Digital Destinations

How the web is shaping today's holiday
experience for UK consumers

TNS

webloyalty

Contents

Welcome aboard

Digital confidence in the UK is high, with 80% of the population regularly using the internet. Usage of digital platforms and services is well established, with a high take up of smartphones and tablets, though PCs and laptops still have a greater share of device time.

Despite being the leading channel used across the customer travel journey, the online experience can also be fragmented, time consuming and not always intuitive.

Digital technologies provide an excellent opportunity to create a 'connected' travel experience from providing inspiration at the research and planning stage, through to sharing memories with others when back from holiday.

Understanding how customer attitudes to travel and digital differ allows travel brands to improve targeting and personalisation. They can also improve the customer experience by providing appropriate tools at relevant touchpoints across different stages of the travel journey, making them easy to use, fun, and saving customers time and money.

A 'connected', seamless travel experience translates into benefits both for the customer and travel brands – from increasing satisfaction and building loyalty amongst engaged customers, and allowing brands to upsell and generate repeat business.

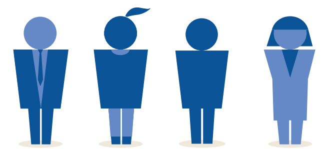
The customer journey on the following pages summarises the key findings from the study, with a more detailed report which explores the differentiated nature and online behaviours that exist across key digital travel segments.

Throughout, we also reference the overall UK digital landscape – incorporating relevant context from 'Connected Life', TNS's leading global study of digital attitudes and behaviours of over 55,000 internet users across 50 countries, exploring how technology is transforming the lives of consumers across the world.

For further information, visit www.tnsglobal.com/connectedlife

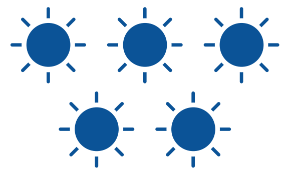
A 'connected', seamless travel experience translates into benefits both for the customer and travel brands.

Who did we speak to?



Webloyalty partnered with TNS to survey a nationally representative sample of 1,000 UK adults online in March 2015

This was to understand how they interact with digital technology across all stages of the travel journey



We focused on their most recent main holiday overseas (five nights or longer)

The customer travel journey

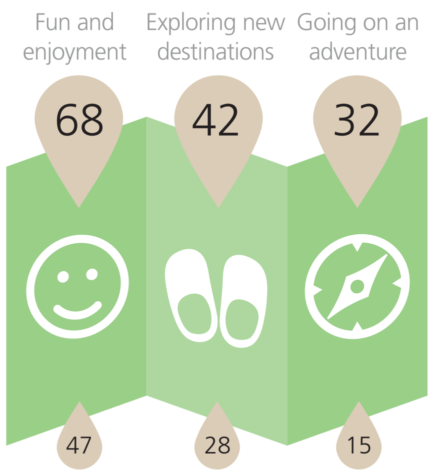
Inspiration, research and planning

Ease and availability of online sources to research holidays has allowed travellers to become savvier. They are spending less time on research, but are looking at more sources of information.

As technology improves so do consumer expectations – the two most important factors when booking online are (%):

Price	90
Ease of booking	88

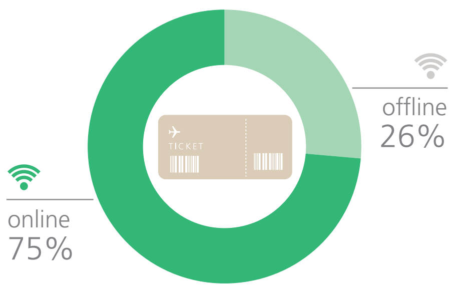
People who research holidays using social media and travel blogs are motivated by (%)



Motivations (All UK travellers) %

Booking

Most UK travellers are booking their holidays online, regardless of their digital awareness. The High Street, however, is not dead with one quarter still booking their holidays offline.



Online and offline sources work in partnership when researching and booking holidays.

70% of travellers who used offline sources for research...

...then go on a website to book their holiday

Post-booking / pre-holiday

1 in 4 plan day trips and activities but only 14% go on to book. Therefore this is prime time for travel brands to engage customers by sharing useful information relevant to their trip and build trust, and convert this interest into bookings.

On holiday

Most people rely on free Wi-Fi provided at accommodation whilst abroad (%)

Free Wi-Fi at accommodation	54
Free Wi-Fi at cafés/restaurants	36
International data deal	11
Bought extra data	9

Wi-Fi reliance is limiting potential of 'on-the-go' apps (%)

Map apps	44
Photo apps	32
Communications apps	27

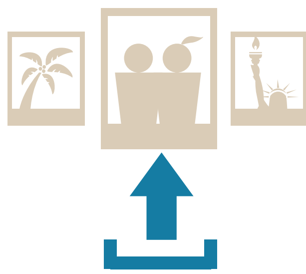
Base: those using smartphone or tablet on holiday

Gender divide usage of apps (%)

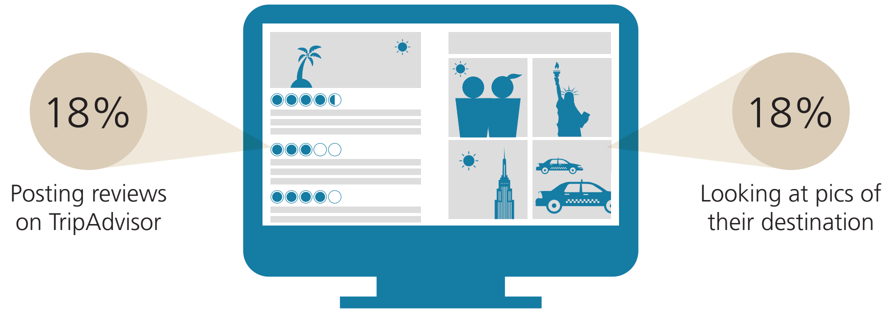
Post-holiday

Travellers are more likely to upload photos:

'In the moment' on holiday	39%
When they get back home	33%



Outside of uploading photos, travellers spend time online reminiscing about their holiday



Segmenting the digital traveller in the UK

We explore the ways in which people are engaging with individuals and travel brands at each stage of the customer travel journey, examining the interplay between online and offline behaviours across different age groups and attitudes to travel and digital.

Travellers in the UK fall into 4 segments:

Digital Savvy Influencers	28%
Social Media Connectors	19%
Online Traditionalists	24%
Technophobes	29%

Over the next few pages, we have summarised each segment, looking at their digital profile and their behaviour and attitudes across the consumer travel journey: from research and planning, to sharing their experiences both on holiday and back home. Throughout the report we follow the customer travel journey through the lens of these digital travel segments.

Online activity whilst abroad includes: planning day trips and activities **34%** reading restaurant reviews **35%**

I have 1000 Twitter followers. It's the best way to communicate.

Highly influenced and very influential on digital and social media, adopters of new technology

When abroad they are most likely to use their smartphone **60%**

Heavily skewed towards the under 35s, they own more devices and spend the most time on them

The most thorough of travel researchers, they are more likely to research online and offline to plan their trip

Their digital profile

Leaders when it comes to digital influence and social media engagement, Digital Savvy Influencers live online and are typically more vocal on social media.

Behaviour and attitudes to researching travel online

As the most thorough of travel researchers using both online and offline resources to plan their trip, their preference for online sources includes:

Search engines	50%
Travel booking websites	45%
Destination specific websites	40%
Online price comparison sites	37%

Booking travel

Quite savvy about finding great deals, their preference for online continues in their booking channel – with most holidays or trips booked on a website. They are also early adopters when it comes to booking travel on mobile apps. Far from being anxious about online security, they have found ways to outsmart online travel brands and are likely to regularly clear their cache memory when checking flight prices.

Digital activity abroad

Few would consider a digital detox and turn off all devices.

They use a range of devices abroad:

Smartphone	60%
Tablet	29%
Laptop	40%

Holiday specific activities include:

Planning day trips and activities	34%
Reading restaurant reviews	35%

Opportunity for travel brands

Far more likely to engage with travel brands online, especially via social media, Digital Savvy Influencers will both consume and broadcast content. Travel brands should look for ways to trigger conversations amongst this group to reach and influence other traveller segments.

Own slightly fewer devices, but are high users of mobile

I always forward offers on Facebook and Twitter, it's an easy way to save.

Most likely to book their trip abroad through a travel booking website **40%**

High engagement on social media compared to other online channels

<34

Most likely to be under 34

Most likely to use social media to research travel at the expense of all other online research methods

Their digital profile

Social Media Connectors are not especially interested in having the latest devices; accessing social media and connecting with friends and family is more of a priority. Logged on to Facebook throughout the day using mobile devices on the move or on the laptop in front on the TV – they regularly update their status and upload photos. Their device usage beyond social media is relatively unsophisticated.

Behaviour and attitudes to researching travel online

Favouring social media at the expense of all other online research methods, 1 in 10 (when doing their travel research) browse through comments and promotions on travel brands' social media sites.

To research a trip online, they are most likely to use:

Travel booking websites	27%
Holiday price comparison sites	14%
Search engines	22%

Booking travel

They are, however, most likely to book their trip through a travel booking website (40%).

Digital activity abroad

Though Social Media Connectors are less likely than average to switch off all online devices when on holiday, they reduce the amount of time they spend on social media.

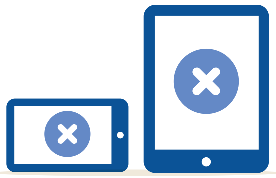
Opportunity for travel brands

Open to following travel brands, Social Media Connectors are looking for useful information and personal benefit. They are also driven by wanting to be in the know. Priority benefits or special offers that acknowledge these needs would encourage them to buy with a specific travel brand online. A mobile-centric, social-first strategy is also likely to be effective with them.

Likely to research travel using a search engine **54%**

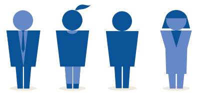
I'm literally lost without my maps app, but I'm not fussed about not having Facebook 24/7.

A large proportion of time is spent on the internet as it is regarded as a key source of information



Least likely to use a mobile app to book their holiday **<1%**

45+



They are more likely to be 45+ years old

Online on holiday, they are most likely to plan day trips and activities **20%**

Their digital profile
Online Traditionalists take pride in knowing about the latest innovations. Extremely comfortable around technology, they enjoy being able to figure things out for themselves. They lack the same enthusiasm for social media, and a need for privacy as they get older is reflected in reduced status updates or photos posted and a culling of 'friends' on Facebook.

Behaviour and attitudes to researching travel online
Most likely to research and plan trips:

Through search engines	54%

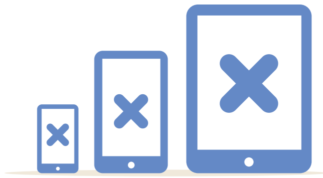
Other popular methods include:

Travel booking websites	43%
Destination websites	37%
Online price comparison sites	28%

Booking travel
They are least likely to use a mobile app to book their holiday <1%.

Digital activity abroad
Time online abroad is most likely spent planning day trips and activities (20%) perhaps explaining the low likelihood to have a digital detox when on holiday (14%).

Opportunity for travel brands
Consumers rather than broadcasters of content, Online Traditionalists are some of the heaviest online researchers and utilise user reviews online. Whilst open to brand engagement initiatives, their interaction with technology is purposeful. Brands must focus their engagement efforts around functional benefits.



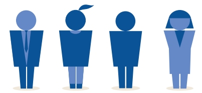
Most likely to switch off all online devices on holiday **29%**

I use Facebook to remember birthdays. It's a necessary evil.

Technophobes are large consumers of traditional media, and the least engaged with the digital and social aspect

Concerned about online security

45-64



Older population (45-64 years old)

Most likely to book through a high street travel agent **20%**

Their digital profile
Slower adopters of technology, Technophobes are attracted by the tangible practical benefits rather than social uses of being online. Though they own a lot of gadgets, the use is functional e.g. tablet to read the news or the phone to text or make calls. They are drawn into social media like Facebook after years of avoiding it, only because they were feeling left out of conversations with family and friends.

Behaviour and attitudes to researching travel online
Their primary method of researching and planning travel is through High Street travel agents. They are less likely than average to research and plan through online sources.

Booking travel
Concerned about online security, they are relatively reluctant online shoppers. When it comes to travel, they are the most likely of all UK travellers to book through a High Street travel agent.

Digital activity abroad
Technophobes are most likely to switch off all online devices on holiday (29%). Even if they do stay online, they are least likely to use social media (68%).

Opportunity for travel brands
As users of traditional media and retail channels, they are spending more time on offline entertainment, news and shopping. Technophobes need help in finding their feet in an online environment. The real opportunity for brands lies in facilitating this transition by finding ways to provide guidance and reassurance.

From inspiration to planning travel

Most travellers rely on multiple sources of information to research travel. 'More is not more', and travellers expect a more streamlined experience which takes away the frustration and makes the process seamless.

The way people approach research differs by the type of holiday they are booking.

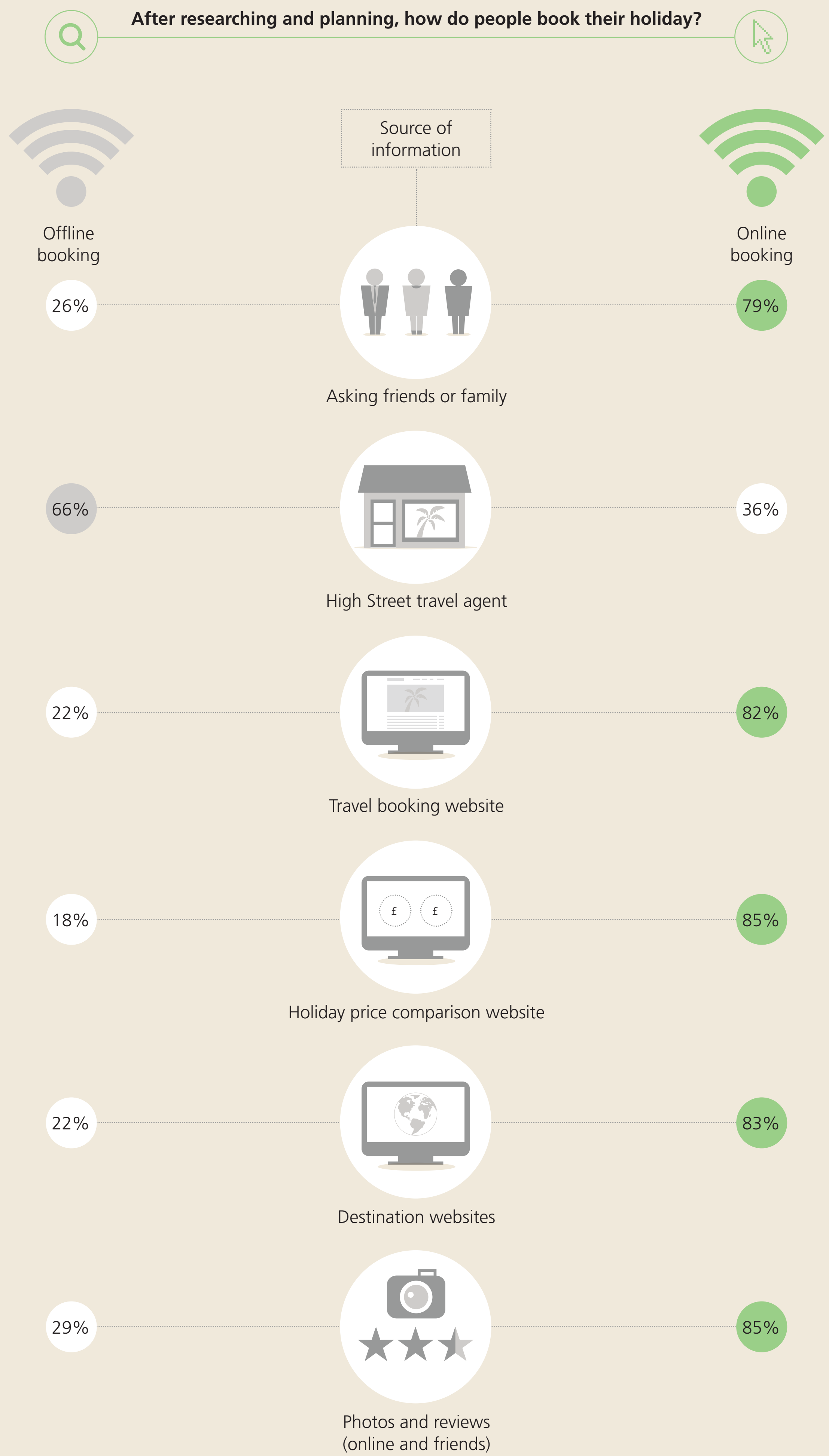
People booking a package holiday tend to be looking for inspiration on where to go, and so look at multiple online and offline sources.

People who book elements of their holiday separately e.g. flights or accommodation, are mainly focused on securing a good deal, and narrow their search to price comparison and travel booking websites.

The range of online sources to research holidays has allowed travellers to become savvier. As a result they are spending less time on research, but are looking at more sources than someone predominantly researching their holiday using offline sources.

Maintaining an offline presence amongst the 45-64 year olds is important – they go on more foreign holidays than any other group in the UK, and are doing less online research in general.

"I like to compare different prices and different types of holiday before making a decision. I think that you're more influenced when you go into a shop by the person that's there."



Digital awareness influences how people are researching and planning holidays – whilst most are using online sources, there is still opportunity to increase traffic to sites by understanding who uses what and how.

Technophobes are less likely to research their holidays online. As a result, traditional 'bricks and mortar' holiday brand websites such as Thomas Cook and Thomson are preferred. The focus for this type of traveller is more on destination choice and type of holiday on offer – they are less price sensitive.

If price comparison travel websites want to appeal to this audience, they need to showcase the variety of holidays and destinations they can offer.

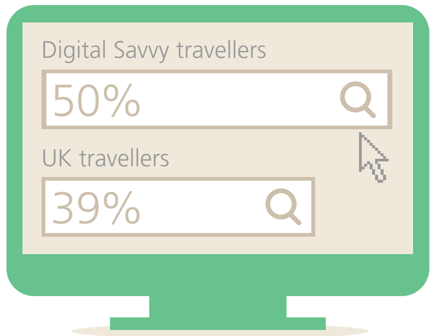
"I always do my research online because it's the only way to get good value."

Digital Savvy travellers tend to be a younger audience, using online sources to find the best deal and so they are most likely to use price comparison websites.

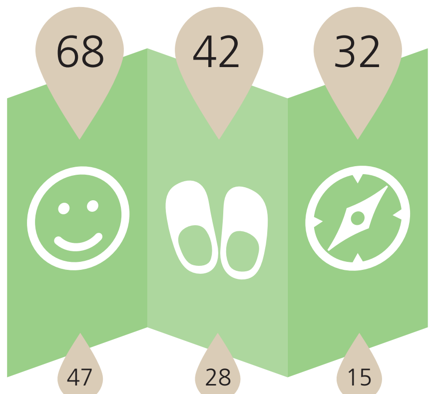
Travel booking websites can drive traffic by improving their price comparison facility or by ensuring their offers are included in an online price comparison search.

Search engines like Google – often the research starting point – are now beginning to challenge websites specialising in travel by offering built in price comparison tools as part of its search functionality. Travel brands need to keep up with innovations which extend outside the sector if they do not want to get left behind.

Digital Savvy travellers are most likely to use search engines when looking for holidays



People who research holidays using social media and travel blogs are motivated by (%)



Motivations (All UK travellers) %

Social Media Connectors are increasingly using photos, comments and promotions on social media as travel inspiration. There is a growing opportunity for travel brands to engage with this audience (19% compared to 12% of UK travellers).

The use of online sources to research holidays is enabling travellers to become more spontaneous. Travellers are increasingly inspired by recommendations from people like themselves – especially online and on social media networks.

The emergence of online and peer review sites like TripAdvisor encourages travellers to be less risk averse and more adventurous when selecting a potential travel destination. People who consider online review sites as an important part of the research process are also more likely to want to travel somewhere new - this includes the majority of Digital Savvy Influencers (82%) in the UK.

Travel companies specialising in offering holidays geared around exploration, discovery and adventure should consider a social media and travel blog led strategy to reach these type of travellers in the UK.

With the proportion of people posting online reviews on return from their holiday decreasing, travel brands need to facilitate opportunities for capturing in the moment and co-created content.

Whilst Digital Savvy Influencers are more spontaneous in terms of exploring somewhere new, they are more considered when it comes to finding the best deal. They are most likely to use price comparison websites and least likely to go on a last minute holiday (37%), which can be more expensive (compared to the average UK traveller 24%).

"I research online before I book my vacations or holidays because I want to know what the best price is and the best places to stay."

Booking travel in the digital age

The majority of UK travellers (75%) are booking their holidays online, regardless of their general digital awareness.

Booking a holiday on a smartphone is a growing opportunity, particularly among the Social Media Connectors – 12% compared to 6% of the UK travelling population.

The majority of travellers (70%) who used offline sources (TV programmes, books/ guides, travel articles, holiday brochures) then go on a website to book their holiday, using the offline sources to complement their search.

The High Street is not dead, one quarter (26%) still book their holiday offline with a travel agent; the majority of which are beach holidays.

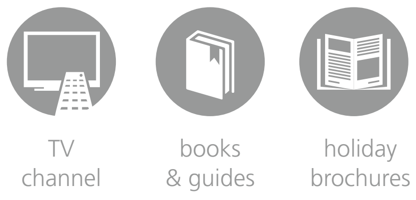
Offline travel agent bookings are more popular amongst people booking a package holiday – 37% compared to 13% who book elements of their holiday separately. This affinity for 'traditional' holiday brands like Thomas Cook and Thomson amongst people booking a package holiday continues, with people favouring to book their package holiday directly on the travel agent's website. Their main priority regardless of booking channel is ease of booking.

Package holidays remain the most popular type of holiday across the UK population, regardless of digital usage or social media engagement.

People are more likely to book their holiday travel and accommodation separately if they are going on a city break – 61%. They predominantly conduct their research online. Their main consideration is price, and they are most likely to look at online price comparison websites.

70%

of travellers who used offline sources for research...



...then go on a website to book their holiday

What happens after booking and before going on holiday?

It is prime time for travel brands to engage customers by sharing useful information relevant to their trip and build loyalty

Digital Savvy Influencers are most likely to be active online before going on holiday, offering an opportunity for travel brands to engage with them.

Social Media Connectors tend to be more interested in social media and are more likely to 'switch off' once they have finished booking their trip.

Technophobes are potentially in the market for booking transport or trips and activities before going away and need to be incentivised to convert this interest into an advance booking.

Activity levels online pre-holiday %

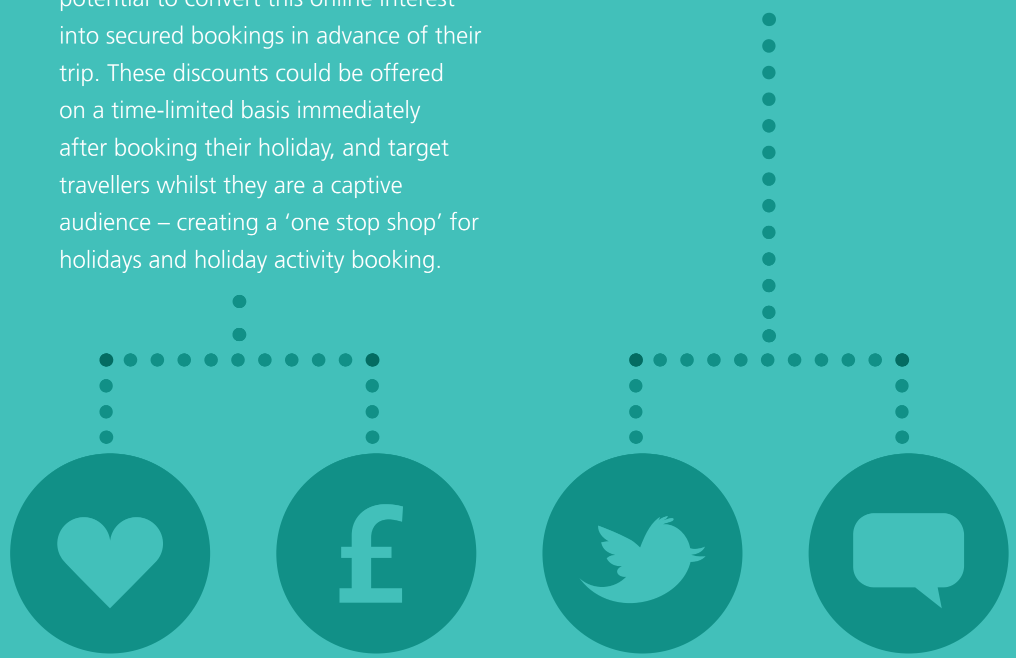
	Digital Savvy Influencers	Social Media Connectors	Online Traditionalists	Technophobes
Plan or research where to go on holiday	45	20	38	22
Search for accommodation before going on holiday	41	20	45	22
Booking accommodation	41	27	33	32
Search for transport before going on holiday	27	16	23	16
Booking transport	25	27	30	23
Plan day trips and activities before going on holiday	33	9	22	30
Book day trips and activities	22	15	10	8
Read reviews about accommodation or restaurants before going on holiday	41	18	43	29
Search for restaurant before going on holiday	22	11	12	13
None of these	11	15	18	26

Most likely to do this activity online pre-holiday

The majority of UK travellers are using online sources when researching or planning their holiday, but only a small proportion stay online once the booking is complete. Converting pre-holiday activity 'planning' into pre-holiday activity 'booking' represents the strongest opportunity for generating additional revenue from travellers in the 'gap' after booking and before going on holiday.

Technophobes, who primarily use the internet to enhance their offline lives, are most likely to switch off. Any time online after booking their holiday is spent researching holiday activities (30%) but this does not translate into bookings (8%) during this period. By offering them online savings through booking activities and optional extras upfront, there is potential to convert this online interest into secured bookings in advance of their trip. These discounts could be offered on a time-limited basis immediately after booking their holiday, and target travellers whilst they are a captive audience – creating a 'one stop shop' for holidays and holiday activity booking.

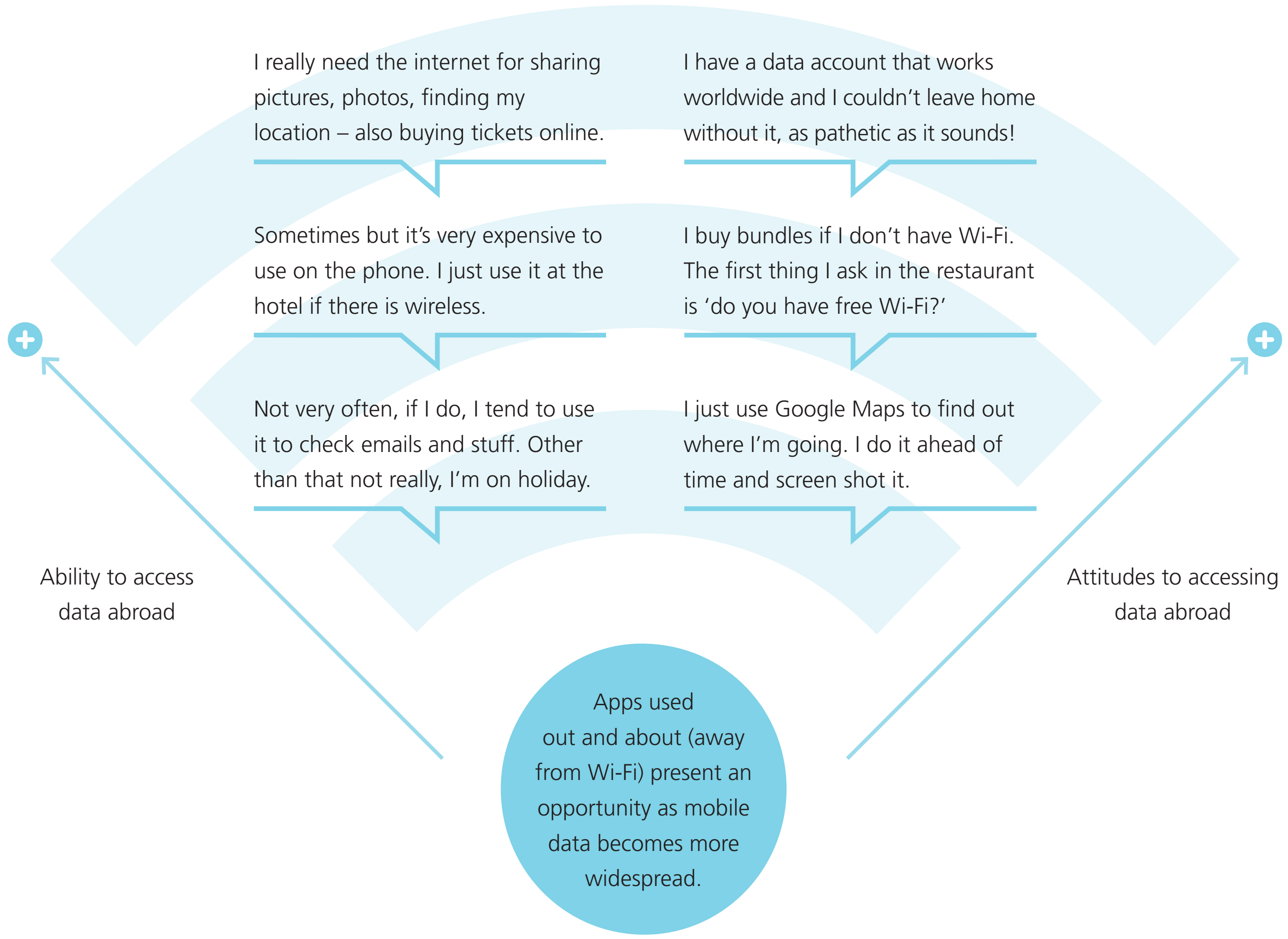
Social Media Connectors concentrate their online use on functional activities such as booking transport and day trips or activities. Brands should tap into the post-booking buzz and excitement with interactions on social media, as well as encouraging them to share their travel experiences both during and after their holidays.



Is our online behaviour on holiday evolving?

What online activities on mobile and social media influence the holiday experience? Are there areas of opportunity for creating a better customer experience?

Access and attitudes to data on holiday abroad



Attitudes and access to the internet on a holiday abroad

As data abroad becomes affordable, people's attitudes and behaviours will determine how much the internet is used when they are on holiday abroad.

Access
UK travellers going on holiday abroad use a number of devices in different ways. Smartphones allow travellers to be more spontaneous with social interactions – a third are using communication apps and sharing their experiences on the go.

Half of all smartphone users going online abroad are uploading photos or videos onto social media – a third are using photo apps. This is fairly common amongst travellers under the age of 45, and usage is set to increase now that there are fewer access barriers, such as data use abroad.

Tablets are used abroad for more practical reasons, with half using map apps, a third to plan day trips once at the holiday destination and a third use restaurant finder or recommendation apps.

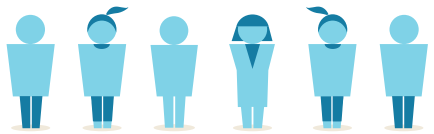
Attitude
Travel websites can continue their customer interaction on holiday by engaging with travellers and encouraging peer-to-peer content through their social media channels. Brand content can be tailored to the type of traveller e.g. practical advice for Technophobes, or fun and social recommendations for Social Media Connectors.

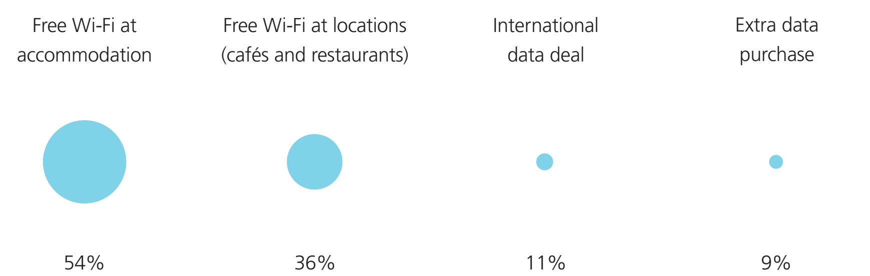
Mobile apps need to be quick, easy, and seamless so they are an enjoyable experience to complement a holiday. They need to tap into what travellers want to do online abroad. 13% of travellers leave online reviews during their holiday and 39% are uploading and sharing photos or videos. Travel review sites need to simplify the process, allowing users to take a photo and provide a star rating to express their opinion instead of writing a detailed review.

Access

How people get online abroad

%





Wi-Fi reliance is limiting potential of 'on-the-go' apps

% App usage when on holiday

Taxi ordering 8%

Restaurant Finder 14%

Smartphone or tablet – holiday app usage

Map 44%

Photo 32%

Communications 27%

Phone companies offering holiday data bundles or international data packages

Offers such as Three's 'Feel at Home' in 18 countries have the potential to change this in the future.

Base: those using smartphone or tablet on holiday

"I use Citymapper to get around, that's it for me really."

"I don't post too much. I don't want to be that obnoxious person but I do a bit of showing off."

"I upload photos to show those at home what it's like and I'm having fun."

Wearable technology penetration is set to grow following the launch of the Apple watch. The next generation of travel apps will be for smart watches e.g. TripAdvisor's Apple watch app provides users with on-the-go recommendations such as local restaurants when lunchtime arrives.

Sites need to be optimised to ensure a seamless experience across all devices and to encourage additional research and booking activity when on holiday.

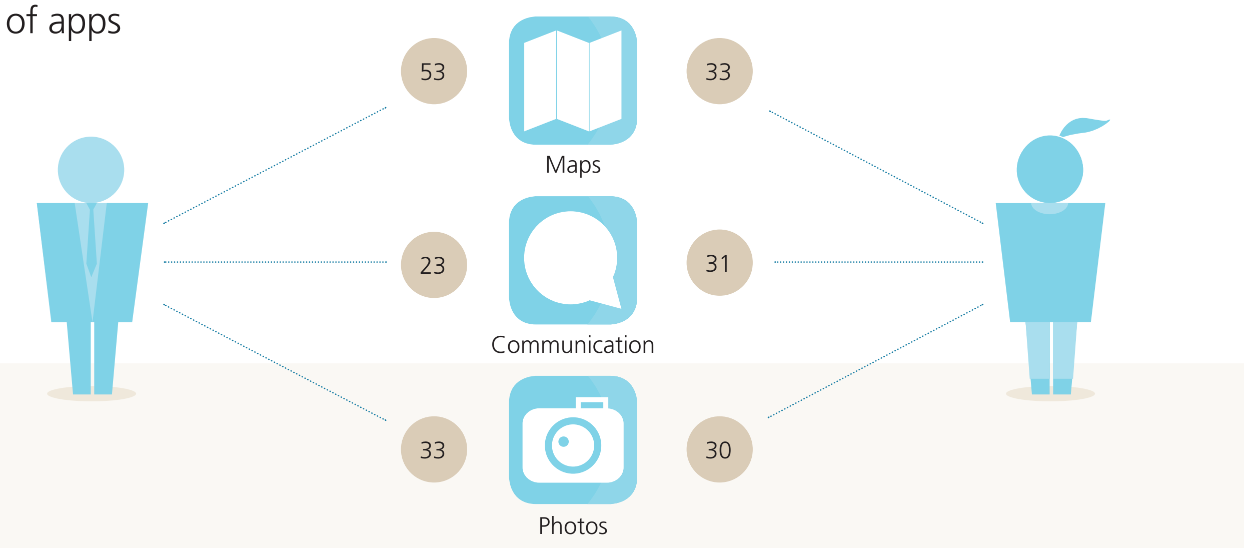
A picture paints a thousand words
Travellers are visually focused, 40% look at pictures of their holiday destination whilst on holiday, and a similar proportion upload their own images on to social media. Travel brands creating online content need to ensure it is visually engaging to get noticed and used.

Online priorities on holiday vary by age
Online activities when on holiday vary by age. 16-44 year olds are most interested in uploading photos or videos to social media and looking at pictures of destinations online. By contrast, 45-65 year olds are most interested in looking at pictures of destinations online, and the 55+ are more likely to post feedback on review sites like TripAdvisor.

The gender divide

Usage of apps

%



Base: those using smartphone or tablet on holiday

Sharing holiday experiences once back home

Facebook – the most popular social network site in the UK across all age groups – is also the most popular way for people to share their holiday photos with friends and family.

Travellers are more active online whilst on holiday and ‘in the moment’. Once home, it is easy to get distracted by everyday routine and the likelihood of uploading photos from the trip reduces, especially amongst the 16-44 year olds. Travellers are slightly more likely to leave reviews once they return, possibly after having had time to reflect on their whole holiday experience, with over a quarter of 55-64 year olds penning some form of feedback online.

Review sites can boost user-generated content by enabling short ‘in the moment’ reviews, such as photo and star ratings, prompting a more in depth review once travellers have returned home.

Social media sites could encourage users ‘checking in’ to upload photos at a later point in time, though this would have to be done in a way that was not overly intrusive.

“I never post reviews, but I do read them when they show up on Google maps.”

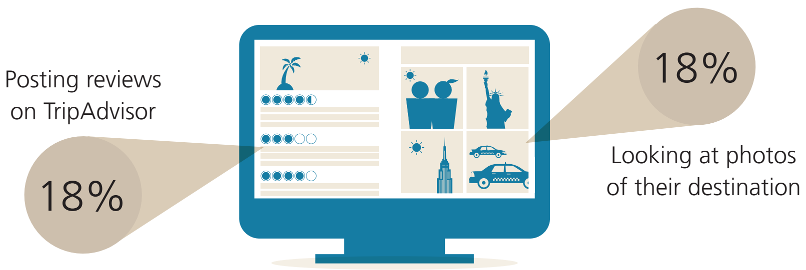
“I have never posted a review before. I do look at them sometimes before I go on holiday but not during.”

Post-holiday

Travellers are more likely to upload photos:

Whilst ‘in the moment’ on holiday	39%
When they get back	33%

Outside of uploading photos, travellers spend time online reminiscing about their holiday



About Webloyalty

Webloyalty is a leading online savings programme provider. We work with over 200 retail and travel businesses internationally to help them build stronger, more profitable relationships with their customers.

Through our UK membership programmes, we help our online retail partners’ customers save hundreds of pounds a year while providing the partner with an additional revenue stream. As well as incentivising customers to make repeat purchases at the partner’s site, they can also earn cashback and get great deals on everything from fashion to electronics to travel at hundreds of top online stores.

Webloyalty started operating in the UK in 2007 and has since expanded into France, Spain, Ireland, Brazil, the Netherlands, Turkey and Australia. Webloyalty is part of Affinion Group, a global leader in customer engagement and loyalty solutions.

Please visit www.webloyalty.co.uk for more information.

About TNS

TNS provides insights based research and consultancy, and advises clients on specific growth strategies around new market entry, innovation, brand switching and customer and employee relationships, based on long-established expertise and market-leading solutions. With a presence in over 80 countries, TNS has more conversations with the world’s consumers than anyone else and understands individual human behaviours and attitudes across every cultural, economic and political region of the world.

TNS is part of Kantar, the data investment management division of WPP and one of the world’s largest insight, information and consultancy groups.

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