

MORE CANADIANS LOOK TO THE INTERNET TO BOOK TRAVEL PLANS

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Ipsos  **Reid**

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Vancouver, BC — Despite the difficulties being experienced by the travel industry as a whole in 2003, more and more Canadians are turning to the Internet and booking their travel directly online according to a new Ipsos-Reid study. The “*Online Travel 2003: What the Future Holds*” study found that 36% of Canadian adults who have Internet access¹ have used the Internet to book an element of their travel plans, including such things as air travel, hotel stays, or car rentals, directly online. This is up from 31% in June 2002 and 18% in September 2000.

“Given the hesitancy of Canadian consumers to make purchases online due to privacy and security concerns, the fact that Canadians are increasingly booking travel directly online is a positive reflection of the travel industry’s ability to successfully convert browsers to buyers,” said Steve Mossop, Senior Vice President of Ipsos-Reid. “Travel is one of the few e-commerce categories that Canadians have embraced wholeheartedly.”

The Internet is considered to be the primary source of information for planning upcoming travel for 35% of online Canadians, over double the proportion who consider travel agents (14%) or family and friends (14%) to be the primary source.

While the incidence of booking travel online is on the increase, the number of trips being booked online has dropped, likely due to the various world events which have hampered the travel industry, such as the outbreak of SARS and the war in Iraq. Among those who have booked travel online, the average number of bookings has decreased from 4.1 times in 2002 to 2.8 in 2003.

¹ 74% of Canadian adults have Internet access from at least one location.

Despite the increase in the number of people booking travel directly online, the percentage of Canadians with Internet access who are using the Internet to research travel online is relatively flat compared to 2002. Currently, 56% of adults with Internet access have used the Internet to research travel online, slightly lower than 59% in June 2002.

Online Canadians who have used the Internet to research or book travel are most likely to cite Expedia as their favourite online travel website (18%). Expedia is followed in popularity by Travelocity (13%), Air Canada (12%) and CAA (or local automobile association, at 11%).

More good news for online travel sites is the fact that the vast majority of Internet using Canadians say they will likely use the Internet to research a trip or vacation in the future (87%). Additionally, over half (55%) say they will likely use the Internet to book travel directly online in the future.

“The popularity of using the medium as a means to research and book travel should continue to grow,” said Mossop. “Internet users who research or purchase travel online have told us that the advantages of using the Internet are comparison shopping, more choice, and instant access to information. As awareness of travel sites increases and as travel sites continue to offer incentives to book online, more and more Canadians will turn to the Internet to research and book directly online.”

The “Canadian Inter@ctive Reid Report” is the largest, most comprehensive and authoritative source of its kind about quarterly Internet trends in Canada. The results are based on two separate data collection instruments. In the first, 1,000 Web users from Ipsos-Reid’s Canadian Internet Panel are surveyed online. Panelists are chosen through random telephone surveys conducted on an ongoing basis across Canada.

Results are complemented by a further 1,000 interviews via telephone with Canadian adults in order to verify results of the panel, and track issues among non-Internet users. The data were collected in June 2003.

These data were statistically weighted to reflect the population proportions of regular online users by online expertise and regional distribution. Our panelists represent approximately 15 million Canadian adult Internet users who are online for one hour a week or more (there are a total of 18 million adults who have Internet access).

With a national sample of 1,000 (for each component), one can say with 95% certainty that the overall results are within a maximum of ± 3.1 percentage points of what they would have been had the entire population of Canada's regular online users been surveyed. The margin of error will be larger for sub-groupings of the survey population.

Established in 1979, Ipsos-Reid is Canada's leading market research and public opinion company. It is best known for the Angus Reid Express Poll, the most widely quoted source of public opinion in the country. Founded by Dr. Angus Reid, Ipsos-Reid has conducted extensive market and social research in 80 countries and in 40 languages, and serves clients around the world through more than 300 professionals and 1,000 data collection staff in eleven offices. The company is a member of the Paris-based Ipsos Group, ranked among the top ten research companies in the world.

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