

## Top Travel Trends to Watch

### Behind the News

The next twelve months promise significant change in the travel industry. The industry is inextricably linked to the well-being of the economy and the level of global tourism, making the hotel/travel industry a cyclical one. Market share rivalry is rife and successful operators are generally the ones with scale, brand equity and the ability to reign in costs to boost the bottom line. Here is an overview of the top travel trends identified by industry experts.

#### **Travel Trend 1: Going Mobile**

With the rapid integration of mobile capabilities to plan itineraries, track flights, receive travel alerts and serve as a boarding pass is making mobile devices indispensable to business travellers, mobile is now an integral tool for the travel marketplace. There is a frenzy of development by new innovators and existing travel software providers, tapping into the suddenly explosive growth in the use of smartphones. Given the heavy use of phones among business travellers combined with handheld technology and network bandwidth improvements, the focus is shifting beyond the travel purchase to traveller services. As such consumer-originating providers - like *Dopplr*, *Triplt* and *WorldMate* - bring their enhanced traveller itineraries to business travelers, industry suppliers - *Amadeus*, *Concur*, *Rearden Commerce*, *Sabre*, *Travelport TRX*, et al - also are putting their mobile development dollars into what has been coined as *traveller-centric buying*.

#### **Trend 2: Traveller-Centric Buying**

The traveller-centric buying approach refers to managed travel programs that revolve around the entire lifecycle of a reservation, rather than just the purchase of travel. Due to the internet - which facilitates the selling and purchasing of business travel components and services in a traveller-centric model - *traveller-centric buying* has the potential to enhance productivity by keeping travel employees informed about a guest's plans pre-trip - their profile, preferences, historical behaviour and more. Conversely, the convenience of traveller-centric buying approach will enable travellers to be more productive by having just-in-time data pushed to them based on situational circumstances and geographic location.

#### **Trend 3: Video Conferencing: Travelling Without The Trip**

The best way to control travel costs in a downturn is to simply cancel the trip altogether and use a technological alternative. Video conferencing and *Telepresence* have developed considerably since the 1990s. Today's business, economic and social climates position video conferencing tools as a practical alternative to business travel. The model has trend-breaking potential for business travel and corporate meeting spend. While this Video conferencing has been on every travel trend list for the past seven years, 2010 will be its year. Video-conferencing will be the lead trend in 2010. Only now is *Telepresence* starting to be built on technologies that can reproduce a high-quality interaction. Once all this becomes cost-effective, the business travel sector will be taking a gigantic drop.

#### **Trend 4. Travelling on a budget**

Admittedly, travelling on a budget isn't the sexiest travel trend story of the year, but without sugar-coating, it's a notion you will be considering. And if you're resourceful, you can make it sexy, or at the very least, fun. You see, there are myriad incentives available for travellers. It's time to look beyond what seems like a good rate, and seek out options - like free nights on a multiple night stay, gift cards, spa credits, complimentary dining, and more. A traveller can save substantial per diem dollars if the hotel throws in, say, free breakfasts, or other perks as added value. But ask yourself if it's added value; meaning, if you have no use for a free chauffer, then you would do well to look toward another offer at another hotel that taps into your needs.

#### **Trend 5. Travelling on a serious budget**

Expect a lot from this suddenly relevant trend - call it *travelling on pennies* - in 2010. Many hotels are dipping into ways to fill rooms, but others are building entire empires on it. *Air Asia* boss *Tony Fernandes* is first on the trend with a new *Malaysian hotel* that offers hotel rooms for 20 cents a night. As one of the newly-coined *no-star* hotels, *Tune Hotel*, located near Kuala Lumpur's airport, offers \$0.20 rooms as a part of a travel package. The no-frills rooms come with a basic bed, ceiling fan and a shower, and not much else. Anything beyond those basics - towels, a kettle and air-conditioning - are all additional charges. This type of hotel,

similar to low-cost airlines, utilizes a self-service online booking system and the rates are kept low by offering limited service. Keep your eye on this travel trend, as there are plans to have 150 hotels around the world by 2012, with Australia and the UK already in their sights.

#### **Travel Trend 6. Whole Body Scanners**

Get ready to show your stuff. Travellers will soon find that checking through security will be a revealing experience with the rollout of *whole body image scanners* that can see beneath clothing will be installed for added security, replacing traditional x-ray machines. You might think these machines sound like something out of a SciFi movie – but they're very real and very current. A whole body image scan is simple: you enter a booth and your body is scanned. In another room a full image of your body is shown to the security force. The airport security force can easily see what they refer to as *metallic and non-metallic threats*. The machines now at certain airports for test periods, and then expect them to become more of a standard at airports. For now the process is optional!

#### **Travel Trend 7. China, India and Gulf States are the new hotspots**

Are we done with Europe? Actually, no. But global travellers are getting more courageous with their travels, and expanding their horizons. Industry insiders are expecting travel to skyrocket in *China, India, and The Gulf States* over the next twelve months. Why? Well, it certainly has nothing to do with political stability. No, it really comes down to money. While the economy is in the toilet, Paris and Milan remain as expensive as ever. But, countries like China and India are seeing enough signs of growth to warrant visiting, offering favourable exchange rates and low travel expenses. Their *tourism* industries are starting to expand and these countries are going to be top destinations in 2010 and upcoming years. Between China and India alone it is expected that over 35,000 hotel rooms will have to be added to meet the impending demands. These will be the places to visit very soon.

#### **Trend 8. Luxury And Adventure Travel**

For 2010, you'll see a growing pressure in the industry to provide exotic travel and customized, ultimate experiences. Travellers are seeking above-and-beyond adventures in exciting new destinations, and ultimately, seeking more excitement in their travels. That's why a new travel trend is popping up known as *Luxury And Adventure Travel*. The *jetset* aren't just populating *5-star hotels* anymore. Now they arrange travel packages that will have them jumping out of helicopters to go skiing, taking safaris, getting high-speed car tours around major cities, arranging personalized art tours, and more. If you've got the money, you can find any number of specially organized holiday packages. So whether you want to plan your own stops on a cruise line or go on a tour of the finest 5-star restaurants in Tokyo, you can make it happen.

#### **Trend 9. Eco-travel**

Ever since a certain *Al Gore* movie, people just started starting taking better care of the planet, for good reason. The green trend has even trickled down to holiday travel (you'd think that would be one area where we'd all still be allowed to be frivolous, but not so). Many people out there want to make sure they take care of planet earth while vacationing and so the travel industry has responded with *eco-travel*. Arrange a trip that will have you flying on a fuel-efficient plane to a self-sustaining villa running on solar power and self-satisfied liberalism. It's a growing industry, so if you want to spend a little extra cash and feel good about keeping the world clean, this is your travel mode of choice in 2010.

#### **Trend 10. The 2010 Vancouver Olympics**

Not technically a trend, but the 2010 Vancouver Olympics is an event that will affect travel like an explosion (to get my point, go online and try to get a flight to B.C. in February. Just try!). The 17 days of the Vancouver Olympics are expected to attract a global television audience of three billion people; more than 80 countries and 6,850 athletes and officials are expected to participate. The opening ceremonies will be held on February 12, 2010, and as a result Vancouver is the city to visit in the Western hemisphere in 2010. Everyone wants to move to Vancouver or visit before that big torch gets lit. It's a beautiful city in a mountain-filled area of Canada that will be perfect for the event. The city will inevitably be overrun with tourists, and you would be one of them. Hotels will be packed and streets will be crowded, but this is the city to see and be seen in this year. So grab a Canadian flag, learn about at least one winter sport, buy an obnoxious compressed air horn, and get yourself over to Vancouver to cheer on your country of choice. Sexy snow-boots and winter-wear are required.