

TOP 7 TRENDS THAT TOURISM AGENCIES NEED TO BE AWARE OF



It is crucial for any tourism business, be they hotel, travel agency or airline, to keep up with trends in spending and technology in order to stay ahead of the competition and retain their evolving consumer base. A survey was recently carried out on travel agencies and professionals within the industry to get their opinions on the changing trends within travel, consumer expectations and bookings, the impact that they are having on their sectors and the adaptations that need to be made as a result. Here are seven of the most important trends and their likely effects.

The rise in direct booking

The first place to start has to be with a trend that is really causing a lot of concern among travel agents - direct booking. At one time these agents simply used to worry about the competition, attracting new customers and helping them with their holiday bookings but these days more and more travellers are cutting out this middle man and booking all their travel and accommodation arrangements direct. This makes sense with today's greater online access and the time and effort saved but it could have a massive, negative impact on travel agencies.

The biggest spenders

Another crucial trend that businesses within the sector need to keep an eye on is where their revenue is coming from: who are their biggest spenders? Spending habits tend to be separated into generations and while many agencies will be focusing on attracting the youth market, this "Millennials" group only accounted for 9% of travel expenditure in the last year. Instead it is the Baby Boomer generation, the middle aged group between their late forties and mid sixties, that is spending the most, bringing in 60% of the revenue.

The blurring of business and leisure travel

The next question to ask is why they are travelling. Some businesses will still ask customers whether their trip is for business or leisure during the booking process but it is important for them to realise that the line between the two is getting heavily blurred and that even though 75% of growth is said to be related to leisure holidays, many travellers are taking their work with them. It is not uncommon for businessmen to use developments in communications and connectivity as an excuse to bring part of the office with them on family trips and this behavioural change leads nicely into another important trend.

The need for free internet access

Internet access is such a everyday part of our lives that we sometimes take it for granted and come to expect a wi-fi presence wherever we go. This means that the primary concerns for a traveller booking a hotel are the location as the number one priority while free internet easily comes in second place. Travellers need to stay connected and the idea of charging them for the privilege is seen as an outdated approach these days. Hotels need to adapt to this idea of a free service or risk

losing customers.

The impact of travel reviews

More and more travellers are leaving reviews of their hotels, the attractions visited and any other part of the holiday they can possibly rate and this feedback is becoming increasingly valuable to new customers as they make their own choices. What makes this trend even more interesting is that this survey shows that 80% of travel agencies feel the trend will grow further and 50% are using these reviews in their own work.

The importance of an attractive website

With so many consumers booking direct and taking advantage of the internet - a figure reinforced by the fact that only 1% of bookings are still made by fax - an attractive, user-friendly website is a must for all hoteliers so they can encourage travellers to browse and book. Additionally, it seems that travel agencies share this opinion, with 34% of those surveyed choosing between hotels for their own clients based on these criteria.

The impact of the mobile site

This last trend is just as important as spending habits because mobile tech has changed the way that consumers are dealing with tourism companies and are coming into contact with advertising and it is surely partly to blame for the trend in direct bookings. Mobile technology makes connections instant with 24/7 connectivity and companies that take advantage of this trend with an up-to-date, easy-to-read mobile site are likely to do much better than those without one.

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