

such as IXIGO, Ezeegol and others aggregate special deals from airlines websites and allow customers to compare deals from several websites without opening multiple tabs. comScore, a leader in measuring the digital world and a preferred source in digital marketing intelligence, reports in early June, 37 per cent of the total number of online users in India access travel sites. It reveals that travel related search has crossed 14 million visitors in April, rising by 50 per cent from the previous year.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Gaining importance. The significance of travel in our lives has gone up and ranks just after the basic necessities. The McKinsey Global Institute report for 2007 says that the higher standard of living would stimulate spending in travel, recreation and leisure activities, triggering growth in the media, the entertainment and the travel industries. According to it, the average total household transport consumption is expected to grow from 17 per cent in 2005 to 19 per cent in 2015 and 20 per cent by 2025 of the total family income. The explosion in travel is driven by a burgeoning middle-class population. Says Joshua Berman, the award-winning guidebook author and travel expert, based in Boulder, US, "There will be a mix of both independent travellers and package tourists, some spending as little as possible, others indulging in luxe-travel products".

Customisation is the key. There will be a proliferation in the 'exclusive' category of travel. 'Boutique travel,' which is popular in developed countries, will be in demand among the Indians. According to a survey by the United

What's on the Horizon

Increasing Number of Flyers As many more low-cost-carriers foray into the market, the number of people opting for affordable travel will see a steep rise.

New Mix There will be discounts and offers both for the independent travellers and for the usual packaged tours.

Customised Travel Offers

More people will seek boutique or customised travel offers involving one-of-its-kind packages.

Short Vacations

More people will choose short vacations, mostly weekend gateaways, than one long vacation every year.

Experience Travel

Travel will no more be limited to visiting a place and sightseeing, most travellers will turn it to a life-time experience.

States Tour Operators Association (USTOA), an association representing the operators in the US, nearly 40 per cent of the respondents reported that custom-planned itineraries were their maximum growth area while nearly one-quarter has reported highest growth in the independent tours segment. Escorted tour was close behind with 20 per cent of the respondents considering it a growth area while 15 per cent sees growth in the packaged tours category. Says, Zubin Karkaria, CEO and managing director, Kuoni India & South Asia, one of Europe's leading leisure travel companies, "Adventure and experiential travel, which are considered as niche markets today, are bound to grow rapidly over the next decade". In the near future, travellers will choose an experience of their liking—some may opt for a 'heritage walk' while others will prefer a day doing desert safari or camel rearing.

A matter of experience. The focus of travel will shift from visiting places to experiencing them. With a shift in mindset, travellers will opt for more "down and dirty" way of exploring. People will not restrict themselves to sightseeing anymore. The main focus would be to know the lifestyle of the locals and gain a deeper understanding of their culture. Instead of one long holiday, short trips will be the preference. According to Sharat Dhall, managing director, Tripadvisor, India, one of the largest travel communities in the world: "People will travel for a cause. They will find the time to help NGOs and visit natural disaster sites to help in the rehabilitation work." According to Tripadvisor's *India Winter Travel Trends' Survey*



Sharat Dhall

Managing Director, India Operations, Tripadvisor

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Ritika Modi

Regional President, Uniglobe Travels South Asia

"Travel technology will dig out data through social networking to create travel recommendations that will match consumers' interests."

Ikram Singh Bawa

CEO, PRO-HOST Executive Search & Recruitment

"Indians looking for value for money will prefer to travel abroad than spend on domestic holidays, where the infrastructure is not yet developed."

