

Global study investigates the state and impact of trust in travel, travel retailing

According to new independent research commissioned by Travelport, the travel industry can boost global recovery by addressing four consumer trust gaps in price transparency, Covid-19 health and safety measures, data privacy and information credibility.



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"The travel industry needs to sharpen its focus on trust", said Greg Webb, chief executive officer at Travelport.

"This study has shown, as an industry, we are not as trusted as we would like. The good news, however, is that we now know what the issues are and we also have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hit reset, as countries re-open and travellers eagerly get back on airplanes. If we move quickly to address these issues, we can accelerate industry recovery as well as the modernisation of travel retail."

Trust gaps to consider

1. Price transparency

The study of 11,000 travellers across 10 countries was conducted by Edelman Data & Intelligence (Dxi), the research and analytics arm of Edelman, which has studied trust for over 20 years through the Edelman Trust Barometer.

It revealed the two most important factors in building consumer trust in travel agencies and travel suppliers, such as airlines, are having 'no hidden costs' (55%) and 'fully flexible or refundable products' (45%).

Unfortunately, most travellers currently deem industry performance in both of these areas to be poor (60% and 57% respectively). Travellers in New Zealand and Australia were shown to be the most disappointed on this point, with a significant 40 and 39 percentage point gap between importance and performance.

"The importance of price transparency can't be overstated", continued Webb. "To put it into context, having no hidden costs is a full 16% more influential on trust than an airline's long-term safety record. The request from consumers here is clear; the time has come to eliminate hidden fees and improve the overall transparency of pricing and communication."

2. Covid-19 health and safety

The majority (56%) of travellers that participated in the study said the travel industry has done well in implementing Covid-19 health and safety measures. Going forward, however, around half said they would like more reassurance on how robustly some measures are being enforced, in particular, improved air filtration, social distancing and managed boarding and queuing.

Webb added: "The travel industry should be proud of how quickly and effectively it responded to Covid-19. What we learned from the study, however, is that travel suppliers and agencies will benefit from being clearer in their communication on certain measures, like social distancing."

3. Data privacy

Data privacy was another key issue highlighted by the research. Only four out of ten travellers (40%) reported that they currently trust travel companies to use their personal information in the right way. This was especially apparent among Baby Boomers (33%) and Gen Z (36%) respondents.

When it comes to using information to personalize experiences, travellers said they are most comfortable with companies using data that they have actively shared with them through one-to-one conversations (46%), past booking behaviour (46%) and loyalty activity (44%).

They are less comfortable, however, when information is sourced indirectly, for example, through social media activity (35%), public records like credit scores (37%) and past shopping, search and booking behaviour with other companies (40%).

4. Information credibility

According to the research, the most trusted sources of travel-related information that travelers use when researching a trip are those perceived to have aligned interests: friends and family (67%) and review websites (50%).

In contrast, the least trusted are those with a clear vested interest in selling, such as social media influencers (30%) and celebrities (25%). Once again, Gen Z was revealed to be the least trusting in almost every category.

A similar story played out when examining trust in different types of travel-related information. Customer ratings (54%) and written customer reviews (51%) are among the most trusted.

However, third-party certification (39%), photos of products such as hotel rooms provided by travel companies (42%) and third-party ratings such as hotel star systems (43%) were revealed to be the least trusted.

Enabling retail

In addition to identifying gaps in trust, the research also uncovered evidence that trust directly influences purchasing behaviour. Due to Covid-19, almost half (46%) of travellers today, for example, were shown to prioritise trust over all other factors when choosing a travel supplier.



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Many travellers also stated, when trust is in place, they will consider purchasing multiple travel-related items (48%), upgrading their package (43%) and buying non-travel-related items such as credit cards (34%).

"Trusted companies make better retailers," Webb concluded. "When trust is combined with cutting-edge technology and effective sales, it becomes a powerful proposition. At Travelport, we will continue to invest in each of these areas in a bid to not only help the industry rebound from the pandemic but come out the other side more agile and stronger."

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