

How to remain relevant for the African traveller

As smartphone penetration across the continent increases, African travellers are increasingly looking for agents offering online and mobile services. This according to an independent research study commissioned by Amadeus and run by strategy consultancy, Inquisition.



©fabio formaggio via [123RF](#)

The Africa mobile travel research explored existing mobile usage behaviour within the travel experience across the African continent. Over 2,500 people were surveyed through mobile phones across seven countries: Angola, Ghana, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa. These were people who had travelled up to 12 months prior to the study and in the 18 to 44 age bracket.

Travel in the digital era

Key findings of this research revealed that African travellers are booking online and directly with service providers like hotels and airlines. If travel agencies want to remain relevant for the African traveller, they will need to offer online booking and management services.

In the digital era, buyers are increasingly shopping through their laptops, desktops and mobile devices and travel is no exception. Travel agents who embrace this trend and evolve by ramping up their omnichannel retail technology will, therefore, benefit greatly.

Andrew Shaw, online manager, Africa, Amadeus says: "Mobile phones provide near ubiquitous access to internet across much of the continent and data collected across all markets show that African travellers are ready and willing to transact on mobile and online platforms."

Key findings from the report have shown:

Travellers increasingly take control of their bookings using online tools

- 16% of travellers book with online travel agencies
- 34% still prefer the High Street travel agent
- 36% of travellers book directly with the service provider, such as the airline or the hotel

Travel Management Booking shows geographical and demographic differences

- In Ghana, 41% of travellers book through an agency that has a website
- In Nigeria, 25% of travellers opt to book through travel agencies who are operating exclusively online
- 49% of South African travellers book directly with the provider

Travel planning happens in a relatively short time

- 61% of male travellers book less than one month in advance, as opposed to 52% of female travellers.
- 36% of female travellers prefer to book between one and three months in advance
- South African travellers plan further ahead as compared to their Ivory Coast and Kenyan counterparts
- 38% of South African travellers book between one and three months in advance, as compared to 9% of Kenyan travellers and 8% of Ivory Coast travellers

Travellers want to manage travel themselves

- Move towards self-management of travel services across the travel experience: pre-booking travel research, through to booking, and managing a travel experience.
- 46% of those polled say they would go online to book and confirm their hotel
- 47% would happily change their hotel booking
- 55% would share their trip on social media
- 45% would rate and review a hotel, activity, airline or travel agency.

Travel app usage

- African travellers share similar requirements from mobile travel apps, with demand across the board for itinerary management, booking management, social network integration and rating and review services.

Preferred payment methods

- Mobile payments still represent a small proportion of payment for travel services booked, with direct deposits to a travel agency still the bulk at 36% of those polled, and 25% directly with the supplier.
- Compared with other African markets, Angola, Ghana, the Ivory Coast and Senegal lag in terms of paying for services with a smartphone.
- 46% of travellers who have not paid for services using a smartphone cite security concerns as the main barrier for adoption.

For detailed results of the study per market visit the [Amadeus Africa Blog](#).