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OTAs try to offer 360 degree service

Travellers are becoming more empowered than ever as the penetration of the internet has made travel planning shorter, smaller and faster as all segments have been taken over by online travel agencies

I look back in time and I continue to be ecstatic to be part of this dynamic travel industry. Review the past and you realise how technologies have converged to bring together experiences that initially weren't even conceptualised. The most important invention in my mind is the 'joy' of planning or booking a travel itinerary. And all at the click of your finger tips with the world right in front of you on a computer screen.

The onerous task of changing the picture of the whole travel industry has been carried out very successfully by online travel agencies. In over a decade, we have witnessed a revolution in the travel industry where there is cut throat competition amongst travel agents to provide the best value add service to their customers. It would certainly not be an exaggeration if we say that online travel market is the most crowded arena in the e-commerce segment with many new players entering this space. Interesting to note, the Indian online travel industry stands at Rs 25258 crore until December 2010 from

Rs 6250 crore in 2007. Within this, currently, domestic air travel segment constitutes 63 percent of online travel industry followed by 28 percent share from online railway tickets.

To make this scenario even more exciting, Google projects that 8 percent of mobile users will be booking travel from their smart phones by 2012. By the end of June 2011, India had 851.70 million mobile phone subscribers making the Indian telecommunication industry the world's second-largest in terms of number of subscribers, and the world's fastest growing market in terms of number of new subscribers. The adoption of smart phones and the plethora of travel related applications that it opens for all sorts of travellers are truly tremendous. Mobile internet is closely related to the travel industry, as smart phones are often the easiest way in which travellers can access information. Smart phones represent an entirely new way in which travellers access information about destinations, flights, hotels etc. and the industry needs to be ready for action. Thus,

aligning with this trend, OTAs are also going mobile now!

The travel industry believes that with the way bookings have migrated from offline to online over the years, one can expect to witness migration of a certain percentage of online travel bookings to move from desktop to mobile in the time to come. Also, it is likely that many travellers who currently use offline channels leapfrog to using primarily mobile devices to make their bookings.

Travellers are becoming more empowered than ever as 2011 has progressed. The penetration of internet has made travel planning shorter, smaller and faster. Not only the air but the non-air segments have been taken over by the online travel agencies. It has been a while that travel agents have invaded into 'beyond the ticketing' segment. The non-air segment includes hotels (chains, representation companies, and independent hotel companies), ground and maritime transport (car rental companies, railway companies, ferry lines,

cruise lines and insurance companies) and tour operators (specialty, mass-market and vertically-integrated tour operators). Broad areas that come into the ambit of OTAs are the ticket booking - air and non air, tele-reservation, car rentals, tour packages. Indian multinational hotel chains are examples of adopters of the dynamic GDS.

The USP of any OTA is not the technological leap but the experience created in the minds of the customers. Technology may not decide the leader of tomorrow but a small innovation with difference may do.



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