LEISURE TRAVEL DECISION MAKING

II - Destination Selection Process

SERIES OF 3

NON-MEMBER: $495

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The second white paper in the *Leisure Travel Decision Making* series, this report analyzes the destination selection process including the most desirable trip attributes and the primary sources of information travelers rely on when deciding where to book their next trip. This report is based primarily on MMGY Global's 2015 *Portrait of American Travelers*.

Highlights:

1. Travelers are identifying an increasing number of trip attributes that impact their decision-making process. The top five desirable trip attributes are gaining influence - beautiful scenery, having enough time to relax, safety, ease of access and a place never visited previously.

2. The most highly-rated trip attributes are essentially considered fundamental attributes and more or less expected from a destination to even be considered.

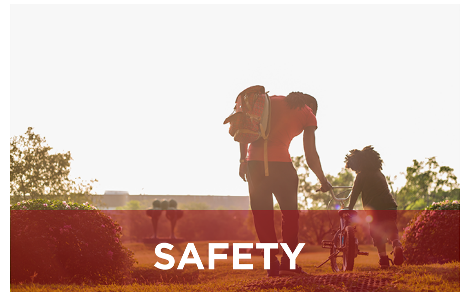
3. Tangible attributes such as museums, fine dining, shopping and guided tours were enticing for half or more of travelers, but were decidedly less important than the top five 'fundamental' attributes.

4. 'Niche' attributes including athletic activities, casino gambling, nightlife/ entertainment, events and festivals and gay and lesbian offerings were the least popular trip attributes but were still important to certain demographic segments.

5. Travelers decreased the number of sources of advice and information considered when making travel decisions in 2015.

6. While gaining some influence in recent years, social media posts (by both friends and family and the travel community), blog posts and photo or video sharing websites were not heavily relied on by travelers.

7. Loyalty programs and points are declining in influence. Brands have less power and customers are having a difficult time distinguishing the value between travel brands in a saturated market.

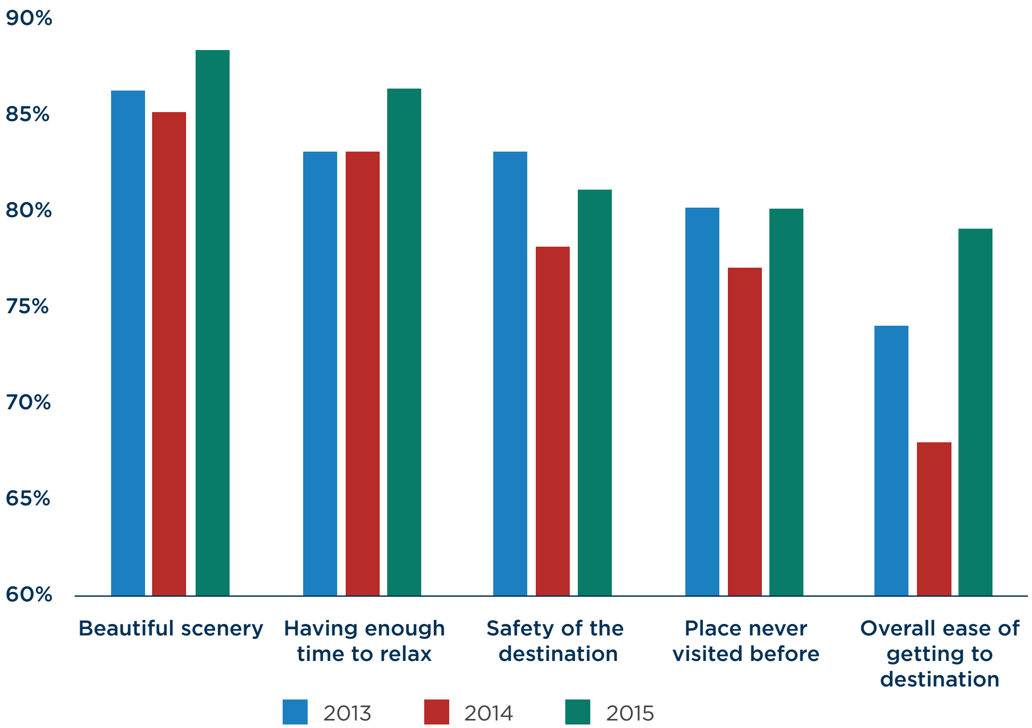


DESIRABLE TRIP ATTRIBUTES

The top desired trip attributes and motivators were elements nearly all travelers found attractive—suggesting that beautiful scenery, relaxation, safety, accessibility and a unique destination are 'fundamental' attributes that travelers expect when deciding on a travel destination.

Common tangible trip attributes, including unique local experiences, different/unusual cuisines, museums, fine dining, historical sites and beaches, were identified as attractive by 50-70 percent of travelers in each generation segment. While not the top motivator, exploration was important for seven in 10 travelers—evident in the fact that historical sites, museums, fine dining, shopping and guided tours were desirable trip attributes for more than half of travelers.

Top Desirable Trip Attributes



SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.

7 in 10 travelers are interested in exploration.

RELATED RESEARCH

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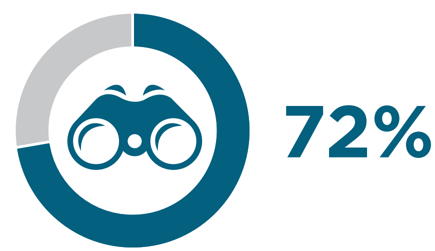


Reiterating the importance of exploring a destination, a recent Meredith Travel Marketing study found that nearly three-quarters of women indicated 'having multiple sightseeing options' was essential for an enjoyable vacation.[1]

[1] Meredith Travel Marketing, Travel Study, 2015.

DESIRABLE TRIP ATTRIBUTES (CONT.)

Despite the fact that eight in 10 travelers desired to travel to a place never visited before, more than half of travelers (53%), up from 43 percent in 2013, indicated they sought to return to a favorite destination visited previously. This was especially true for Boomers, who may be reminiscing and bringing their grandchildren to their favorite travel destinations to share their memories.

Niche attributes were identified as attractive for fewer than half of travelers. Niche attributes include activities such as **casino gambling, spa and wellness programs, events and festivals, sporting events or other athletic activities such as hiking, biking, skiing and golf.** Niche attributes help set a destination apart and assist in narrowing down the destination selection for travelers seeking a high quality unique experience from a destination.

While travelers in general do not rank these as their top trip attributes and do not expect them to be present at every destination, destinations exceling at and promoting these attributes will likely succeed at capturing targeted, passionate groups—particularly younger Millennials interested in a specific activity.

While the overall order of desirable attributes was fairly consistent across audience segments, older generations place stronger emphasis on beautiful scenery, relaxation, safety, a place never visited and accessibility than younger generations. Likely as a result of their youth, diversity and desire for higher levels of activity, Millennials appreciate and prefer a wider range of trip attributes than older generations. Millennials placed greater importance on active and adventurous attributes and local experiences. Seven in 10 Millennials desired the opportunity to eat different cuisines on their travels and six in 10 desired to participate in unique experiences reflecting the local culture. The only trip attribute declining in desirability for Millennials from 2014 were guided tours. While just over half of Millennials desired guided tours, nearly six in 10 Matures rated guided tours as an important trip attribute.

Overall, **females** more strongly desired nearly all trip attributes than males, although the order of desired attributes was identical.

Desirable Trip Attributes	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Beautiful scenery	83%	87%	92%	93%
Having enough time to relax	85%	84%	90%	87%
Safety of the destination	75%	81%	86%	81%
Place never visited before	78%	78%	82%	81%
Overall ease of getting to destination	75%	76%	83%	89%
Historical sites	69%	73%	75%	77%
Beach experience	73%	74%	70%	60%
Opportunity to eat different cuisines	70%	64%	64%	67%
Museums	62%	66%	63%	68%
Fine dining	63%	53%	63%	72%

SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.
Note: Colored cell indicates significant differences between generations.

RELATED RESEARCH

meredith travel marketing

Meredith Travel Marketing found that **millennial women** were more likely to describe their approach to travel and be motivated by adventure and unique exciting experiences than **older women.** Millennial women are also more likely to be influenced by food/beverage festivals, tastings and local food tours and award-winning restaurants than older counterparts.[2]

[2] Meredith Travel Marketing, Travel Study, 2015.

DESIRABLE TRIP ATTRIBUTES (CONT.)

PHILADELPHIA'S NEW AMERICANS TOUR

Reinforced by the seven in 10 travelers who are motivated to explore and nearly six in 10 travelers who desire unique experiences reflecting local culture, Visit Philadelphia developed a guided tour to appeal to a niche group of travelers interested in American history and U.S. citizenship. Simultaneously, Visit Philadelphia was also able to join the immigration conversation, reaffirm the city's central role in American history and position themselves as a key destination to connect with the American story for new United States' residents in pursuit of the American dream.

Visit Philadelphia launched "Philadelphia's New Americans Tour" in November 2014 as a self-guided tour of 13 attractions relevant to U.S. Citizenship test questions. Sites include the National Constitution Center, Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell Center, the Betsy Ross House and four contemporary sites related to immigration. Visit Philadelphia partnered with experts to better understand the citizenship process and the role of various organizations, ensuring the inclusion of immigrant groups' voices in the tour and earning credibility in the field.

Visit Philadelphia's primary tactic was content creation and distribution using their far reaching media channels to explain the program, position Philadelphia as a meaningful destination for learning about American history and relay the importance of our newest citizens. "Philadelphia's New Americans Tour" was released at a press conference one week prior to President Obama announcing his sweeping immigration reform plan—adding urgency and relevancy to the story.

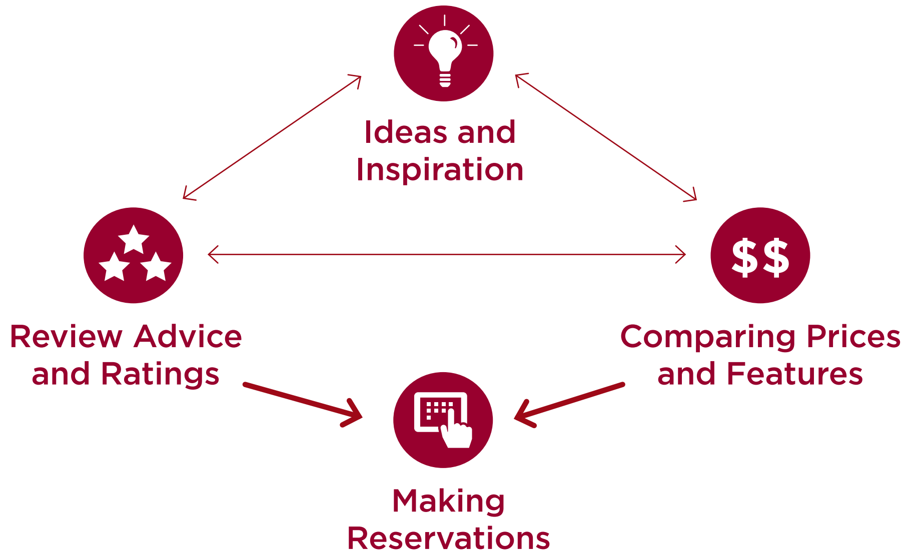
As a result, "Philadelphia's New Americans Tour" generated significant press, inspired social media engagement and web visitation and, most importantly, solidified Philadelphia's historic role as a place to inspire citizenship and the American dream. In sum, the program resulted in 161 media placements generating 6.6 million impressions with an estimated publicity value of $103,000. **Visitphilly.com/NewAmericans** has received 2,600+ visits since the campaign launched. The tour also had meaningful cultural impact. Philadelphia's New Americans tour was presented during the National Immigrant Integration Conference in December 2014. In addition as a result of the tour, Philadelphia competed against five other destinations for "Most Welcoming City" in the United States.

RELATED RESEARCH

American travelers tend to be more adventures than other travelers worldwide. According to a TripAdvisor study, **two-thirds of U.S. respondents** indicated their top trip desire was to have a unique and interesting experience—higher than the **55 percent of worldwide travelers** who were similarly motivated.[3]

[3] TripAdvisor, 'New Experiences and Bonding with Loves Ones Top Vacation Motivations for U.S. Travelers,' September 24, 2014. http://ir.tripadvisor.com/releasedetail.cfm?releaseid=872318

LEISURE TRIP PLANNING CYCLE



The leisure trip planning cycle is not entirely a linear path and often includes multiple steps in a circuitous process, though it can be outlined in the four high level stages above.

The ideas and inspiration stage generally includes selecting the destination and picking the type of trip, such as going on a cruise, a beach vacation, outdoor recreation, etc. Completing this initial travel stage lays the groundwork for more detailed budget determination, comparison shopping, reading online reviews and activity planning and booking. Regardless of gender, age, region or ethnicity, most travelers agreed that the first step in the trip planning cycle was selecting the destination. Nearly three in 10 travelers (29%) selected the destination as the first step in the decision making process, followed closely behind by selecting the type of trip (23%).

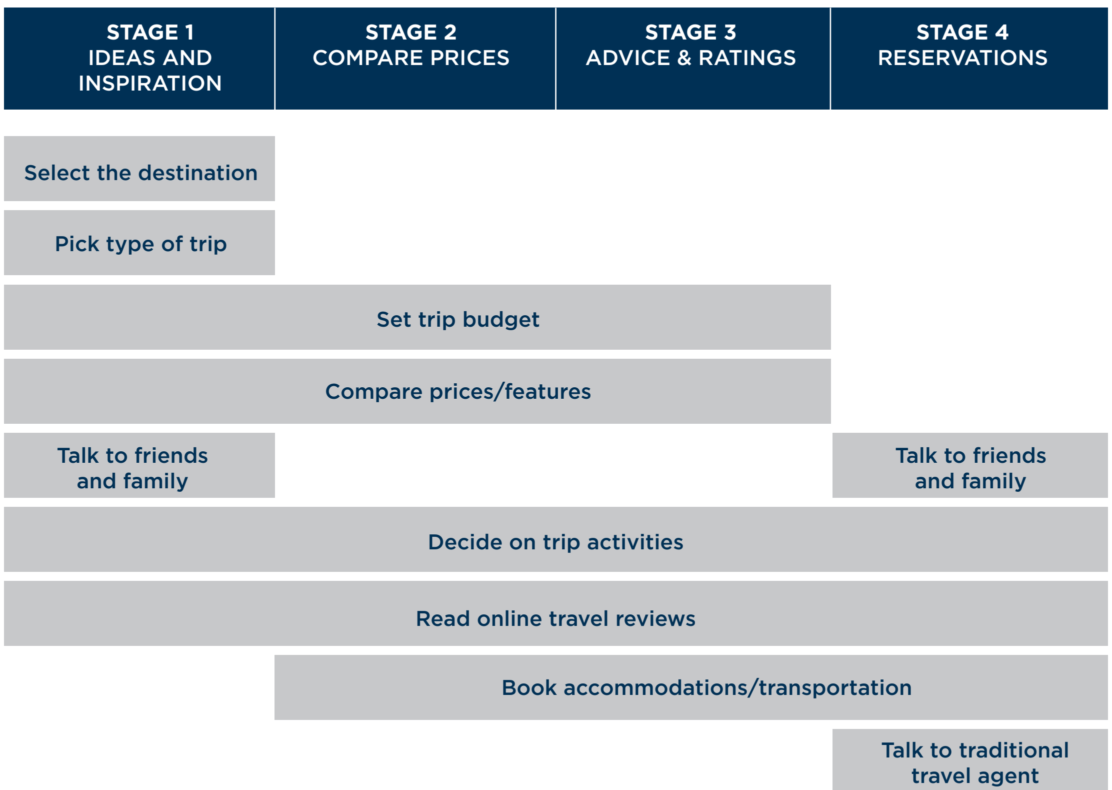
Older travelers were more likely to select the trip destination as their first step in trip planning than younger travelers. More than four in 10 Mature travelers (42%) selected the destination first **compared to just 21 percent of Millennials.** Millennials and travelers residing in the Midwest were split between selecting the destination and the type of trip as the first step in the process. Females and travelers residing in the West were more likely to choose their trip destination as the first step in the planning cycle than males or travelers residing in other regions.

Travelers were already considering the budget in the ideas and inspiration stage—close to four in 10 travelers (38%) included setting the trip budget in the first stage of travel planning. Yet, the travel budget has a strong influence on many of the remaining planning activities including comparison shopping, deciding on trip activities and booking accommodations and transportation.

LEISURE TRIP PLANNING CYCLE (CONT.)

The majority of travelers simultaneously compared prices and features of travel providers (44%) and sought advice and ratings through online travel reviews (40%) during the middle two stages. While the trip budget may not be finalized, travelers began narrowing down their list of activities, comparing prices and features, talking to friends and family and reading online travel reviews for reassurance and more detailed recommendations in the destination selected. While four in 10 travelers also booked accommodations and transportation activities during the comparing prices and advice and ratings stage, travelers tended to agree that the final stage of travel was primarily reserved for booking accommodation and transportation. Still, **nearly one-quarter (24%) of travelers were continuing to talk to friends and family and if applicable, talk to a traditional travel agent (21%) during the final reservations stage.**

While **two-thirds or more of Xers, Boomers and Matures** had selected the destination during the ideas and inspiration planning stage, **less than six in 10 Millennials** had decided on a destination and one in seven were still selecting the destination or type of trip in the final stage of trip planning.



SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.

LEISURE TRIP PLANNING CYCLE (CONT.)

While there was typically consensus among Xers, Boomers and Mature travelers on the trip planning process, the process for Millennials was more varied and more likely to include additional steps. Friends and family were more influential for Millennials during the initial ideas and inspiration stage than other generations.

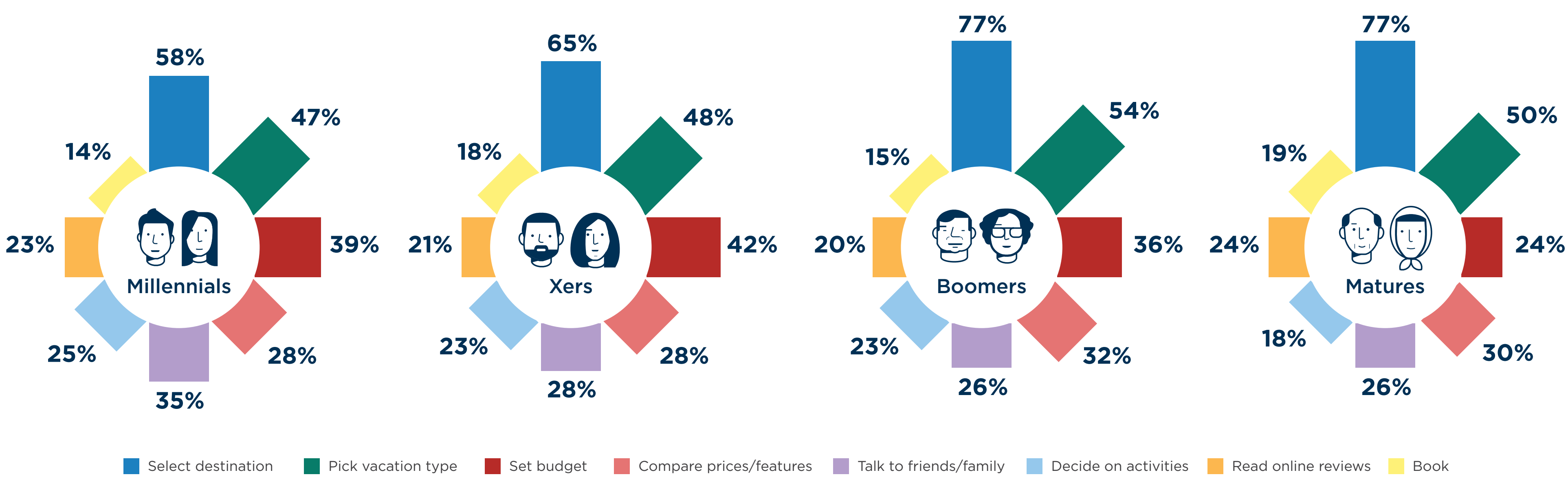
More than one-third (35%) of Millennials talked to family and friends during the ideas and inspiration stage, compared to slightly more than one-quarter of Xers, Boomer and Mature travelers. While two-thirds or more of Xers, Boomers and Matures had selected the destination during the ideas and inspiration planning stage, less than six in 10 Millennials had decided on a destination and one in seven were still selecting the destination or type of trip in the final stage of trip planning.

Talking to friends and family and deciding on trip activities was more important to Millennials in earlier trip planning stages than other generations. Boomers were more likely to have decided on their trip activities during the comparing prices and features stage. Reading online travel reviews was also somewhat more influential to Millennials—particularly when comparing prices and features. Despite their tech savviness and affinity for all things digital, consulting traditional travel agents was considered by nearly half (46%) of Millennials during the trip planning lifecycle. Travel agents were most commonly relied on when comparing prices and booking travel.

Nine in 10 or more of Mature travelers identified selecting the destination and booking accommodations as extremely important in their trip planning cycle. Other steps in the process were less critical to Matures than other generations.

$ Budget was a much higher consideration early on in the trip planning process for Gen Xers. **More than four in 10 (42%)** Gen Xers set the travel budget during the ideas and inspiration stage while **less than one in 10** Mature travelers considered budget at all in the initial travel planning stages.

Ideas and Inspiration Trip Planning



SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.

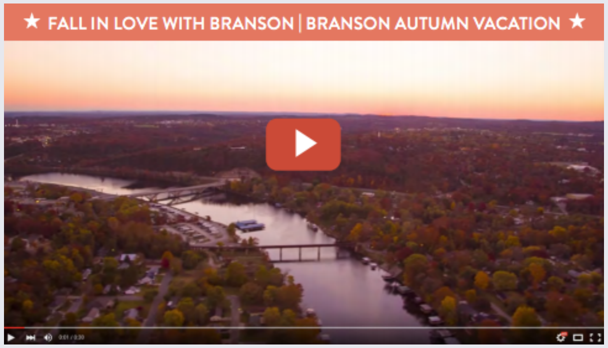
LEISURE TRIP PLANNING CYCLE (CONT.)

BRANSON, MO THEMED VIDEOS

Of all the planning steps, destinations have considerable influence during the ideas and inspiration stage. Aware of rising rates of video consumption among consumers and its influence throughout the potential visitor's travel planning, the Branson Convention Visitors Bureau produced a series of themed videos specifically targeting key potential visitor audiences. The goal was to reach these audiences with content relevant to their interests and also present content that showcased the destination in new ways. But to be effective at changing perceptions of the destination and inspiring travel, it wasn't enough for the videos just to be cool, they also had to be seen. Working with Miles, they developed a social distribution strategy in tandem with video production planning to ensure the videos would achieve maximum visibility.[6]

The video strategy targeted a few unique audiences: Thrill Rides for the younger than typical visitor, Baby Boomer couples in search of a romantic getaway and families of all ages interested in Branson's elaborate Christmas season events.[7]

Once the seven video shoots were completed, Miles helped deliver the videos optimized for specific social channels and managed and optimized distribution of the video through various paid channels. As a result, the video content presented the destination in a fresh way and reached new audiences. The videos generated more than 300,000 impressions and achieved a 14 percent view rate. Viewers were also 50 to 75 percent more engaged than the average visitor, spending an average of three to five minutes on the CVB site, after watching the videos. Finally, the cross-channel video strategy won a Bronze Adrian Award in 2015.[8]



[6] Miles, 'Branson Video Case Study: How to Create a Series of Audience-Focused, Strategy Driven Award Winning Videos, February 2016. http://enews.milesmedia.com/milesforward/images/feb16_feature.pdf

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

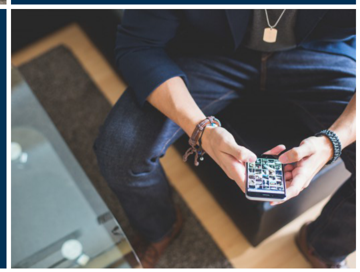
TRIP PLANNING SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Highlights:

Perhaps overwhelmed with options, 2015 was the first year where travelers decreased the number of sources of advice and information they considered when making trip decisions.

Search engine results were the most frequently consulted source in travel planning regardless of the stage of travel planning or market segment.

While gaining some influence in recent years, social media posts (by both friends and family and the travel community), blog posts and photo or video sharing websites were still utilized by less than one-quarter of travelers for trip planning, regardless of market segment.



Millennials considered significantly more types of information throughout the trip planning cycle and were influenced more by social media and blog posts than other generations.

Travelers residing in the South were more likely to be inspired by traditional sources of information such as print and broadcast.

Less than three in 10 (28%) travelers indicated they were relying on more sources than ever when making decisions, down slightly from the prior two years. Still, four in 10 Millennials relied on more sources of advice than ever when making trip decisions, significantly more than the one-quarter of Xers, Boomers or Matures.

Although slightly fewer sources were considered than the previous year, travelers seeking ideas and inspiration considered more information sources than during other planning stages. Fewer sources were considered closer to the final booking decision. Overall, travelers considered 7.5 sources for ideas and inspiration versus just 2.5 sources when making travel reservations, which slightly increased from 2014.

[9-11] Expedia Media Solutions, "New Study Uncovers Opportunities for Marketers to Reach Travel Bookers Across the Consumer Funnel," November 19, 2015. http://blog.advertising.expedia.com/new-study-uncovers-opportunities-for-marketers-to-reach-travel-bookers-across-the-consumer-funnel

RELATED RESEARCH Expedia

Even with a narrowing of sources closer to booking, Expedia recently reported in their Traveler Attribution Study that **"travel is complicated to book,"** despite the wealth of information out there, and **"consumers have so many choices."**[9] The data showed that in the week right before making a booking, travelers more than doubled the time they spent researching on the internet.[10] Expedia also looked at how the plethora of travel sites available—meta search engines, online travel agencies (OTAs) and supplier sites—work together to drive consumer choice and confirmed that many people browse OTAs even if they ultimately end up booking with a supplier or a more traditional booking source.[11]

Average number of sources considered by stage

	Ideas/ Inspiration	Advice/ Ratings	Comparing Features/Prices	Reservations
Overall	7.5	5.2	5.9	2.5
Millennials Age 18-35	**9.1**	8.0	**9.5**	3.6
Gen X (Xers) Age 36-49	7.2	4.5	5.3	2.1
Boomers Age 50-68	7.8	4.0	5.5	1.8
Matures Age 69+	6.7	**2.8**	4.0	1.1

Friends and family and more traditional media including magazines, print and online visitor guides, television shows and travel guide books were considered the most for ideas and inspiration. Tied with travel review websites, friends and family were also a top source considered for advice and ratings. Although in recent years, friends and family were relied on less for ideas and more for advice/ratings. Travelers preferred to communicate with their friends and family in person or over the phone than through online and social media channels. Slightly more than one in five were inspired by social media posts from friends or family. An increase from 2014, 17 percent of travelers considered social media posts from friends and family for advice and ratings.

A somewhat broad category, search engines were the one source highly influential across all four travel planning stages. Search engine results include organic searches using Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc. With nearly four in 10 travelers using search engines, this method was by far the most popular source for comparing prices and features. Millennials more strongly considered search engine results for advice and ratings and Boomers utilized search engines more to compare prices and features.[12] Considered somewhat less frequently for making reservations, still two in 10 travelers indicated they considered search results when making a reservation. While it is highly unlikely travelers are booking directly from a search engine page and are ultimately booking through an intermediary or travel provider, it is noteworthy that travelers do not perceive a distinction. When travelers use a search engine, they generally attribute all findings to the initial search results. Sometimes the content populates within the search engine, sometimes (like in the case of reviews) they are redirected to a site such as TripAdvisor; regardless, to the traveler, it is linked to the search results, not to the ultimate online source.

RELATED RESEARCH

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

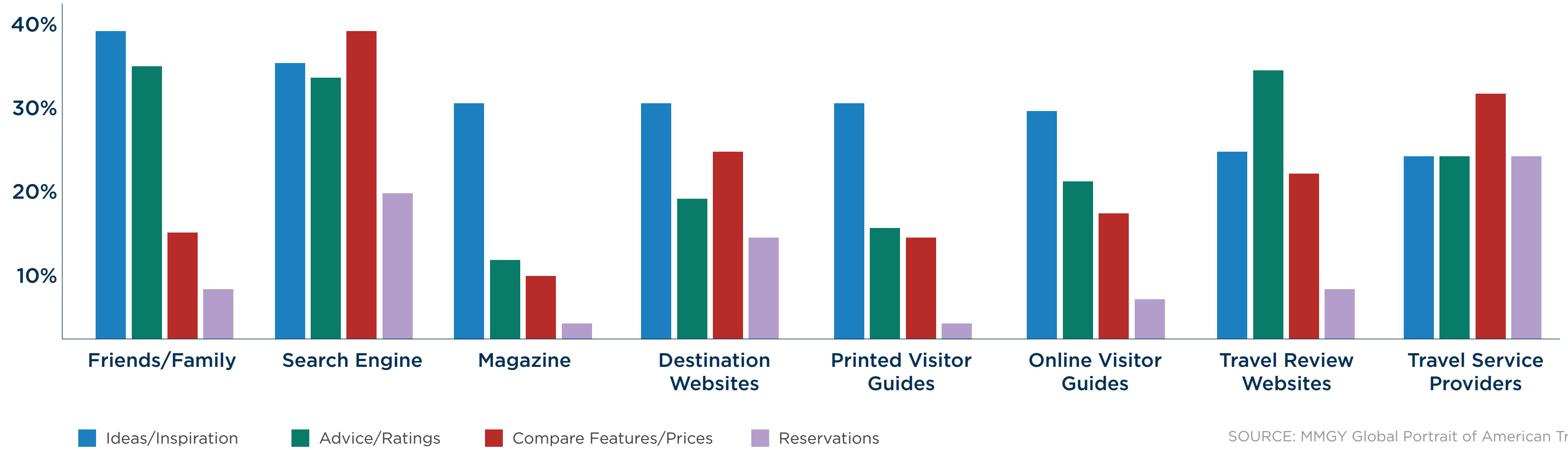
Corresponding findings were found in a recent U.S. Travel mobile study analyzing travelers' usage of mobile both in the planning stages and in market. **While one in 10 travelers indicated they had accessed a destination website or app while traveling when asked to recall the specific site, only about a third were able to accurately name the official app or website name.[13]** Instead, those surveyed often recalled generic search engines or brands such as Google, MapQuest or TripAdvisor.[14] This research also concluded that the vast majority of travelers do not distinguish between branded websites and well-known brands and search engines. Individual niche brands are not top of mind or readily familiar; instead travelers recall the initial search engine.

[12] Note – refer to detailed sources of information considered by generation in the appendix.

[13] U.S. Travel Association, 'Taking Travel in Hand: How Travelers Use Before & During a Trip,' March 2015. https://www.ustravel.org/research/taking-travel-hand-how-travelers-use-mobile-during-trip

[14] Ibid.

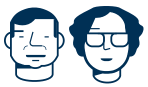
Top Information Sources Considered by Planning Stage



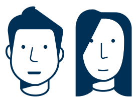
SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.

TRIP PLANNING SOURCES OF INFORMATION (CONT.)

While down from previous years, travelers still heavily relied on destination websites as a source of information—particularly for ideas and inspiration. Slightly more than three in 10 travelers utilized destination websites during the ideas and inspiration stage and one-quarter used them to compare prices and features. Boomers (36%) in particular preferred destination websites for inspiration than other generations. Destination websites were relied on less for advice and ratings or for booking purposes. Millennials were the least likely generation to rely on destination websites to compare prices and features – 22 percent compared to 25 percent overall.



Boomers (36%) in particular preferred destination websites for inspiration than other generations.



Millennials were the least likely generation to rely on destination websites to compare prices and features – **22 percent compared to 25 percent overall.**

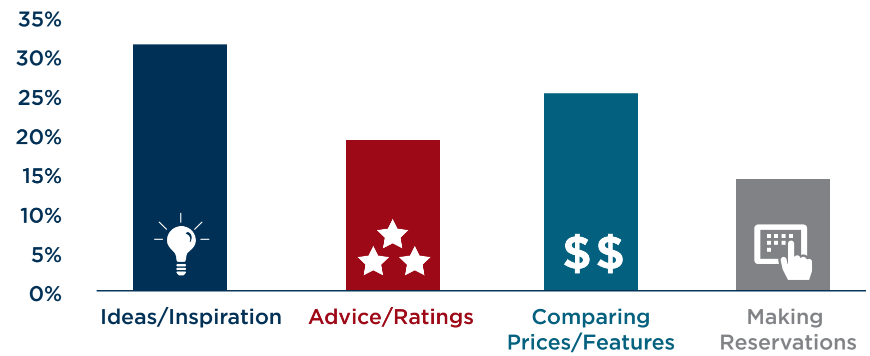
More than one-third of travelers residing in the South were inspired by destination websites—higher than other regions. While nearly one in five of overall travelers considered destination websites for advice and ratings, only 14 percent of travelers residing in the West region utilized destination websites for travel advice and ratings.

Unsurprising, travel review sites were popular for advice and ratings across generations, but somewhat more so for Millennials. Millennials were also more likely to utilize travel review sites to compare prices than Xers or Matures. While considered a top source for ideas, advice and comparing features, travel review sites were not used to make reservations. Travel provider websites followed by search engines, OTAs and destination websites were most commonly used for making reservations.

RELATED RESEARCH

In a 2014 Traveler's Road to Decision study by Google, the report also found that leisure travelers were increasingly turning to search engines instead of travel provider websites for online trip planning—particularly during the inspiration stage.[15] **Nearly six in 10 leisure travelers (57%) indicated they 'always start the travel booking and shopping process with Search.[16] Travelers rely on generic and branded search terms related to the destination across planning stages.[17]** Many leisure travelers were undecided which brand to book and how brands differentiated themselves. Strategic search engine optimization can help brands stand out in a crowded marketing space.

Usage of Destination Websites



SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.

[15] Think with Google, 'The 2014 Traveler's Road to Decision,' June 2014. https://think.storage.googleapis.com/docs/2014-travelers-road-to-decision_research_studies.pdf

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

TRIP PLANNING SOURCES OF INFORMATION (CONT.)

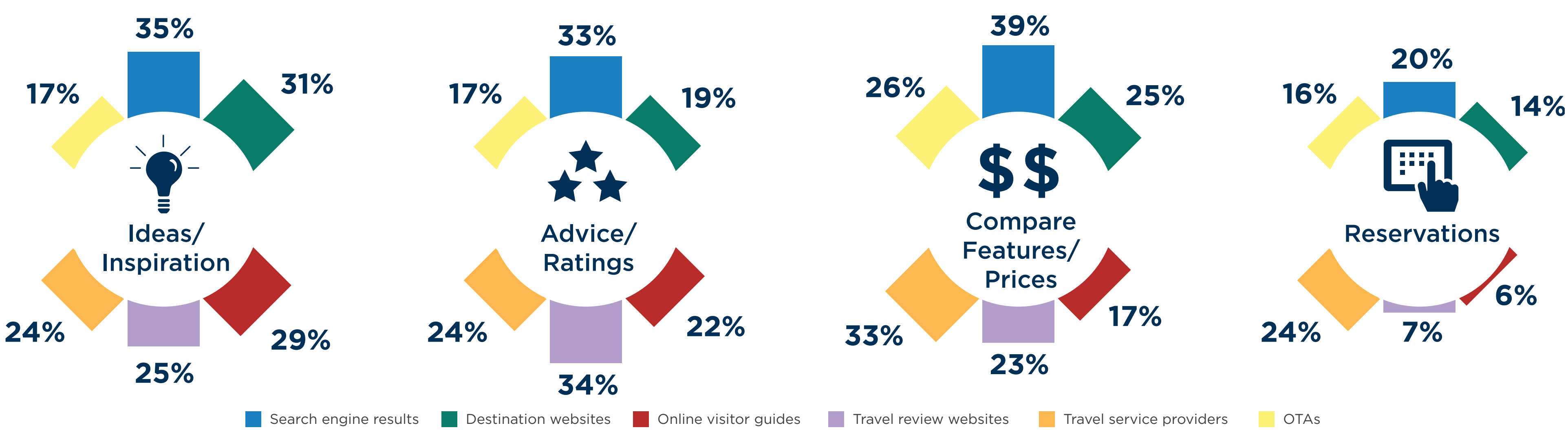
While online visitor guides and travel provider websites gained influence, OTAs declined in relevance. Nearly one-quarter of overall travelers relied on travel provider websites for inspiration or advice and ratings and one-third relied on them to compare features. Hotel/resort and airline promotions and travel service providers were considered a source of information for more than one-third of travelers comparing prices and features. Airline promotions were increasing in influence when comparing prices while OTAs usage declined. **In 2014, one-quarter of travelers relied on OTA's for advice and 37 percent to compare features/prices but this declined to 17 percent for reviews and 26 percent for comparison purposes in 2015.**

Travelers in the Northeast used a more diverse set of sources when comparing prices and features for upcoming trips. In particular, they were influenced more by online visitor guides, friends and family (both in person and social media posts), professional guide books and social media posts from travel destinations and providers than travelers in other regions. Travelers residing in the South were more likely to be inspired by traditional sources of information such as magazine, television and newspaper advertising or direct mail than travelers residing in other regions.

RELATED RESEARCH

Google recently found that nearly half of consumers (45%) engaging with videos when researching and planning trips desired to be entertained or inspired and just over one-quarter (27%) to relax or escape.[18] **When it comes to trip planning, they found nearly half of travelers used online video before they decide where to go on holiday.** The majority (66%) used video for inspiration and to select activities within a destination. Just less than half (48%) used video when deciding on the type of trip to take.[19]

Influence of Digital Information Sources



SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.

[18] Tnooz, 'How Video Influences Travel Decisions,' December 1, 2015. http://www.tnooz.com/article/youtube-video-influence-on-travel/

[19] Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Optimize search engines. With the majority of leisure travel search and bookings beginning with a generic search, search engines are the most popular online planning source for leisure travelers.[20] Investing money in search advertisement and search engine optimization can be extremely influential and using targeted search advertisements remains a lucrative and efficient form of advertising.

2 Inspire with authentic video content. Online travel videos are also influential in early travel planning stages. Search engines and YouTube were among the top online sources for inspiration according to Google.[21] The Travel Channel also found that more than seven in 10 travelers look to video for their next vacation destination.[22] The right balance must be found between inspiration, aspiration and authenticity and obtainability. Video has the benefit of being highly shareable and allowing the audience to explore a travel destination more in depth. Brands who are proactive in establishing and refining their content strategies can benefit from higher consumer engagement, traffic and ultimately an elevated awareness and reputation. Reaching out to and partnering with influencers with travel video logs can increase social engagement more than other types of travel video content on YouTube.[23]

3 Consider traveler contexts. Understand when segments are making their destination selection decisions to be able to target the traveler at the right stage with the most relevant content. The further along the travel decision making cycle the destination is selected, the more chance a destination has to convert generally interested parties into confirmed tourists. Knowing that men, Millennials and Hispanic travelers are more swayable further into the cycle helps specify destination marketing messaging to travelers.

4 Stay relevant, tailor content. Keep travelers engaged throughout the destination selection process. Comparing features and prices is an essential step, particularly as travelers narrow down their destinations and get ready to book. Destination websites, OTA's and travel review sites that are most engaging effectively use meaningful images with rational messaging educating travelers on trends, tips and quality. Expedia used this technique after learning how travelers compare features when searching for travel options. Expedia developed a white paper "Hotel Images Matter" as a tactical guide on the best- and worst types of images for hoteliers to include online in order to maximize bookings. As a technology company, Expedia focused on innovations that drive demand to hotel partners, while providing them with the capability to target the demand that they want, and easy-to-understand analysis and data to refine their distribution strategy.

[20] Think with Google, 'The 2014 Traveler's Road to Decision,' June 2014. https://think.storage.googleapis.com/docs/2014-travelers-road-to-decision_research_studies.pdf

[21] Ibid.

[22] Skift, 'Survey: 71 Percent of Travelers Look to Video for Vacation Ideas,' September 15, 2015. http://travelchannel.skift.com/2015/09/11/71-percent-of-travelers-look-to-video-for-vacation-ideas/

[23] HospitalityNet.org, 'The Rise of Video Content Marketing in Travel,' December 8, 2015. http://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4073133.html

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

5 **Leverage existing platforms.** Since travelers are not as readily familiar with destination websites as tried and true search engines and well-known brands, leveraging existing platforms and channels to take advantage of the sources travelers rely on and trust may be a better use of resources for some destinations.[24] In addition to common internet search engines, the TripAdvisor, Expedia and Fodor brands continue to dominate. Through content syndication on these platforms—maintaining, updating and tracking content beyond a destination's website, marketers can cast a wide net of influence through a variety of channels and resources that consumers already know, trust and use.[25] Typically destination websites are used for inspiration and not necessarily to book. It makes sense to leverage intermediaries and other well-known brands to assist in the final booking stages.

6 **Personalize and simplify loyalty programs.** The influence of loyalty programs is declining for both leisure and business travelers. Many leisure travelers are unclear about the differences of brands and begin the planning process undecided on a brand. Google recently surveyed travelers and noted a decline in loyalty for business travelers who are normally the most loyal.[26] Travelers are willing to try new loyalty programs if they provide a new, different or unique experience.[27] The top two reasons travelers would switch to a different loyalty/rewards program is for better perks and to earn points faster/easier.[28] Ineffective rewards programs are complicated to track or take too much time and energy to enroll.

In order for customers already engaged in a loyalty program to find value in the program and be a loyal customer, they must be engaged effectively. **Nearly three-quarters of travelers have received irrelevant perks from their preferred brands.[29]** Personalized emails and promotions have proven to have a much higher open rate, as well as higher levels of engagement. With the availability of customer data and research, a loyalty program can better understand the target market and what they find most valuable. Similarly, relevant personal marketing messages are much more effective at converting customers when they are authentic and helpful. Disappointing, irrelevant and inconsistent messaging can have the opposite effect and be detrimental to your brand.

[24] U.S. Travel Association, 'Taking Travel in Hand: How Travelers Use Before & During a Trip,' March 2015. https://www.ustravel.org/research/taking-travel-hand-how-travelers-use-mobile-during-trip

[25] Ibid.

[26] Think with Google, 'The 2014 Traveler's Road to Decision,' June 2014. https://think.storage.googleapis.com/docs/2014-travelers-road-to-decision_research_studies.pdf

[27, 28] Ibid.

[29] tNooz, ' Loyalty in travel isn't dead – it's evolving and it's personal,' February 17, 2015. http://www.tnooz.com/article/loyalty-not-dead-evolving-personal-revinate/

APPENDIX

TRIP PLANNING ACTIVITIES BY STAGE AND GENERATION

Ideas & Inspiration	Total	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Select the destination	67%	58%	65%	77%	77%
Pick type of vacation	50%	47%	48%	54%	50%
Set vacation budget	38%	39%	42%	36%	24%
Compare prices/features	30%	28%	28%	32%	30%
Talk to friends and family	29%	35%	28%	26%	26%
Decide on vacation activities	23%	25%	23%	23%	18%
Read online travel reviews	21%	23%	21%	20%	24%
Book accommodations/ transportation	16%	14%	18%	15%	19%
Talk to a traditional travel agent	8%	11%	7%	6%	10%

Reservations	Total	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Book accommodations/ transportation	36%	39%	35%	36%	28%
Decide on vacation activities	26%	27%	27%	24%	20%
Talk to friends and family	24%	24%	25%	24%	20%
Talk to a traditional travel agent	21%	19%	22%	23%	17%
Read online travel reviews	19%	19%	20%	19%	19%
Set vacation budget	15%	16%	15%	15%	18%
Compare prices/features	14%	16%	14%	13%	12%
Pick type of vacation	11%	16%	9%	8%	8%
Select the destination	8%	13%	9%	4%	3%

Compare Prices/ Advice & Ratings	Total	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Compare prices/features	44%	43%	44%	44%	41%
Book accommodations/ transportation	40%	38%	38%	43%	42%
Read online travel reviews	40%	42%	38%	40%	33%
Decide on vacation activities	37%	36%	35%	40%	35%
Set vacation budget	26%	27%	24%	27%	27%
Talk to friends and family	25%	25%	25%	25%	26%
Pick type of vacation	20%	17%	23%	21%	16%
Select the destination	18%	22%	18%	15%	13%
Talk to a traditional travel agent	13%	16%	14%	10%	10%

SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.
* Highlight indicates significant differences between generations.

APPENDIX SOURCES CONSIDERED BY STAGE AND GENERATION

Ideas & Inspiration	Total	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Friends/family	39%	37%	38%	41%	48%
Search engine results	35%	38%	32%	35%	25%
Magazine articles	31%	29%	28%	36%	39%
Destination websites	31%	30%	28%	36%	29%
Printed visitor guides	31%	28%	30%	33%	39%
Online visitor guides	29%	26%	31%	33%	29%
Television shows	28%	27%	26%	30%	31%
Professional travel guide books	26%	24%	23%	32%	29%
Magazine advertising	26%	25%	22%	29%	33%
Television advertising	25%	23%	24%	25%	38%
Travel review websites	25%	22%	27%	25%	25%
Travel service provider websites	24%	22%	25%	25%	17%
Newspaper articles	23%	19%	18%	30%	38%
Hotel/resort promotions	21%	22%	21%	20%	21%
Social media posts from friends/family	21%	24%	21%	16%	23%
Online search advertising	20%	24%	17%	19%	22%
Blog posts	20%	27%	17%	15%	20%

Advice and Ratings	Total	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Friends/family	34%	38%	32%	30%	32%
Travel review websites	34%	43%	29%	31%	19%
Search engine results	33%	40%	31%	30%	16%
Travel service provider websites	24%	29%	22%	20%	24%
Online visitor guides	22%	26%	22%	21%	14%
Destination websites	19%	19%	19%	18%	19%
Professional travel guide books	19%	23%	16%	19%	18%
Social media posts from friends/family	17%	26%	14%	10%	16%
OTAs	17%	21%	17%	13%	11%
Printed visitor guides	16%	21%	13%	15%	13%
Blog posts	16%	25%	13%	12%	7%
Hotel/resort promotions	15%	18%	15%	11%	10%
Online search advertising	15%	21%	10%	13%	12%
Newspaper articles	13%	18%	12%	9%	9%
Magazine articles	12%	14%	10%	10%	13%

SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.
* Highlight indicates significant differences between generations.

APPENDIX SOURCES CONSIDERED BY STAGE AND GENERATION (CONT.)

Compare Prices/Features	Total	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Search engine results	39%	39%	36%	43%	32%
Hotel/resort promotions	34%	32%	31%	38%	39%
Airline promotions	34%	33%	29%	39%	35%
Travel service provider websites	33%	32%	31%	36%	26%
OTAs	26%	27%	25%	25%	25%
Destination websites	25%	22%	26%	27%	27%
Car rental promotions	24%	22%	18%	30%	27%
Travel review websites	23%	27%	20%	24%	16%
Cruise promotions	21%	24%	17%	20%	30%
Online search advertising	20%	25%	18%	16%	22%
Collective buying websites	19%	27%	19%	14%	6%
Online visitor guides	17%	21%	15%	15%	14%
Friends/family	15%	18%	16%	12%	11%
Professional travel guide books	15%	18%	10%	14%	21%
Printed visitor guides	14%	13%	13%	16%	22%

Making Reservations	Total	Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
Search engine results	20%	24%	16%	21%	12%
OTAs	16%	20%	14%	15%	10%
Hotel/resort promotions	15%	14%	16%	16%	17%
Destination websites	14%	16%	14%	13%	12%
Airline promotions	13%	13%	12%	13%	10%
Traditional travel agents	11%	13%	8%	9%	17%
Car rental promotions	10%	12%	8%	11%	8%

SOURCE: MMGY Global Portrait of American Travelers, 2015.
* Highlight indicates significant differences between generations.