

TRAVEL PACKAGES: PERSONALIZATION OVER PROTECTION



in the purchase.

Consumers of any kind have always been assertive of what they need and how they get it, at the least price possible. Likewise, proprietors are almost always flexible to meet changing market-preferences. However, to keep with the rising demand at a lowering cost, some aspects of a product are deemed unnecessary by the client, though ideally otherwise, and are deliberately omitted

The perfect sample for this is a travel package. Let's admit it, everybody loves going to panoramic places to relax and get away with their busy lives. But, only a few are actually willing to spend much. As a matter of fact, most travelers would actually wait for seat sales on planes and transfers, and discounted deals on resorts and hotels before they actually travel. All of these are directed to getting what you want the way you want it to be.

This became a window for businessmen to create travels in "dynamic packaging". As the phrase implies, dynamic packaging is where consumers can create a personalized tour package in a way they want it to be, mixing up different aspects of the travel themselves. Also called the DIY (do-it-yourself) packages, dynamic packages are mostly done on web sites where links on different sites providing different tour elements are proposed by a primary site. For example, after purchasing a plane ticket in an airline website, it will also propose other websites or links which offers transfers, hotels, city tours, etc. This allows the consumer to customize his own travel.

As good as it sounds, this concept also has its drawbacks. The European Package Travel Directive of 1990 does not cover most dynamic packages. This is because this concept became popular only after this rule has been established. This prompted officials in Brussels to seek reform since the popularity of dynamic packages kept on rising over the years. As a matter of fact, in 2009, 23% of EU consumers were booking dynamic packages, 40% of which is from Sweden and Ireland. This leads to the drop of travelers under the said directive from 98% in 1997 to less than 50% in 2005.

However, this seems to be an uncommon knowledge among European travelers. A survey shows that 67% of those who book dynamic packages not covered by the Package Travel Directive mistakenly believe that they are legally protected, and that a consumer loses an average of 600 Euros as a result of a dynamic package-gone wrong.

The European Commission says, "It is important to note that genuinely separate bookings where the consumer buys different components from different sellers/websites that are not linked or co-branded are generally not covered in the review. These 'independent arrangements' are not considered part of the Package Holiday Sector." This statement warns dynamic package holiday travelers of the non-possibility of an extension of the directive's protection. But as in any other public issues, there's always interplay of different laws regarding this matter that could possibly rectify travel misfortunes in the absence of the directive's protection.

So the next time you plan a holiday or even a week-end get-away, make sure to weigh the odds and possibilities between a non-covered personalized package and a legally prepared pre-set tour.

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