

BITCOIN BORN AGAIN

“The report of my death was an exaggeration.”

– Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) 1835–1910

This past February, the world's largest bitcoin exchange filed for bankruptcy; in March, the Bitcoin Bank was shut down after the theft of 896 bitcoins; that same month, a global investment firm reported a \$3.7 million loss on bitcoin. In April, the IRS ruled that bitcoin is to be treated as property but is not to be used as legal tender. All in all, the reports constituted how currency obituaries are made. But not so fast: Recently, bitcoin acceptance has surged as companies ranging from a global online travel service to a major satellite TV provider announced policies for accepting bitcoins in payment the same as credit cards and PayPal. The world's largest online vending site may soon follow.

Hotel Rooms via Bitcoin

Expedia, the world's second-ranked online travel booking service announced earlier this month that it will begin accepting bitcoins for hotel reservations. “Bitcoin is a great example of how Expedia is investing early in an array of payment options to give our customers and partners more choice in the ways they interact with us,” the company announced in a press release. The company, which last year booked 146 million room nights, will be integrating bitcoin as a payment option at checkout. As spending on travel and leisure trips returns to its prerecession levels, the impact of bitcoin acceptance on this sector will likely be significant.

Largest Bitcoin Payee to Date

DISH Network, the satellite content service provider, will begin accepting bitcoin for payment later this year, making it the largest company so far to accept bitcoin. Previously, the largest company to accept the crypto-currency was Overstock.com. Recent comments by the CEO of eBay that “we’re going to have to integrate digital currencies into our wallet” portend the final push of bitcoin into mainstream online currency acceptance.

Bitcoin on Financial News Services

Yahoo! Finance and Google Finance began posting bitcoin prices on their websites earlier this month along with news articles about bitcoin and other digital currencies. The moves came in response to requests from viewers of the two sites, indicating a burgeoning interest in such currencies.

“Bitcoin Evangelist”

A U.S. ex-patriot known as the “Bitcoin Evangelist” touts acquisition of citizenship in a West Indies tax haven by way of bitcoin purchase. The disaffected American promotes the country's cash-for-citizenship program whereby a \$400,000 real estate purchase gets you a free passport. The early bitcoin investor and provider of seed money for bitcoin ventures is quite familiar with how it works: Although every bitcoin transaction is stored in a ledger, names and physical addresses are not included in the entries.

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