



For Immediate Release
July 30, 2007

New USTOA Consumer Survey Finds Destination Loyalty Drives Vacation Decision

Destination loyalty drives the majority of decisions about where to go on vacation according to a new 2007 telephone survey conducted for the U.S. Tour Operators Association. A full two-thirds (66%) of 1,000 consumers polled said that place is the most important factor when planning a vacation.

Price and value are also important elements, but for this majority group, they tend to be considered after the destination decision has been made.

The largest group of respondents, 35%, said they choose a destination first and then shop for the best value. Another 19% reported that they travel to the destination they want, regardless of price and value; and 12% said that they shop for the best value among several preferred destinations. Only 16% of respondents said that they shopped for the lowest price before choosing a destination.

Favorite Destinations Revisited

When it comes to where to go on vacation, people tend to prefer returning to destinations they like. Nearly a third of Americans polled (31%) said they typically repeat favorite vacation spots, but sometimes try new destinations. Another quarter (22%) said they stick to a few tried and true places.

The numbers are slightly lower for those who continually seek new experiences. About a quarter (24%) of those polled reported that they typically explore new places, but occasionally return to a favorite destination. Far fewer, 16%, indicated that they usually seek a new destination with each vacation. Survey findings also revealed that increased income correlates strongly with the desire to repeat favorite destinations.

According to Bob Whitley, USTOA president, tour operators' products clearly reflect the desire to return to a favorite destination. "We have seen a marked trend toward tour operators offering itineraries that focus on a single area or

destination. This clearly responds to the repeat traveler who wants to learn more about the history and culture of an area,” notes Whitley.

Why People Choose Packaged Travel

More than half of respondents—56%—cited both an interest in visiting unfamiliar places and a wish to discover more about a destination’s history or culture as key reasons that would motivate them to choose a tour or vacation package.

Other frequently cited reasons for choosing a tour or vacation package include convenience (45%) and safety (40%). Survey results pointed out that women are drawn to tours for safety reasons more often than men, while men were more likely to cite companionship and meeting new friends as reasons to book a tour or vacation package.

When it comes to key motivators for taking a tour or vacation package, younger respondents (18 – 34) scored higher across the board for potential to take a tour or vacation package than any other age group. Main motivators were seeing unfamiliar places (68% of respondents), to find out more about an area’s history and culture (67%), and convenience (54%). On the opposite end of the spectrum, those aged over 65 scored lowest in citing factors that would motivate them to choose a tour or vacation package.

Selling the Experience

“The research results underscore the importance of selling the experience of escorted tours and packages. Savvy travel agents can point out the benefits of traveling with an expert tour manager as well as the added insights into an area’s history and culture provided by local guides. “Another selling point highlighted by the survey’s results is that tours and packages provide excellent ways of visiting new places, says Whitley.

TNS Research conducted the telephone survey of 1,000 participants on behalf of USTOA in May, 2007. Vacation packages were defined as buying hotel and airfare or other arrangements together.

Selecting a Tour or Vacation Package

USTOA’s web site – www.ustoa.com or www.ustoa.travel - makes it easy for travelers to select a vacation package or tour. Drop-down menus on the home page allow travelers to search for a USTOA member company by destination or activity, including history and culture. Travelers can even choose by their “Vacation Personality,” after taking the USTOA Vacation Personality Quiz, also on the association’s home page.

About USTOA

USTOA members are responsible for the vacations of 11 million people yearly. The organization’s more than 130 brands have met the travel industry’s highest standards, including participation in the USTOA Travelers Assistance Program.

This program requires, among other things, that each USTOA member set aside \$1 Million in security to reimburse consumer payments in case the company goes out of business. USTOA is the only travel industry organization with this requirement.

For more information on tours and vacation packages, and for a listing of USTOA members visit www.ustoa.com or www.ustoa.travel.

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