster rate than in the U.S. with penetration rates already higher. Since Booking Holdings is very strongly positioned here, it will be able to benefit from increasing penetration rates. Latin America and Asia Pacific are at a nascent stage, but are believed to have significant long-term growth potential. Booking Holdings has increased focus on these regions through Agoda, booking.com and its agreement with Ctrip which enables it to share inventory and thereby capture outbound traffic from China. It is also able to use Ctrip inventory for people looking to travel to China.
- ▲ Further, Booking's strong initiatives to bolster its presence in North American OTA market remains positive. Its brand has strong popularity in Europe. The company is in a position to leverage this popularity to capture a share of international travel into the U.S. Its agreement with and subsequent investments in Ctrip have also furthered this objective. It also acquired OpenTable to further beef up its domestic business. Booking Holdings has supplemented these initiatives with brand-building actions using both online and offline channels. Most notable of these was an agreement with TripAdvisor to join its Instant Booking platform. While still a very small part of its business, this could familiarize the brand with Americans. Management said in the last earnings call that the arrangement was working on track with expectations.
- ▲ Booking Holdings's **sales approach** enables it to serve both premium and cost-conscious customers, at the same time helping to mobilize its suppliers' excess room nights. Room nights not used are lost forever and the low occupancy rate lowers margins for the seller. Booking Holdings's opaque business takes care of this problem by selling suppliers' excess room nights to cost conscious customers at a discount. Customers' preferences regarding the kind of accommodation/car/etc are considered, but the supplier's name is not disclosed at the outset. This protects supplier pricing models, while helping them mobilize inventory. It also generates additional revenue for Booking Holdings. However, as more competitors adopt the opaque model, growth rates through its adoption are likely to slow. It also doesn't do as well when the travel market strengthens simply because there is less available inventory. The "name your own price" model is popular even among airline companies.

The secular growth trend in the online travel booking market, strong position in international markets and growth opportunities in the domestic market are positives.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ Booking Holdings has been **increasing advertising spend**. Management is trying to take share in the U.S. for which it has embarked on an extensive offline brand advertising campaign in addition to continuing strong online advertising. As a result, performance and brand advertising expenses increased significantly in the recent years. Total performance advertising expenses were \$4.4 billion, \$4.4 billion and \$4.2 billion in 2019, 2018 and 2017, respectively. Total brand advertising expenses were \$548 million, \$509 million and \$435 million in 2019, 2018, 2017, respectively. The increased advertising spend is necessitated by the fact that the company has a very strong competitor in Expedia in the domestic market. Capturing mindshare involves sustained investments in brand building, so this expense is not necessarily a negative although it can negatively impact results in the near term.
- ▼ Despite significant investments as well as branding and promotional initiatives, the **domestic business remains small**. Booking Holdings tried to leverage its Booking.com brand and Ctrip investments to build the business, but these efforts have not yielded desired results as yet. There were also high hopes of the OpenTable acquisition adding to its growth, but this too doesn't appear to have materialized, since growth rates have in fact come down since then. Limited presence in the domestic market is particularly significant in the current environment because the stronger dollar is increasing the cost of travel for inbound tourists and thereby impacting these sales. On the other hand, cost of travel for Americans has fallen with the dollar strengthening, which although good for outbound travel, is not an opportunity the company can exploit because it doesn't have good brand position yet.
- ▼ Booking Holdings operates in the highly competitive online travel booking space with its participants such as Expedia, Ctrip.com and MakeMy Trip, to name a few. Booking faces competitive pressure from both online and physical travel agencies, tour operators, consolidators, wholesalers of travel products and providers of travel search engines.
- ▼ Similar to other online travel companies, Booking Holdings is also **facing a significant amount of litigation**. This is mainly because there seems to be a doubt about whether its revenue is taxable under the tax ordinances applicable to hotels. This is mainly due to the fact that there seems to be a doubt as to whether its revenue is taxable under the tax ordinances applicable to hotels. It has been argued that had the hotels charged customers directly, they would have charged higher rates than they charge the online travel companies, which acquire inventory at wholesale prices. Therefore, a higher amount would have come under the ambit of occupancy tax. Just because the revenue is now being split with a booking company, there is no reason for it to be exonerated. The arguments in favor of the online travel companies are first, they do not own or operate hotels. Second, they are already collecting and remitting to hotels the tax on wholesale prices which are being paid by the hotel. And third, offline selling agents are not required to pay occupancy tax, so there should not be an exception for online agents. However, certain facts have come to light regarding the taxes collected by online travel companies. It appears that they have been collecting cash from customers in the name of occupancy taxes on the retail value of rooms sold, but remitting taxes on wholesale prices to hotels, keeping the balance. Online travel companies have been winning some cases and losing some, but they have had to pay significant amount of taxes in some states.

Macro headwinds, rising advertising costs, intensifying competition and occupancy tax-related litigation remain overhangs for Booking Holdings.

Last Earnings Report

Booking Holdings Earnings & Revenues Beat Estimates in Q4

Booking Holdings reported fourth-quarter 2019 non-GAAP earnings of \$23.30 per share, which beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 5.4% and improved 4% from the year-ago quarter. However, the bottom line declined 48.6% on a sequential basis.

Revenues of \$3.34 billion surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate by 1.6% and improved 4% year over year. However, the top line was down 33.8% from the previous quarter.

Solid momentum across merchant, and advertising and other businesses drove the top line year over year. Additionally, robust accommodation business drove the booked room nights number, which came in at 191 million during the reported quarter, up 11.8% from the prior-year quarter.

Further, Booking Holdings witnessed robust improvement in airline tickets unit and rental car days that rose 11.3% and 11.9%, respectively, from the year-ago quarter.

However, continued softness in agency business remained a headwind during the reported quarter.

Further, the coronavirus outbreak is acting as a headwind. Notably, APAC region accounts for significant portion of the company's total room booked nights but the outbreak is not only disrupting travel plans of people living in China but also Asia at large.

Moreover, the company has already started witnessing increasing cancellations and decreasing bookings in the APAC region, which is a major negative. Consequently, management expects decline in bookings and room nights number in the first quarter.

Nevertheless, secular growth trend in the online travel booking market and growing usage of mobile by travelers for their travel planning remain tailwinds.

Moreover, the company's strong position in the international markets, growth opportunities in the domestic market, solid momentum across the alternative accommodation business and expanding payment platform are likely to instill investor confidence in the stock.

Further, integration with Rentalcars.com has started benefiting the company. Additionally, strengthening flight capabilities remains a major positive.

Top-Line in Detail

Booking Holdings generates bulk of revenues from the international markets, wherein the agency model is more popular. This is reflected in the merchant/agency split of revenues, which was 28.6/63.7% in the fourth quarter (previous quarter's split was 26.1/68.1%).

Merchant revenues came in \$955 million, up 36.2% year over year. The company's continued efforts toward improving of merchant business remained a positive.

Further, Agency revenues were \$2.1 billion, down 5.9% on a year-over-year basis.

Advertising & Other revenues were \$258 million (7.7% of total revenues), improving 2% from the year-ago quarter. These are basically non-inter company revenues from Kayak and OpenTable.

Bookings

Booking Holdings' overall gross bookings came in \$20.7 billion, up 5.9% year over year. Further, the figure was up 7% at constant currency from the year-ago quarter. We note that gross bookings growth rate exceeded management's guided range.

Additionally, gross bookings surpassed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$20.1 billion.

Merchant bookings were \$6.5 billion, up 50.3% from the prior-year quarter. However, agency bookings declined 6.6% year over year to \$14.2 billion.

Operating Results

Adjusted EBITDA in the fourth quarter was \$1.3 billion, up 2% from the year-ago quarter. As a percentage of revenues, the figure contracted 70 basis points (bps) to 38.4%.

Per management, operating expenses were \$2.2 billion, up 4.7% year over year. Further, as a percentage of revenues, the figure expanded 50 bps from the year-ago quarter to 64.9%.

Operating income was \$1.2 billion, increasing 2.5% year over year. However, operating margin of 35.1% contracted 50 bps from the year-ago quarter.

Balance Sheet & Cash Flow

As of Dec 31, 2019, cash and short-term investments balance was \$7.3 billion, down from \$7.4 billion as of Sep 30, 2019.

At the end of the fourth quarter, Booking Holdings had \$7.6 billion of long-term debt, up from \$7.5 billion in the previous quarter.

Quarter Ending **12/2019**

Report Date	Feb 26, 2020
Sales Surprise	1.52%
EPS Surprise	5.38%
Quarterly EPS	23.30
Annual EPS (TTM)	103.42

During the reported quarter, the company generated \$1.1 billion of cash from operations, decreasing from \$1.9 billion in the prior quarter.

Further, free cash flow was \$990 million in the fourth quarter. The company repurchased shares worth \$1.3 billion during the reported quarter.

Guidance

For first-quarter 2020, Booking Holdings expects room nights booked to be down by 5-10%.

Further, total gross bookings are anticipated to reflect year-over-year decline in the range of 10-15%. On a constant-currency basis, gross bookings are expected in the range of 8-13%.

The company anticipates adjusted EBITDA in the range of \$560-\$590 million.

Non-GAAP earnings are expected in the range of \$9.05-\$9.65 per share.

Further, the company anticipates year-over-year decline in revenues in the range of 3-7% and 5-9% on GAAP and non-GAAP basis, respectively.

Recent News

On **Jan 21, 2020**, Booking Holding's KAYAK unveiled a new tool called Trip Builder which helps in seamless planning of multi-city trip.

On **Nov 19, 2019**, Booking Holdings' OpenTable teamed up with Capital One Financial in a bid to enhance its offering to the Capital One credit cardholders who will now be able to enjoy its hard-to-get reservations at prime dining times in more than 15 different US cities.

On **Nov 11, 2019**, Booking Holdings rolled out enhanced products and technology on its Agoda platform. This is in sync with its growing initiatives toward delivering better traveler experience.

Valuation

Booking Holdings shares are down 3.2% in the past six-month period and 15.2% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Retail-Wholesale sector are up 7.3% and 1.1% in the past six-month period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are up 4.7% and 5.5%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 2.3% in the past six-month period and 5.4% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 14.33X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 36.89X for the Zacks sub-industry, 23.54X for the Zacks sector and 17.03X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 24.9X and as low as 14.33X, with a 5-year median of 20.07X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$1,743 price target reflects 15.05X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for BKNG

Valuation Multiples - BKNG					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	14.33	36.89	23.54	17.03
	5-Year High	24.9	53	26.2	19.34
	5-Year Low	14.33	24.72	19.07	15.18
	5-Year Median	20.07	42.07	23.08	17.44
P/S F12M	Current	4.28	3.79	0.98	3.14
	5-Year High	7.38	5.76	1.11	3.43
	5-Year Low	4.28	3.1	0.8	2.54
	5-Year Median	5.99	4.58	0.92	3
EV/Sales TTM	Current	4.73	4.81	1.13	2.89
	5-Year High	8.87	8.09	1.28	3.33
	5-Year Low	4.73	4.18	0.88	2.16
	5-Year Median	7.23	6.19	1.06	2.82

As of 02/27/2020

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 31% (80 out of 254)



Top Peers

Alibaba Group Holding Limited (BABA)	Outperform
Amazon.com, Inc. (AMZN)	Neutral
Carnival Corporation (CCL)	Neutral
Expedia Group, Inc. (EXPE)	Neutral
Alphabet Inc. (GOOGL)	Neutral
MakeMyTrip Limited (MMYT)	Neutral
TripAdvisor, Inc. (TRIP)	Neutral
Uber Technologies, Inc. (UBER)	Neutral

Industry Comparison Industry: Internet - Commerce				Industry Peers		
	BKNG Neutral	X Industry	S&P 500	EXPE Neutral	MMYT Neutral	TRIP Neutral
VGM Score	C	-	-	A	F	A
Market Cap	68.16 B	2.50 B	21.35 B	13.82 B	2.40 B	3.17 B
# of Analysts	14	3	13	11	3	10
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.00%	2.02%	1.38%	0.00%	0.00%
Value Score	C	-	-	B	F	C
Cash/Price	0.09	0.10	0.04	0.27	0.08	0.08
EV/EBITDA	12.50	7.48	12.70	6.63	-16.85	8.71
PEG Ratio	1.26	1.30	1.84	0.95	NA	1.30
Price/Book (P/B)	11.71	4.82	2.92	2.54	1.94	2.73
Price/Cash Flow (P/CF)	13.92	17.86	11.89	7.40	NA	11.34
P/E (F1)	15.21	27.48	16.90	13.23	NA	12.32
Price/Sales (P/S)	4.52	1.85	2.39	1.15	4.55	2.03
Earnings Yield	6.69%	2.16%	5.90%	7.56%	-5.20%	8.10%
Debt/Equity	1.54	0.21	0.70	0.85	0.02	0.00
Cash Flow (\$/share)	119.22	0.37	6.94	13.34	-1.37	2.00
Growth Score	C	-	-	B	D	A
Hist. EPS Growth (3-5 yrs)	17.28%	16.19%	10.85%	15.66%	NA	-13.98%
Proj. EPS Growth (F1/F0)	8.32%	11.32%	6.79%	21.30%	-21.33%	4.18%
Curr. Cash Flow Growth	1.20%	4.42%	5.92%	-6.21%	-25.26%	6.29%
Hist. Cash Flow Growth (3-5 yrs)	17.08%	14.20%	8.38%	15.70%	NA	-1.67%
Current Ratio	1.83	1.57	1.23	0.72	1.59	1.23
Debt/Capital	60.59%	20.58%	42.53%	46.11%	1.80%	0.00%
Net Margin	32.29%	0.33%	11.57%	4.68%	-28.39%	8.01%
Return on Equity	74.06%	10.09%	16.80%	13.15%	-11.55%	10.27%
Sales/Assets	0.70	0.77	0.54	0.56	0.34	0.66
Proj. Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-1.70%	15.47%	4.07%	5.47%	16.53%	4.28%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	A	A	D
Daily Price Chg	-1.09%	-2.50%	-3.99%	-2.45%	-2.35%	-3.77%
1 Week Price Chg	-3.13%	0.00%	-0.94%	-2.18%	-0.60%	-4.59%
4 Week Price Chg	-11.34%	-9.52%	-9.83%	-9.52%	-1.65%	-19.46%
12 Week Price Chg	-12.83%	-6.62%	-6.79%	-6.60%	-6.95%	-21.74%
52 Week Price Chg	-2.19%	-5.68%	2.79%	-19.95%	-17.50%	-57.27%
20 Day Average Volume	555,763	65,466	2,169,477	3,157,098	373,199	2,897,669
(F1) EPS Est 1 week change	-2.02%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
(F1) EPS Est 4 week change	-2.88%	0.00%	-0.09%	4.27%	3.96%	-3.91%
(F1) EPS Est 12 week change	-1.85%	0.00%	-0.24%	1.21%	3.96%	-3.51%
(Q1) EPS Est Mthly Chg	-20.70%	-16.29%	-0.72%	-31.35%	NA	-25.68%

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	C
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	C

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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