



**EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS
FROM THE
INDUSTRY'S THOUGHT LEADERS**



Editorial Note



We launched TravHQ earlier this year with a vision to analyse the growth opportunities for the entire travel ecosystem in SEA & APAC region. This report is our first attempt to identify the forces that will drive the industry forward in 2016.

No surprises that we have taken a giant leap this year as 2015 has witnessed the rise of innovative travel startups, carving out a niche for themselves amongst the established players. The businesses that were once the disruptors in the travel industry are at the verge of being disrupted owing to tech-led innovation.

We want to thank all the industry leaders for making this report possible and highlighting the trends they foresee in their respective verticals. We hope that 'Top Trends of Travel in 2016' report serves as an ideal launchpad for your brand's journey in the new year.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 1

Sherri Wu

Chief Strategy Officer, Alitrip

“The travel industry has been relatively lagging in terms of innovation in the past few years, but we believe Asia particularly China will lead in this respect as its travel market grows with remarkable speed. The Chinese travel market has already made great strides in its shift from traditional offline to online, and has seen some significant changes in mobile travel research, booking and payment in 2015. We believe this trend will continue in 2016 with more disruptive technology changes that will provide travellers with an even more convenient and holistic travel experience.”

travHQ says

With growth rate of 16% this year, China continues to be the world's largest outbound travel market for the third year in running. These travellers spent \$171 billion overseas last year with over half of them booking accommodation online. The shift in offline to online paradigm has been largely dominated by Alitrip as it leverages consumer data and pushes to introduce new payment methods.



Sherri Wu

Sherri Wu leads her team in building growth opportunities for businesses globally across key Alibaba Group platforms, especially in the travel area.

Before Alibaba, Sherri was VP and GM for Product and Technology at Orbitz Worldwide, where she oversaw different areas of the business including loyalty, finance technology, CRM and many others. Before that, Sherri was CTO of PEAK6 Retail, where she built the company's e-commerce development team.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 2

Bart Bellers

Senior Advisor, Corporate Strategy,
Amadeus Asia Pacific

“The great thing about disruption is that it’s hard to predict! But we do see that the sharing economy will continue to be a key growth sector in 2016. Although players in this space have been extremely innovative in their business approach, it will be interesting to see how they further leverage technology to broaden their content and distribution strategy. It’s also important to recognise that no one player can do it all, and for a company like Amadeus, working with startups through Amadeus Next is a great way to keep our finger on the pulse.”

travHQ says

Sharing economy is catching up fast and the giants in this space like Uber and Airbnb are disrupting the conventional practices. The size of sharing economy was \$15 billion in 2014 and is projected to reach \$335 billion by 2025. Expect this segment to spill into new markets with local players hitting the stratosphere.



Bart Bellers

Bart is an experienced business executive and passionate out-of-the-box thinker who has successfully led commercial and innovation initiatives.

At Amadeus, his role is to lead new business opportunities and seed innovative initiatives in the region. He has held management positions in e-Travel, Customer Delivery, Business Development & Innovation over his 12 years with Amadeus. Prior to Amadeus, Bart built up a strong digital, technology and commercial background in the ICT industry and has worked for several start-ups developing e-business solutions.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 3

Winnie Tan
CEO, Tripzilla

“Expect more consolidations in 2016. Lines are getting blurry between OTAs, meta-search engines and content platforms – everybody’s business model is starting to look similar. This gives even more reason for vertical or horizontal acquisitions. The travel giants are racing for Asia dominance. While they have all tried and some have made some headway, none have been wildly successful. Instead of building relationships from scratch, perhaps it would be easier to just merge with a local hero.”

travHQ says

This year we saw some major acquisitions like HomeAway and Starwood Hotels among others. As travel brands strive to increase their customer offerings, they are taking the route of M&As rather than starting afresh in newer categories. This trend will be principally evident in the Asian market.



Winnie Tan

Founder and CEO of TripZilla and a ‘doer’ by nature, Winnie is passionate about pulling limited resources together to create something of much greater value. Having built and sold off two businesses, she understands the importance of building a sustainable business – one with real users, paying customers and a clear revenue model. She has been involved in spearheading and managing many functions within the business, including product, finance, business development, marketing and sales.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 4

Ramesh Iyer

Managing Director, Concur Technologies, India

“ Business travel is the bell weather for business growth and economic recovery. We see continued growth in business travel spends in line with GBTA predictions. Aside, technology will change the way we experience travel today. It will become more integrated, seamless, secure and effortless, end to end, to make it a 'Perfect Trip' for the business traveller. The boundary between business travel and leisure travel is starting to blur. Additionally, we see open platforms, big data and interconnected eco-systems driving the digital wave in travel. Services mash up will become the 'new normal' sooner than later. ”

travHQ says

Gradual intermingling of business and leisure travel has accounted for the rise in 'Bleisure' travellers. With supportive company policies, they are looking to explore after-work stay options on their business trips. Observing this trend, Airbnb has expanded its 'Airbnb Business Travel' program to attract more corporate customers.



**Ramesh
Iyer**

Ramesh Iyer is Managing Director of Concur Technologies, India. Ramesh has over 22 years of experience in IT and Telecom, out of which 20 years have been with Tata Group in various capacities. Prior to Concur, he was instrumental in steering the growth of Enterprise and SME Business lines as a Business President in Tata Teleservices. In one of the earlier assignments, he also played a pivotal role in TTML achieving leadership position in consumer and enterprise business segments.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 5

Neeraj Singhal

Head of Expansion -
India & the Subcontinent, Uber

“Technology is clearly increasing its influence on the travel industry. As companies like Uber shape the way you get around a city, and Airbnb changes the way you stay in a city, more and more is being done at people’s fingertips. As competition heats up in markets across the world for local dominance among these global players, I think 2016 will be the year where companies win based not only on price and optionality, but customer service and the complete ‘before, during and after’ experience. ”

travHQ says

Many businesses are entering the same space as others, not only in the cab hailing segment but also in other sectors like budget hotels and e-tailing. Competing on price helps them gain initial traction but eventually brands that don’t offer seamless customer experience and quality service will fade away.



Neeraj
Singhal

Neeraj Singhal is the Head of Expansion for India and the Subcontinent at Uber. He has led Uber's foray into India since they began operations in Bangalore in August of 2013. Prior to working on the India operation, Neeraj started Uber's first markets in the Middle East and Africa, and has worked on operations in Europe and North America.

Prior to Uber, Neeraj was an M&A consultant with PwC, and worked in the investment management industry in New York.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 6

Laurens Van Den Oever

Global Industry Lead,
Travel & Hospitality, GfK Asia

“Consumers will go mobile, web will become invisible, cloud based services will catch up and the Internet of Things will find more applications with the traveller at the centre of it all, holding sway. Social media will see more adoption with influencers ruling the scene. Large brands will enter new spaces and use their size to reach more audience. Consolidation of services will also pick up pace and we will see the lines blurring and business models morphing.”

travHQ says

As mobile takes the front seat in travel industry, more businesses will target smartphone travellers. The Internet of Things technologies will also help brands cater their customers better. These technologies will especially find wide applications in hospitality industry as hotels try to keep their edge over alternative stays.



Laurens Van
Den Oever

Laurens graduated from Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands, mastering in Tourism Management and Interactive Marketing. He started with KLM and Ericsson Mobile.

He joined GfK in 2003 and was responsible for spearheading research on new techniques to measure live consumer behaviour for various industries. In 2010 he took charge of the travel business, now leading a global team of local travel experts & data scientists that help industry stakeholders to better anticipate the dynamics of the industry, turning big data into smart analyses.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 7

Sesh Seshadri

General Manager, Lonely Planet India

“Customer expectations and demands are the key external factors that will influence and impact travellers. How people are getting information is what the travel media should be constantly looking out for.

I see mobile commerce market growing fast with brand focussing on the user experience across devices. Going forward, more brands will use specialised content to gain visibility in searches and on social media which in turn will help them drive more business.”

travHQ says

Content plays a significant role in boosting a brand's search & social media visibility and inspiring people to travel. With emerging platforms, travellers are now increasingly using smartphones and social media to discover destinations, plan activities and trips.



**Sesh
Seshadri**

The Director of Lonely Planet India, Sesh Seshadri is one of the most renowned names in the publishing industry today. Carving a niche for himself with a career spanning over four decades, he played a vital role in Lonely Planet's entry in India.

Previously associated with Oxford University Press (OUP) for over 25 years, Sesh Seshadri was the only employee to be appointed to 3 of OUP's national strategic committees. He has also worked with Dorling Kindersley, India as Executive Director.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 8

Manmeet Ahluwalia

Marketing Head, Expedia India

“Experience and experiment have become the new trend. A lot of sports related activities have caught the interest of people and we will notice an increase in demand for offbeat places and activities. Trends like taking long road trips or cruise holidays which offer a lot of activities are also getting DINK segment and group travellers interested.

Tourists are willing to explore the destinations and enjoy the local flavours by spending more time within the community. Those looking for a relaxed holiday prefer a homestay and destinations like Kerala, Manali, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan are picking up fast on the concept of Homestay.”

travHQ says

As the number of travellers go up, more people are willing to take the 'local way' of experiencing a destination. This is giving the local communities an exposure to the outside world and also promoting trends like homestays and experiential tours even in India.



Manmeet
Ahluwalia

Manmeet Ahluwalia has been working with Expedia for over 5 years as the Marketing Head. He handles all the offline and online communications and programs across India market. Earlier he has worked as E-Marketing Manager at Oberoi Hotels & Resorts where his role was to increase the brand awareness in multiple markets.

Before Oberoi, he was working with another major OTA Yatra.com as Sr. Marketing Manager for more than 2 years. He has also worked as a Manager Tourism Business at Singapore Tourism Board.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 9

Jens Thraenhart

Executive Director, Mekong
Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO)

“Brands are spending billions of dollars in creating and curating social and digital content, only to drive traffic to rented social media channels away from their own sites. There is no question that user-generated and brand-generated content bring value to the customer relationship and build brand awareness, but going forward, marketers will focus not only on content creation, engagement and infrastructure to support brand awareness and traction in social media channels, but also on identifying how to improve the customer path-to-purchase, and how to close the loop between the brand that lives on social media channels, and the brand that transacts and converts the customer. ”

travHQ says

As brands compete with each other for visibility across platforms, the rise in advertising spends would mean these ad-networks are all set to rake in the moolah. That is why we will see marketers trying to push customers directly to their platforms along with the social channels.



Jens
Thraenhart

Jens Thraenhart heads the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office as Executive Director. He is the founder & president of Digital Innovation Asia (DIA), building digital capacity from social to mobile in the travel and tourism industry in Asia Pacific. He also founded China Travel Trends, as well as award-winning China digital marketing firm Dragon Trail in 2009, and has led marketing and Internet strategy teams with the Canadian Tourism Commission and Fairmont Hotels & Resorts.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 10

Valentin Dombrovsky

CEO, Travelabs

“It's a bit hard to make predictions without repeating myself and other experts in what has been said previously. All in all, trend is a continuous thing and we see some trends that have emerged several years back before becoming bigger and more visible. I believe we'll see the rise of emerging economies with big industry players making serious moves in the markets of LatAm, South-East Asia and Africa and local startups from these regions growing too.

Other major trends will be entry of non-travel players in the market, more B2B travel suppliers and rise of sharing economy.”

travHQ says

As the travel industry grows, new markets will appear on the map and the startups with better local understanding will thrive. More brands will leverage data mining techniques so that they can offer better personalisation and seamless experience to travellers. With the integration of new features, chat and social platforms will also be seen competing in the travel space.



Valentin
Dombrovsky

Valentin is an active participant in Russian and international start-up-community, having participated in several internet-marketing and online travel conferences as a speaker. Valentin was the CEO of internet marketing consulting company Nextup Media. In 2011 he sold his share to work on Travelatus project. In 2013 Travelatus was sold to Excursiopedia and he became a part of Excursiopedia team where he was responsible for company market relations. In September 2015, Valentin started his new venture, Travelabs - an online travel consulting company.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 11

Madhu Madhusudhanan

Founder and CEO, Proxcel

“Travellers will be the catalyst for all changes in technology. We are going to see an avalanche of connected devices (IOT's)—like door locks and sensors that will simplify the check-in/out experience at hotels and vacation rental homes. Most travellers today seek the local experience of Airbnb with the comforts of a hotel. Hotels will leverage technology to facilitate this experience.”

travHQ says

With the increasing number of connected devices around us, the IoT market is set to grow by 30% in 2016. IoT technologies will play a major role in the travel industry, especially in hotels, to offer a better, more connected experience to the guests, thereby creating loyalty.



**Madhu
Madhusudhanan**

Madhu Madhusudhanan is the Founder and CEO of Proxcel. He is a full-stack developer with expertise in Bluetooth Smart, indoor mapping, and identity management. Before Proxcel, Madhu was an Advisory Consultant at IBM and TechM where he worked on various technologies and won numerous awards for innovation. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electronics and Communications and an M.B.A. from Santa Clara University's Leavey School of Business.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 12

Soraya Homchuen

Director, TAT Mumbai

“We can expect a still greater focus on social media as a marketing tool. Our HQ has conducted several social media contests – all aimed at increasing the destination’s visibility –and I think this will only get bigger and better in 2016.

We already have a host of standalone apps in place for all Thailand’s tourist destinations, from the most popular to the more uncharted territory and also for different segments like luxury, wellness and honeymoons. Next year, I foresee potential tie-ups with third parties that provide generic travel information to provide information to travellers, or perhaps tempt them to travel, via their app.”

travHQ says

Brands nowadays have a short window to be visible to the consumers and act as a true source of inspiration. Good content helps them interact and connect with their audience. As people shift to newer platforms like Periscope and Snapchat, we will see more brands adopting them to boost visibility.



Soraya
Homchuen

Soraya Homchuen is Director of the Tourism Authority of Thailand in Mumbai. She is the youngest individual to earn the role of Director at a TAT overseas office. Her tenure at TAT began in 1994 and she has worn several hats in this duration. She was the Marketing Officer, ASEAN, South Asia and South Pacific Department, TAT. Before that, she was at the helm of TAT’s R&D activities. She has also dabbled with marketing and PR in her earlier roles.

"WHAT EXPERTS SAY"

Quote 13

Claude Benard

Managing Director, HoteliTour

“ Disruptive digital marketing is now on mobile chat platforms with O2O strategy (On-line 2 Offline). It's very clear on China travel market with WeChat and its tremendous business ecosystem. WeChat is looking to expand its mobile payment and mobile services overseas and other Chinese players are planning the same. This "Chinese etourism Tsunami" is the main trend I see in 2016. My 2 cents, don't play the strategy of the ostrich, it can kill your business if you are not on track with the main trends. ”

travHQ says

China is seen as a huge opportunity by travel brands. Although a large number of Chinese travellers are buying online now, there is still lot of room for new players. Their domestic brands have adapted best to their buying practices and international players will have to think strategically different to tap the market.



**Claude
Benard**

Claude is a seasoned travel professional hailing from Marseille, France. He started his career as a technical sales manager for a Marseille-based tour operator. He then spent six years as a sales executive at Louvre Hotels group, before starting to leverage internet for the marketing of hotels and tourism.

He is founder of HoteliTour, a French agency specialized in tourism engineering. He managed marketing travel online since 1994 and manage the international etourism conference Digital Innovation Asia in Paris end May 2016.

Takeaways for Industry Professionals

- Chinese travel market will evolve with mobile being a significant contributor.
- 2016 will be the year of consolidation with bigger brands acquiring local startups to foray into new territories.
- Sharing economy will grow exponentially making room for local players.
- Internet of Things (IoT) will be adopted widely across the hospitality industry.
- Alternative stays will emerge as a new segment for business travellers.
- The use of data to personalise user experience will witness a sharp rise.
- Brands will increasingly leverage touchpoints such as instant messaging apps and social media platforms.

ABOUT travHQ

TravHQ offers information, news, insights and reviews about the travel industry, focussing primarily on the intersection of technology, digital marketing and startups. We track and analyse the changing scenario in SEA/APAC (South East Asia/ Asia Pacific) region.

Upcoming Event

travHQ &  FICCI
present

#StartupKnockDown,
an exclusive
opportunity to showcase
your Travel Startup

17-18 March 2016,
New Delhi

Stay tuned for more updates on
India's first event on Travel &
Hospitality Technology

email: info@travhq.com

The background is a solid blue color with a repeating pattern of white line-art icons. These icons include an airplane, a heart, a tube of sunscreen, a camera, a lightbulb, a passport, a pair of flip-flops, a suitcase, and a pair of sunglasses.

For partnerships and business queries, please write to us at info@travhq.com