

DIGITAL TRAVEL SALES EXPECTED TO IMPROVE WITH INCREASED MOBILE USE



A new report by eMarketer has shown varying digital travel trends in different countries of Western Europe. Overall, European digital travel sales have been slowly and steadily increasing, but the report identified key differences in patterns of consumer behavior in each of the four major Western European markets, including France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Travel trends in these four Western European countries were analyzed in terms of general business to consumer (B2C) ecommerce. **It was found that digital travel sales in France and Germany have matured, with travel this year taking up 21% of the overall B2C ecommerce in both countries.** However, because they already have mature ecommerce markets, other retail sectors are expected to experience quicker growth compared to travel ecommerce.

On the other hand, in Italy and Spain, ecommerce markets are not as mature as those in France and Germany. The report estimates that travel and other ecommerce in these countries will grow at similar rates. Digital travel sales in Italy presently take up 50% of B2C ecommerce, while in Spain, it accounts for 60%. Both of these figures are expected to remain constant for the remainder of the forecast period.

A key finding of the report was that mobile is expected to be a major growth driver of digital travel. Many European consumers are undertaking online travel research which indicates that digital means are important ways through which customers interact with businesses. The increasing use of mobile can lead to a greater number of digital booking in Europe, which can take place with more accommodation and transportation ticket bookings by traveling consumers.

The report estimated that by 2015, more than 50% of the populations in the four Western European countries will be using smartphones.

Reports of smartphone usage relating to travel in Western Europe have found Spain to be taking the lead. A survey by Expedia and Egencia in September this year, that included over 8000 Western European consumers, discovered that **smartphone bookings were highest in Spain out of the four major markets in Western Europe.** The survey asked internet users about travel bookings they made using their smartphones in the past 12 months. In Spain, 12% of internet users made bookings for leisure travel on their smartphone, while 14% made smartphone bookings for business travel. France led alongside Spain for business travel bookings with 14% of internet users, followed by Italy and Germany, both at 11% for business travel. The figures for leisure travel bookings on smartphones were lower across Western Europe, with 9% in France, 7% in Italy, and 4% in Germany.

Nonetheless, smartphone booking is expected to improve in Western Europe. Stefan Menden, the founder of JustBook, commented that planning is occurring less as people are becoming more flexible and last minute with their travel booking arrangements. When people have experienced mobile booking, whether it is for a hotel, restaurant reservation, car rental or transportation, they will realize the convenience of booking on the go and that planning in advance will no longer be necessary.

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