C2C is new holiday buzzword

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C2C is new holiday buzzword, by Euromonitor International

Look over your shoulder Sir Richard Branson. There is a growing gang of â€œminipreneursâ€• chasing you. They don't own a plane or a hotel between them and have a lot of ground to make up, but their influence can revolutionise the future of travel. Innovator Sir Richard's finger on the pulse will have surely noted this latest trend - customer-to-customer (C2C) holiday planning.

It's internet driven via web logs, otherwise known as blogs, and is creeping up the popular holiday booking scene. There has been a massive 60 per cent rise in blogs over the past three years, lifting the 'blogosphere' capacity to more than 35 million, according to one source. That means a new weblog is set up every second of the day. One company claims that they track 50,000 postings an hour.

Post your weird or wonderful dream break on a blog and if a minipreneur comes up with a solution or itinerary to satisfy you then a â€œfixingâ€• fee changes hands.

â€œIt's the newest slant in personalised, tailor-made, for-your-passport-only holiday planning,â€• revealed Fiona Jeffrey, Managing Director of World Travel Market, the leading business-to-business travel and tourism exhibition for the international industry, held in London every year.

"From mini-breaks to minipreneurs, the field of travel is forever adapting, improving, experimenting and adjusting its horizons. The web is such a gigantic influence in today's marketplace and this idea has jumped from the United States to Europe, where it has been on the rise for about 18 months.

"Our market intelligence provider, Euromonitor International, has found that consumers craving more choice and individualism are helping to create their own cottage industries and sideline packages. It is a trend which can completely bypass official distribution channels, travel companies and agencies, meaning that an exchange of views and information on the net could lead to somebody getting a payment".

Caroline Bremner, Euromonitor International's Global Travel and Tourism Research Manager, said, â€œC2C holiday planning has the potential to be very profitable. I believe that ultimately somebody could hit on an idea and make a living giving advice as a minipreneur. It's the next step on from dynamic packaging, which at Euromonitor International, we estimate will be worth US$19billion at world level in 2006, an astonishing leap of 43 per cent on 2005".

Bremner continued, â€œWhile it is too early to put a figure on the value of the minipreneur market, businesses are already moving with the times. They're aware of the changing on-line purchasing scene, and realise they must ride with the trend for customised holidays. The next step is to be more flexible. By inviting customers to request exactly what they want, businesses can try responding to individual demand.

â€œHowever, at Euromonitor International, we believe the ability of major players to offer increased levels of customisation and creativity is questionable as they merge into bigger, global corporations. Consumers using the web as a medium have been moving away from the major websites to the highly personalised market. They tap into blogs and ask fellow customers what they think. Consumers seem to like word of mouth recommendation and minipreneurs are turning these recommendations into sales opportunities, using their knowledge to put together holidays for other consumers.

"The range of 'what I'd like to do' postings on the web is enormous and has no barriers â€“ from visiting KGB prison cells to sustaining a fragile community industry such as Harris Tweed making in the Outer Hebrides. A minipreneur seeing this could volunteer: 'Pay me Â£100 and I'll set it up'. Similarly, there are many Americans who might gladly welcome help in re-tracing their family roots and pay a search fee.

â€œLooking ahead, Euromonitor International forecasts that C2C communication will influence the future of customisation, translating into the likely emergence of customised packages from independent agents who are best placed to respond. This could just be the breakthrough that many independents have been waiting to capitalise on.â€•

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