Travel Industry's Online Sales Rebound

Contributed by eMarketer
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Fees help overcome slowing penetration rate

The market for leisure and unmanaged business travel has had a tough few years, but a rebound is under way. Online sales picked up steam again last year after a drop in 2009.

eMarketer estimates that US online sales of leisure and unmanaged business travel will increase another 8.5% this year to $107.4 billion, up from $99 billion in 2010.

eMarketer benchmarks its US online travel sales projections against figures from PhoCusWright, for which the last full year measured was 2009, and bases its forecast on a meta-analysis of data from several research firms, as well as overall travel industry trends.

The number of US consumers researching and booking travel online is still growing. More than 114 million people will research travel online this year, and 93.9 million will book it.

But the percentage of US internet users doing so has stabilized. The online travel market is now mature, and only modest growth in the percentage of all trips booked online is expected.

Growth in spending is coming largely from a rise in airfares, hotel rates and ancillary fees, which increase the aggregate dollar amount of online bookings.

This year, eMarketer estimates, the average amount each online travel booker will spend is $1,145. That will go up to $1,213 next year.

Mobile travel research and booking is also on the rise. eMarketer expects this less-mature channel to attract 24.6 million travel researchers and 11.8 million bookers this year.

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