

## **AITO'S TRAVEL INSIGHTS REPORT 2024 REVEALS INTERESTING TRENDS IN SPECIALIST TRAVEL FROM OVER 40 PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES (BOTH SPECIALIST TOUR OPERATORS AND SPECIALIST TRAVEL AGENCIES)**

22nd March, 2024

Launched yesterday, at the Royal Geographic Society, in London, the results of **AITO's Annual Travel Insights Survey for 2024** reveal encouraging data provided by analysis to questions posed to **over 12,000 travellers (some of whom are at the enquiry stage, and some of whom have already travelled with AITO members over the past 12 months)**.

Says AITO Executive Director, Martyn Sumners: "Results from this latest survey (the 10th to date) showcase interesting feedback from AITO customers. We already know that **the important 50+ market has increased dramatically in size – it now represents about 80% of those who buy holidays**. This is because the last wave of the Baby Boom generation, born from 1946 to 1964, is reaching 60 this year. The age bracket between 55 and 75 is the most populous of any age range in this coming decade (2024 to 2034).

"This group of the holiday-buying public enjoys a robust financial status, with an above-average income; many, understandably, consider themselves to be well off. Some 85% of them feel that there will be no change to their financial status over the next 12 months, which shows a significant increase in confidence levels compared with 2023, when the figure was 75%."

### **1. Value for Money and Satisfaction:**

Overall satisfaction levels continue at a high level, with 93% expressing above-average satisfaction levels with their holiday (compared with 94% in 2023). **Specialist travel agency customers rate satisfaction levels still higher, at 96%, due, we suspect, to long-lasting relationships built over many years contributing to the delivery of stand-out, highly-personalised, customer service.**

With holiday prices having increased considerably compared with pre-pandemic costs, and many customers having delayed travel immediately post-pandemic, perhaps having lost confidence, the **value for money scores have, understandably, dropped slightly - from 88% in 2023 to 87% in 2024.**

**Some 56% of AITO customers participating in this survey spend more than £2,500 per person on experiential holidays - and they, understandably, expect the highest levels of service.**

### **2. Expertise, Service and Support:**

**Some 94% of AITO customers ranked expertise, service levels and support at the top of the list as to why they chose to book with a particular company – an increase of 6% from the ranking of 88% given in 2023. Amongst specialist travel agency customers, who may be slightly older, the ranking was even higher, at 97%.**

**Financial protection, and knowing that the company with which they were booking their holiday was a member of a reputable travel association, also scored higher than in 2023.**

### **3. Political Stability, Sustainability Credentials (of the holiday provider and of the destination) – and is Sustainable Travel still as important as it was to consumers?**

Political stability has dropped in terms of importance in 2024 versus 2023, from 66% to 50%.

Sustainable travel also seems to be less important to consumers in 2024, with less than 50% of consumers now claiming it to be a significant driver in connection with their holiday plans. In terms of their carbon footprint, 37% were concerned about this in 2023; now it is just 33%.

#### 4. The importance of holidays...

**Over 80% of those polled stated that holidays were an important part of their lifestyle, and 75% claimed that they saw travel as a force for good, despite sustainability not being a key driver for them. Nearly 80% of travellers said that they were willing to pay more for a better holiday experience; over 50% choose to use a specialist tour operator or a specialist travel agent to deliver that experience.**

#### 5. How do they travel?

Consumers responding to this AITO survey mostly travelled by air, despite its high carbon footprint – but many, equally, were also looking at rail travel as a serious alternative where possible to reach their destination; **52% reported that they were considering rail as a possible option.**

#### 6. Top 10 long-haul destinations for 2024...

At the top is North America, followed by SE Asia, Australasia, South America and the Indian Sub-Continent, including Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Slot 6 is Africa, 7 is the Caribbean, including Cuba, 8 is Central America, 9 is North Africa and the Middle East, and 10 is the Polar regions.

#### 7. Holiday planning for 2024 and 2025

**2024 sees over 90% planning to holiday in the UK or Europe, with 70% planning to travel outside Europe (an increased compared with 2023).** Over 60% have either booked or are about to book the UK or Europe, with just under 50% for long haul.

#### 8. What preferred method of communications do travellers seek from their specialist travel organiser?

**Primarily (86%) by email.** They also like to receive a brochure or a magazine, but are tech savvy – 78% use Facebook, 55% use Instagram and 54% use WhatsApp.

#### 9. Net Promoter Scores (NPS)

**Slightly down, from 69.8 to 64.8, but this doesn't signal dissatisfaction** – travellers don't always have friends or relatives who share the same interests as their own, meaning that they wouldn't necessarily recommend a company that they personally rated highly and used regularly to their friends and family.

**Executive Director of AITO, Martyn Sumners, quoted Roy Barker of Spike, which carried out the survey on AITO's behalf for the 10<sup>th</sup> time: Roy said: "It's good to be reminded of how lucky AITO members are – their clients, the basis of this report, are financially privileged and financially stable. Around 95% say that their financial position is average or above average – and that is with British reserve, too! And 90% say their financial position over the next year will stay the same or get better."**

**Martyn Sumners continued: "Roy left us with three things to remember, and they are very powerful:**

1. Your customers love you.
2. They want to travel more.
3. Demographics are on your side.

**Sumners said:** "I couldn't put it better myself. We need to seize the moment, work hard to engage with our clients and to help them to book exactly the holidays that they will love, for 2024 and beyond. Our customers are our best salesforce; they will enthuse about the experiences that AITO members have crafted for them to their like-minded friends, and personal recommendation is the best sales tool bar none.

**“I urge you all to seize the moment, to share the key results of this fascinating survey with your teams, and to encourage them to sell with confidence, in the knowledge that AITO holidays are the best of the best.”**

**Ends**

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**For more information on AITO, The Specialist Travel Association ([www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com)), or for quotes or comments on industry issues, please contact **Sue Ockwell** or **Gemma Minto** at Travel PR – [s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk) / 07831 126 356 or [g.minto@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:g.minto@travelpr.co.uk) / 07833 760 047.**