

Consumers Using the Internet to Research Travel Continue to Outnumber Those Booking Online

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Consumers are continuing to use the Internet to make their travel arrangements, but usage has declined over the past few years, The Conference Board and TNS report today.

"Consumers conducting travel research online continue to outnumber those booking online," says Lynn Franco, Director of The Conference Board Consumer Research Center. "Among consumers whose online travel arrangements increased this year, ease of use and instant availability are the key drivers."

Among those using the Internet to make travel arrangements, the ability to book airfares online garnered the highest level of satisfaction, with 48 percent of customers claiming they are "extremely" satisfied. The ability to make car rental arrangements online also received high marks with nearly 42 percent of customers saying they are extremely satisfied.

The Consumer Internet Barometer - produced by The Conference Board, the global business research and membership organization, and TNS, a global market insight and information group - surveys 10,000 households across the country and tracks who's doing what on the Internet.

More women than men, 21 percent versus nearly 19 percent, used travel websites solely to research their travel arrangements. However, more men than women, 34 percent versus 33 percent, researched and also booked their travel arrangements via a travel website. In terms of satisfaction with travel websites, only 30 percent of consumers expressed a high level of satisfaction with these sites, although an additional 55 percent say they are somewhat satisfied.

Two out of every ten consumers say they have used the Internet more this year than last to research travel arrangements, while 18 percent have increased their online bookings. Ease of use was the primary reason behind the boost in online usage, followed by instant availability. Past experience and promotions are also among the top reasons consumers cited for their increased usage. Conversely, nearly one out of every four consumers say they used the Internet less than last year for making travel arrangements.

"Clearly, there appears to be room for continued growth in the online travel arena," says Franco.

RESEARCH CONTINUES TO OUTPACE BOOKING BY NEARLY TWO TO ONE

The proportion of consumers planning to use the Internet in the next three months to research travel continues to outnumber those intending to book online by nearly two to one. Overall activity, however, has declined over the past three years. Women are more likely than men to research travel activities online, but both are equally likely to book travel arrangements online.

Lodging is the most researched activity while airline tickets are the most booked online. Currently, 27 percent of men versus 29 percent of women intend to research lodging online, while 25 percent of men versus 27 percent of women intend to research airline rates/availability online. When it comes to booking, close to 18 percent of men and women plan to book airline tickets online and 16 percent intend to book lodging online. Close to 30 percent of consumers said they do not intend to research nor book travel arrangements online in the next three months.

About This Survey:

The Consumer Internet Barometer is based on a quarterly survey of 10,000 households. A unique sample is surveyed each quarter. Return rates average 70 percent, which ensures highly representative data. Data is weighted as well to reflect the latest U.S. household demographic information. The latest survey was conducted during the second quarter of 2007.

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