

TRAVELERS DON'T BOOK THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



A recent study of leisure travelers in thirteen countries gives some interesting clues about the importance of social media sites in the travel decision making process. The study was conducted by Text100.

According to the findings social media sites have a strong impact when it comes to vacationers' planning and inspiration, because such sites are an important venue for sharing experiences. However, as soon as it is time for money to change hands, that all changes. **Travelers typically do not use such sites as part of the process of booking a flight, a hotel room, or a rental car.**

The study relied on personal interviews with 4,600 travelers from e.g. Australia, China, France, India, Malaysia, South Africa, and USA. Each of the respondents had been on at least one pleasure trip in the past year, or planned to take such a trip in the coming year.

The study found that younger travelers (those under 34) were very inclined to use Facebook to get travel ideas. 87% of that group reported having done so. **The study also showed that about half of the respondents used Pinterest, Twitter, or other social media websites for inspiration.**

Respondents also keep in touch with social media while on vacation. About two thirds of the respondents (68%) used cell phones or other mobile devices in this way. This use was higher than those using the devices for photography (43%) or checking news (20%).

Over half of the respondents (52%) post photos of their trips, and 24% write reviews. Interestingly, respondents are more likely to post positive reviews.

The biggest influence in picking a destination is personal recommendations by family and friends, with 63% of the respondents relying on this type of information. Web searches were cited as a source of information by 55%. The most popular websites are those with reviews, followed by professional travel guides and columns.

This study shows that travelers get tips and recommendations from family, friends, and social media sources. But when it comes to actually booking, the more traditional sources remain most popular: Online travel agency websites, tour operators, or hotels and airlines directly.

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