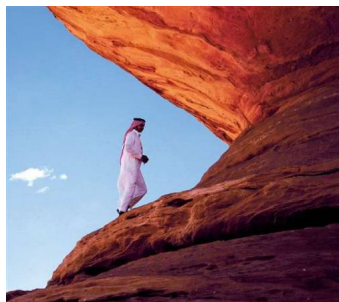


# MIDDLE EAST: ONLINE TRAVEL BOOKINGS GROWING



Most people who are traveling to the Middle East are choosing to browse and book flights online.

Phocus Wright, which is a worldwide travel market research company, has reported that online bookings in the Middle East have seen a compounded annual growth rate of eighteen percent beginning in 2010 until 2014.

**According to Tarique Kharti who is the senior vice president of Cleartrip.com, the market has responded well to online booking because many people are able to access the internet in this region.** Kharti also says that mobile devices that allow many people to access the internet easily have also contributed to this trend.

He said that the recent mobile application that Cleartrip launched generates more bookings than its website. Bookings at the website rose up to a hundred and twenty five percent from a hundred percent in the previous year.

Another trend taking place in the travel industry is localizing a websites to cater for people who speak different languages. This is a great way to reach out to one's target market especially when you consider that people who reside in the United Arab Emirates come from all parts of the world.

The internet provides customers with adequate information about various destinations and airline products. This is highly beneficial for the travel industry according to Rashid Alawadi who is the dnata travel agency's retail manager.

When customers call travel agencies, they clearly know about the destination they want to travel to, the airline to book and the cost of air fares. Being able to access information online has also helped travelers avoid booking travel packages at the last minute. Travel agencies are now finding that some of the customers they serve at their offices are now choosing to book travel packages online.

**It is expected that online bookings in the Middle East will demonstrate growth in the coming years.** The PhoCusWright report states that the online travel business market of this region will be valued at sixteen billion dollars between 2011 and 2013. The report further demonstrates that the UAE is the dominant player in the region's travel market since it accounts for almost half of all its bookings and a large proportion of its online sales.

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