

THE PREFERENCES OF LEISURE TRAVELERS, BOOKING HABITS, AND THE FUTURE OF TRIPS



Every traveler knows what the perfect trip needs: an exciting destination to explore, a secure and comfortable hotel to stay at, a rental car for getting around and quality travel insurance. But what do they want beyond the basics? Preferences differ depending on the country, culture, and the purpose of the journey.

Do Chinese travelers value technology more than Germans? Are the French more budget-oriented than the British? The recently published Amadeus research, *Travel Dreams*, answers these questions based on the opinions of 6,000 people from the US, UK, China, India, France, and Germany, unveiling the opportunities for the travel industry.

Where Trip Inspiration Comes From

The sources of inspiration for leisure travelers have changed throughout the years, and social media and bloggers have become critically important. **This is evident in the responses from the Chinese and Indian respondents, who identify influencers as their primary source of inspiration, with 50% each.** At the same time, the French and American travelers tend to rely on friends and family, with 54 and 55%, respectively. Moreover, 41% of the UK respondents said TV was their travel inspiration source.

Immersing oneself in a foreign environment is becoming increasingly popular, with 70% of respondents worldwide saying they are likely or very likely to use VR or virtual tour experiences to explore potential destinations. Therefore, the most compelling opportunity for hotels and destination management companies is to collaborate with influencers and bloggers and invest in VR technologies.

Preferred Booking Channels for Travel-Related Services

Hotels

While online travel agencies (OTAs) are the most popular booking platforms for all respondents worldwide, online bookings can be found in China and the US, where they equal the preference for direct hotel bookings. Europeans, however, continue to favor agents when booking hotel rooms.

Car rentals

The predominant share of respondents (52%) said that the best way to book a car rental is directly with the car rental company. Chinese and Indian respondents are relatively more open to the idea of adding a car rental to a hotel booking, with 24 and 26%, respectively. Moreover, Indian travelers are almost twice as likely as the respondents from any other country to rent a car when abroad.

Travel Insurance

Most travelers will purchase travel insurance from well-known brands, and they prefer to buy it online. Moreover, the potential losses from not having enough insurance are too high, with the

worldwide average for an unsettled claim being US \$1,210, and it can be much higher in certain cases. Hence, it is not surprising that 38% of leisure travelers identified appropriate health coverage for emergency care abroad as their priority when it comes to travel insurance.

Dreams for the Future of Travel

The analysis revealed that the preferences of business and leisure travelers differ, and in certain areas, such as check-in preferences, these differences are stark. While almost half of leisure travelers (49%) will choose a personal touch and a personalized experience at the front desk as their preferred method of check-in, the majority (53%) of business travelers will select online or kiosk check-in.

Regarding the in-house amenities, most travelers (63%) are willing to pay extra for their preferred view or entertainment experience. The price difference between the average and the preferred option depends on the country, with Chinese and Indian respondents willing to pay up to 16% extra for a nicer view and between 8 and 9% for the French and the British.

Hotels that provide personalized experiences and options for in-house amenities and streamline the check-in procedure will have a competitive advantage.

Expectations from Technology

The discussion around technology and its role in personalizing the travel experience has only begun to unfold, and already, 50% of leisure travelers will trust an AI-powered recommendation from a hotel concierge when it comes to the best local restaurant, with 60% of business travelers sharing the same opinion. Only 13% of leisure and 15% of business travelers do not trust this technology at all.

As for car rentals, 40% of respondents would like the process of renting a car to be as frictionless as possible, with the booking process and pick-up made easier by technology such as a mobile phone or a kiosk. Travelers expect insurance to be fast, proactive, and most importantly, available when they need it the most. Thus, 52% of all respondents would prefer to have an option to call a travel insurance company at any time in a situation when they cannot resolve the issue themselves, for example, to rebook a flight or a hotel.

Turning Insights into Opportunity

The analysis and information provided by Travel Dreams show that **there are opportunities to address the needs and wants of travelers in both similar and different ways depending on the region and the type of traveler.** Technology can be leveraged to offer personalized experiences, ranging from AI-powered concierge services to easier and faster online check-in for business travelers. Moreover, the technology-enabled personalization can be applied to the in-house hospitality and guest accommodation, such as offering to upgrade a room for a specific view or access to certain facilities.

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