

Americans Place Trust in 'Virtual' Strangers, According to First boo.com Travel Trust Index
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œ **Outside the country, American travelers trust reviews from Canadians, Aussies**

œ **'Down under' rules, as Americans most want to meet Australians, New Zealanders**

œ **Eastern cultures among those lowest on the 'want to meet' list, along with our neighbors south of the border**

œ **Merchants can be trusted, as nearly two-thirds of travellers say they are comfortable buying local goods when on vacation**

An increasing number of Americans prefer to place their trust in complete strangers when it comes to researching and booking their vacations, according to the inaugural Travel Trust Index Report, released today by boo.com. The research reveals that peer reviews are growing in power, with nearly one in five travelers posting a review following a vacation. Seventy percent of survey respondents let their fellow travelers be their guide, using peer reviews to guide their booking decisions.

boo.com, a new type of travel site, allows customers move through multiple platforms to find the hotel that best meets their needs. Combining search engine capabilities, pricing, reviews and social networking with an innovative interface, boo.com is changing the way online travel is booked.

Psychologist Donna Dawson, commenting on the research, says: 'We no longer need to meet face-to-face in order for trust to develop. We can follow the reports of one or more fellow travelers over time to see if their priorities are the same as ours. And the conclusion we then reach is that we would rather put our trust in someone who appears similar to ourselves than a travel agent who may have a hidden agenda.'

Americans cherish their annual vacations, and almost half of respondents admit to saving for most of the year to guarantee their two weeks of vacation time is well spent. Yet researching a holiday destination can be a time-consuming and sometimes stressful process. To ease this process, more than three quarters of consumers are opting to research and book their vacations directly on the web, with a paltry 17 percent of people surveyed preferring to book their travel through an agent.

When it comes to placing trust in online reviews, 42 percent of Americans are confident in the opinions of Canadians over any other nationality, with the opinions of Australians coming in a close second at 41 percent.

Ray Nolan, CEO of boo.com said: 'Peer reviews have rapidly changed the travel booking process. We at boo know how important collective wisdom is in helping people make the right travel decisions, but how do you know if you can trust a reviewer? At boo.com we separate out reviews your friends publish from reviews that others publish - your 'crew' versus the 'boo crew.' We have introduced a boo trust rating index which enables reviewers to earn the trust of the rest of the community based on the number of reviews they have submitted and how useful these were considered. This takes some of the risk and anonymity out of the whole decision-making process.'

The Travel Trust Index also reinforces the growing power of the web for travel booking:

-64 percent of travelers book their vacations online.

-66 percent prefer to see images of their accommodation or destination prior to booking.

-88 percent found their pre-trip research to be accurate following their vacation.

About the survey

The survey was conducted by Lightspeed International with 2,000 consumers in the UK and Ireland, 2,000 consumers in the USA and 500 in Canada.

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