

A NEW ONLINE TREND IN SENIOR TRAVEL BOOKINGS



Online and mobile travel booking is often perceived as being a young man's game, with some companies understandably targeting the more youthful demographic that seems to be constantly attached to their smartphones; however, research shows that 23% of the total internet population is over 55, a sizeable portion of users that shows that senior travellers are heading online more readily than the tourism industry may have suspected.

It is no longer the case that senior consumers want to stick to visiting human travel agents on the highstreet while the younger generations go online; older generations are now using the web to plan and book their trips. Data from eMarketer shows that 69% of senior US customers will make use of the internet in 2014 and a study by AARP goes on to suggest that 80% of customers over 50 will do so when planning their holidays. Furthermore, when this is narrowed down to a smaller age gap of 60-69 year-olds, this percentage rises to 91%, a factor that some attribute to their higher income, and this is more than just a small cultural change in America. The industry is seeing a new global online trend as the older populations of Europe and Asia also turn to the the internet.

What does this new online trend mean for the companies and booking agents looking to make sales from these older tourists?

It is important that tourism boards, hoteliers and other business who are favouring web-based promotion and bookings take note of this trend within senior travellers and work with it. This data is the perfect excuse to continue development and innovation in online technology, applications and website content to welcome and support this growing number of older users. One way to encourage this new demographic is to give them more control over the specifics of their booking on the online form, such as specialised facilities at a hotel or airline seats with extra leg room, so they can be sure of securely dealing with every query and need via the website alone. Additionally, companies need to ensure that they offer easy navigation of their websites and information that is tailored to the age group.

Essentially, it all about going one step further to appreciate and nurture this growing group of tourism consumers and turn this new trend into increased business - more and more over-55s are connecting with these online resources, which is great, but these visits and initial interests still need to be turned into sales.

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