



AGENTS UPBEAT FOR 2010, SAYS TIPTO

Positive feedback from independents as new Agent Research Panel introduced

23 December 2009: More than 75 per cent of independent travel agents are confident that 2010 will be better for business than 2009, according to a new survey undertaken by TIPTO (Truly Independent Professional Travel Organisation).

In the inaugural survey for TIPTO's new Agent Research Panel, for which more than 300 agents have registered to take part, 25.6 per cent of those questioned expected 2010 to be 'much better' than 2009, while 51.2 per cent predicted the New Year would be 'a little better' for business. Less than three per cent expected business to deteriorate.

"The survey results show that agents are cautiously confident about what the New Year will bring," said TIPTO Chairman Graham Balmforth of Superbreak Mini-Holidays.

"While the economic climate remains challenging, they recognise that there are key sectors they can capitalise on to improve their business. 2010 will be the year the trade starts to bounce back."

Cruising was identified as the sector representing the biggest opportunity, with 75.6 per cent of agents acknowledging its potential. Long-haul (65.1 per cent) and non-Eurozone destinations such as Turkey (62.8 per cent) were the next biggest hopes for the trade, while 47.7 per cent felt that short breaks would sell well in 2010.

Asked what they considered to be the single biggest challenge facing the industry in the coming year, reduced consumer spending power was unsurprisingly identified by exactly half of all those questioned - while 31.4 per cent believed the weakness of the pound would be the most significant challenge. Only 10.5 per cent of agents felt the increase in APD would be a major factor, while the forthcoming football World Cup was considered a significant challenge by less than two per cent of those surveyed.

Despite the recent trend towards dynamic packaging, nearly half of the agents surveyed said that traditional tour operator packages were more

popular with their clients - 34.9 per cent said they still sold 'far more' traditional packages, while 14 per cent sold 'slightly more'. However, a total of 36 per cent said they now sold more dynamic packages.

When the agents were asked for their one wish for the travel industry in 2010, a clear theme emerged:

"Clients realising the immense value of a knowledgeable, well-trained travel agent"

- Lynne Swinnerton, Delmar World, Wrexham

"For customers to focus more on the High Street travel agent being the best, most reliable place to book"

- Hayley Gittins, Co-operative Travel, Leyland

Full Survey Results

| How do you view the prospects for your agency's business in 2010? | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent |
| a. Much better than 2009 | 25.6% |
| b. A little better than 2009 | 51.2% |
| c. About the same as 2009 | 20.9% |
| d. A little worse than 2009 | 2.3% |
| e. Much worse than 2009 | 0.0% |

| Which sectors do you think represent the biggest opportunity for your agency for 2010? (Please select all that apply) | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Answer Options | Response Percent |
| a. Cruising | 75.6% |
| b. UK holidays | 38.4% |
| c. Luxury | 34.9% |
| d. Long-haul | 65.1% |
| e. Outside the 'Eurozone' (eg. Turkey) | 62.8% |
| f. Organised/ escorted tours | 14.0% |
| g. Weddings & honeymoons | 25.6% |
| h. Wintersun | 20.9% |
| i. Activity breaks | 7.0% |
| j. Short breaks | 47.7% |

What do you consider to be the single biggest challenge facing the travel industry in 2010?

| Answer Options | Response Percent |
|--|-------------------------|
| a. APD increase making travel more expensive | 10.5% |
| b. The World Cup | 1.2% |
| c. Reduced consumer spending power | 50.0% |
| d. Reduced staff numbers/heavier workload | 7.0% |
| e. Weakness of the UK pound | 31.4% |

Which do you sell most - traditional tour operator packages or 'dynamic packages' (flights, hotels, etc sourced from different suppliers)?

| Answer Options | Response Percent |
|---|-------------------------|
| a. Far more traditional tour operator packages | 34.9% |
| b. Slightly more traditional tour operator packages | 14.0% |
| c. About the same | 17.4% |
| d. Slightly more dynamic packages | 17.4% |
| e. Far more dynamic packages | 18.6% |

More on the TIPTO Agent Research Panel

Launched: December 2009.

What is it?: A group of independent travel agents who have agreed to take part in regular surveys organised by TIPTO (Truly Independent Professional Travel Organisation).

How many agents?: More than 300 agents have registered to be part of the Agent Research Panel. TIPTO is still keen to recruit more participants.

How were the agents sourced?: Via TIPTO's database (currently more than 3,700 independent agents based all over the UK).

What will the agents be surveyed on?: The surveys will be a combination of strategic research for TIPTO and trade awareness research for individual members.

Are there incentives for taking part?: Yes, generally there are prizes on offer to encourage more agents to respond.

How can agents register to take part?: Via TIPTO's website - www.tipto.co.uk - or by calling TIPTO on 020 8742 4073. Please note the Agent Research Panel is open only to independent agents.

"We have established the Agent Research Panel to give TIPTO members a quick, organised way of gauging the opinions of independent agents on any relevant subject," said the consortium's Chairman Graham Balmforth of Superbreak Mini-Holidays.

"TIPTO exists purely to work with independents and strong two-way communication is vital; as individual operators and as an organisation, we really want to hear what agents have to say.

"So far we have more than 300 agents signed up but we want more - the greater the numbers, the more representative the responses will be."

For further press information, please contact: **David Ezra**

Tel: 020 7902 2795 **Fax:** 020 7928 1700

E-mail: david@saltmarshpr.co.uk

The Saltmarsh Partnership, 25d Copperfield Street, London SE1 0EN

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