

# **SOCIAL LIVES: GROUP BOOKINGS - UK & US**

INDUSTRY REPORT



# SOCIAL LIVES: GROUP BOOKINGS - UK & US

By Make it Social

[makeitsocial.com/business](http://makeitsocial.com/business)

## CONTENTS

Page 3: Executive Summary

Page 10: Interview: Gene Quinn, CEO Tnooz

Page 13: The Group Phenomenon - with Dr Elisa Bellotti

Page 17: At a Glance

Page 21: Millennials - Interview with Jeff Fromm

Page 25: Leaders & Followers

Page 29: Conversions

Page 33: Make it Social Technology

Page 34: Conclusion

Page 35: Methodology



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## THE PEOPLE

For the purpose of this research, 1,000 respondents were selected from a larger sample to ensure those questioned had considered or completed one of the following group activities in the last year:



**Accommodation:** stayed in a hotel, villa, ski chalet or short term rental property



Attended a **ticketed** event: sports, theatre, cinema, gig or other type of ticket event



Package **holiday** (including package ski holiday)



**Travel:** booked a commercial flight or train journey

Approximately half of the respondents were UK-based while the remainder resided in the US.. The sample included an equal mix of males and females as well as a good breadth of age ranges from 18 to over 55. Participants were also chosen carefully to ensure a broad demographic in terms of annual income and social status. Geographically UK respondents were mainly based in England, in the US, 35 states were represented.



## THE RATIONALE

Our research focused on behaviour and attitudes towards group activities. Firstly, we defined how many social groups the average person had, what these groups were and how many people were in the average social group. In this report – we consider a group to be any number of people above two.

Once a party exceeds two, group dynamics come into play and the booking experience changes. Variables such as who will book and pay for the activity and the difficulties of agreeing logistics and collecting payment

from members of the group may affect sale potential - in this study we aim to discover the extent of these barriers.

The report delves into the social dynamics of groups, the emotions we experience by sharing a group activity and the long-lasting memories that we achieve as a result. Dr Elisa Bellotti, from Manchester University, helps to explain the sociological importance of groups in the 21st Century, giving the results context in an ever-changing social environment, her comments can be found

in the 'Group Phenomenon' section of the report.

We then explored what activities the participants had planned or successfully booked in the last year, to determine those which were most popular. Further questioning allowed us to discover how many people consider booking a group activity compared to those who actually follow through.

Discovering more about the group and group leaders was essential to achieve a

deeper understanding about the barriers to group booking and what ultimately prevent the conversion from taking place. As well as highlighting the difficulties with group bookings the survey also aims to show the steps to alleviate these problems.

As well as Dr Elisa Bellotti we collaborated with two other independent experts; Gene Quinn CEO from online travel magazine Tnooz and Jeff Fromm, author of Marketing to Millennials, to help analyse our findings and predict group travel trends for the future.

## THE INSIGHTS

The average person in the UK and the US has nine separate groups within their social circle, from school friends to work colleagues, close family to friends we share our hobbies with – people have distinct groups that they like to socialise with.

# THE AVERAGE PERSON IN THE UK AND THE US HAS NINE SEPARATE GROUPS WITHIN THEIR SOCIAL CIRCLE.

**7** The **average group size** is seven. Group sizes appear slightly smaller in the UK: in the US groups contain an average of eight people – while in the UK groups contain an average of six people.

One in two men (50%) have groups of uni/school friends, compared with almost three in five women (58%). However, men tend to have a slightly larger number of friends in each group (8 on average compared with 7 on average for women).

**8-11** The largest group in both countries was **'specific interest friends'** – in the UK the average number of people in this group was eight compared to 11 in the US.

63% of both men and women have groups of work / business friends – the average number of friends in each group is 7 for both men and women.

**4** The smallest group was **housemates/flatmates** – with just four people being the average number for this group in both countries.

## THE DATA SHOWS THAT PEOPLE'S AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL GROUPS DECLINE AS THEY GET OLDER, FROM 10.25 AVERAGE AMONGST 18 TO 25S DOWN TO 8.04 AMONGST OVER 55S.

However, over 55s have the social group with the largest average number of people – those with specific interest social groups average 16 people in the group!

Over 55s also hold on to their school/uni friends in larger groups than younger age groups. Amongst the 22% of over 55s with school/uni social groups the average number of people in the group is just over 11.

In contrast, 84% of 18-25s have school/uni social groups and the average number in each group is slightly fewer than 7.

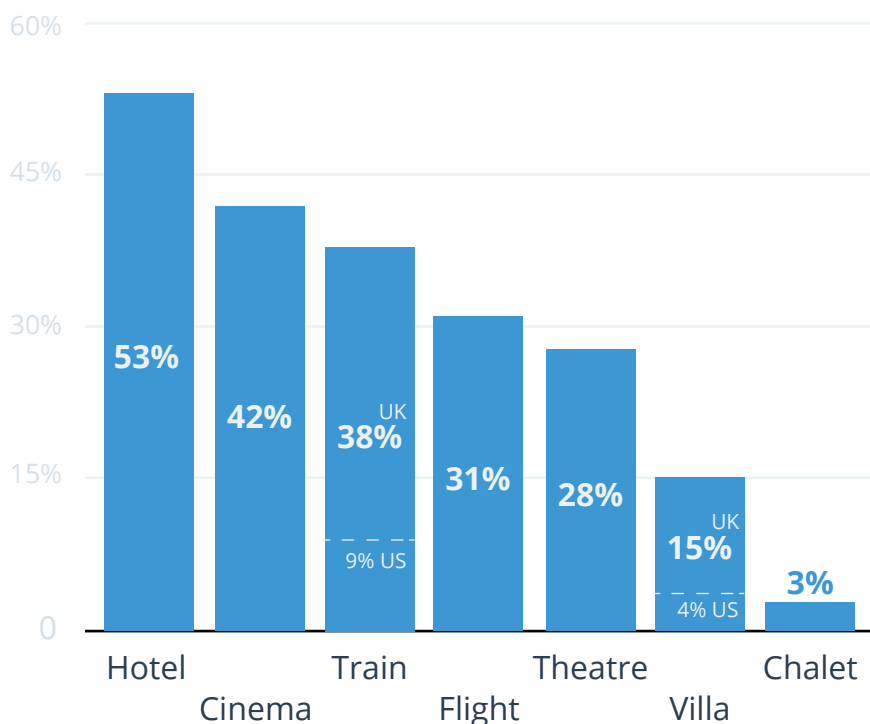
## THE MOST COMMON ACTIVITY FOR GROUPS IS TO STAY IN A HOTEL – WITH OVER HALF (53%) OF RESPONDENTS HAVING CONSIDERED OR STAYED IN A HOTEL WITH A GROUP OF FRIENDS.

The second most popular group activity is booking a cinema ticket (42%), followed by booking flights (31%) and purchasing theatre tickets (28%).

Booking a villa as a group is again more popular in the UK (15%) versus just 4% of US respondents.

The least popular group activities include booking a ski chalet (3%), and booking a villa (10%).

Group booking for train journeys appears to be much more popular in the UK with 38% of participants having considered or planned a group train journey compared to just 9% in the US.



**53% OF RESPONDENTS HAVE FOND MEMORIES OF THE FOOD ON THEIR GROUP ACTIVITY, A THIRD REMEMBER POSTING A PICTURE OF THE ACTIVITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND A FIFTH SAID THAT THEY 'FOUND HAPPINESS'.**



On average 23% of group leaders found group bookings stressful, booking a villa or ski chalet for a group proved to be the most stressful activities.

---

Group leaders give up, on average around six days of their time booking a group activity.

13% of leaders found themselves out of pocket after the event – The financial loss suffered by the group leaders is significant - in the UK the average amount is £371.42 and in the US the figure is \$295.67.

Not surprisingly one of the main barriers to a group booking taking place is the fact that nobody in the group wants to take charge (12%).

**A QUARTER OF PLANNED GROUP ACTIVITIES WILL NOT GO AHEAD BECAUSE OF THE HASSLES ASSOCIATED WITH BOOKING AS A GROUP.**



## HASSLES WITH GROUP BOOKING

Our research found that the group booking process had several barriers – which prevented planned activities from progressing.

On average one in ten group activities – which reached the ‘detailed planning stage’ failed to convert into a booking. This figure was particularly high for rail travel – with 20% of potential bookings stopping at the detailed planning stage.

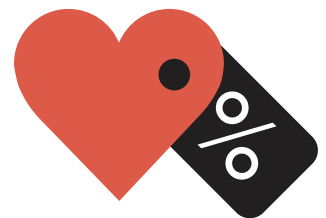
23% of the group leaders in our sample cited the difficulties in getting answers and agreement from members of the group as the main reason that planning ceased.

Almost a fifth agreed that one person having to pay up front prevented them from making a booking.

The fear of somebody dropping out was also a major barrier mentioned by 17% of respondents.



## DISCOUNTS, ONLINE BOOKING, EMPOWERED CUSTOMERS AND BETTER COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO INCREASED GROUP BOOKINGS ACROSS ALL ACTIVITIES.



Almost two-thirds (**61%**) agreed that **discounts** would make life easier when arranging group bookings.

Group discounts are significantly more important to the 26-35 age group with 70% of this demographic saying that it would make the booking process easier.

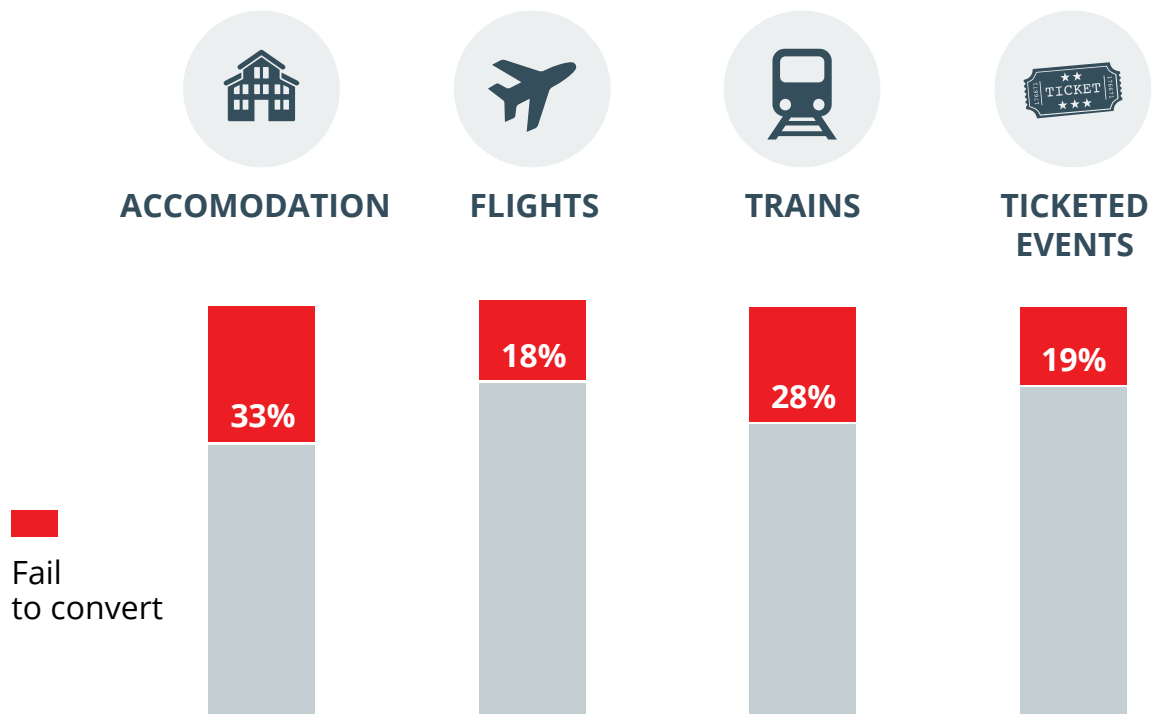
57% said that if members of the group **answered emails and texts**, it would help to make the process less stressful – for 18-25 year olds this would be the most useful factor – compared to 59% of the 55 age group.

Being empowered as a group leader and empowering group members is considered to be really important for respondents. 54% agreed that managing the group booking online would make **organising a group activity more appealing** - with 51% wanting members to be able log in individually and pay for themselves.

Ongoing communication could help to keep the booking live – with 43% of participants stating that a **notification** when a group member has booked or viewed the activity would make the booking process simpler.



**OUR RESEARCH FOUND THAT A HUGE AMOUNT OF POTENTIAL REVENUE IS BEING LEFT ON THE TABLE ACROSS ALL GROUPS ACTIVITIES.**



Almost a third (33%) of those planning an accommodation group booking (including villas, hotels and short term rentals) will not go ahead.

An average of 28% planned group rail bookings in the UK and US fall short.

**18% OF PLANNED GROUP FLIGHT BOOKINGS FAIL TO CONVERT - IN REAL TERMS THAT'S A LOSS OF £349 (\$466) AVERAGE SPEND PER HEAD.**

19% of bookings for group ticket events (including sport events, theatre, cinema, gig and music festival tickets) are planned but never happen.

# INTERVIEW



**Gene Quinn, digital pioneer and CEO of travel tech website Tnooz offers expert insight into the complexities of group bookings and how the travel industry needs to respond.**

Q

**Why do you think that the barriers for group bookings still exist in the travel industry and should the big travel companies be doing more to solve the pains experienced by group leaders?**

A

There are at least three problems that are the barriers: 1) the often chaotic behavioral dynamics of groups themselves, 2) travel service providers organized to “operate” their transport, lodging and activities at scale and “sell” offers to travelers at scale, and 3) the many segments of customer types, including an

infinite number of combinations that form groups.

If every customer is a unique opportunity that requires personalization of a travel offer, do the math on how messy it is for opinionated human beings to agree on their group travel details.

Q

**What apps / technology currently exist to aid group travel?**

A

Tnooz has run travel hackathons with themes of “travel inspiration,” and we have seen some clever ideas that use Facebook’s social graph and IBM’s Watson to cluster individual and group likes and dislikes to create travel-planning engines.

As often than not, these engines magnify disagreement rather than fostering agreement and smooth group decision-making. The Make it Social research confirms the stress

that group travel leaders experience while wearing a target on their backs as thanks for volunteering.

There are tools out there like Slack and other collaboration technology, but those tools can’t overcome inefficient group dynamics. The breakthrough would be some kind of services that makes it easier to “play nice” as a group of traveling friends, family or associates.”

Q

**How has the rise of social media affected the travel industry?**

A

Best use of social media by travelers is for sharing experiences that went right, and complaining, loudly, when something went wrong. Best use of social media for travel providers has been for support, reputation management and managing a crisis with honest and timely response.

Social media is unwieldy and non-authentic for sales, more useful for deft marketers. A better use of social media is aggregating authentic traveller experiences -- photos, videos, lists, recommendations -- and presenting their corner of the world through the eyes of actual travelers.

Q

How do you see group booking technology evolving over the next few years?

A

It's less about tech, and more about touch. People have awakened to the fact that travel-planning is a time-sucking, emotion-sapping chore with

too much seeking and not enough finding options for oneself. The code to crack is finding a new kind of travel "agency" for the digital age.

i

## About Gene Quinn

Gene Quinn is a pioneer in digital media and a well known figure in the travel industry through his former role as chairman of research company PhoCusWright.

An editor, columnist and reporter in his first career at The Chicago Tribune and previously Philadelphia Daily News and Wilmington (DE) News-Journal, Gene has since been involved at the forefront of the new digital economy.

He has held adviser, executive and board director positions to a string of media, technology and marketing companies including Newtrade Technologies, Checkfree, MTV Networks, BzzAgent and the MIT Media Lab.

## About Tnooz

Tnooz is a global provider of news, analysis, commentary, education, data and business services to the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. It is the leading voice to the industry for all areas related to travel technology.

<http://www.tnooz.com>

# THE GROUP PHENOMENON

With Dr. Elisa Bellotti  
Sociologist  
Manchester University

In both the UK and US, respondents reported an average of nine social groups – these are identified as the people we share our social lives with and have collected through the years via shared interests, situations and environments.

From the university friends with whom we organise an annual meet-up to the work colleagues that we socialise with regularly, we possess clearly defined groups within our social circle and we have specific activities that we enjoy doing with these groups.

Sociologist, Dr Elisa Bellotti said: “The phenomenon of multiple groups, or “overlapping circles” as we refer to it in sociology, has been a typical trait of modern society since the times of the industrial revolution and mass urbanization (Simmel 1976). In cities individuals can interact with more diverse people, and groups form around common interests as well as sociodemographic traits. In other words, we are no longer constrained within ascribed groups (family, neighbors) but we electively interact in multiple groups with people similar to us in terms of age, class, ethnicity and social status (McPherson et al. 2001).

In modern times working hours have become more flexible, we possess disposable income, which has allowed us to be more sociable and therefore develop more social groups. In more recent times, college and university education has become more mainstream

and not just for the privileged in society. This extension of education has created more opportunities to meet people and develop strong bonds via shared interests.



The phenomenon, has reached a different level with the advent of social media, which has made it easier to keep in touch and manage the time and space we dedicate to the numerous social circles we relate to. This also means that groups may not be as well bounded as before but there might be people who broker or liaise between various social circles (eg: a colleague who is also part of the football team; a friend from the book reading group who also comes to walking hikes, see Bellotti 2008 and 2014).

Our research found that the average number of people in each social group is seven and as Dr Bellotti explains each member of the group has their unique role to play in the group dynamic...

## OUR SOCIAL CIRCLES

*“Social circles need to be manageable in size, as large groups require more effort for organizing activities, which can reduce the frequency of socialization. These are “informal” groups that aggregate spontaneously because of the pleasure of spending time together and share common interests: despite their informality they usually organize around some leaders, people who tend to get in charge of proposing events and involve followers (Martin et al. 1952). However, the informality of the groups often*

*means that leaders and followers can exchange roles, as some people may be more apt in organizing certain activities rather than others, and usually groups build their own routines and traditions (Bellotti 2008 and 2014). For example, the more well travelled in the group may be the ones to propose trips and holidays, whereas a member who has a strong interest in music or film is likely to be the ones that organise gigs or cinema tickets.”*



**SCHOOL / UNIVERSITY FRIENDS**



**WORK AND BUSINESS FRIENDS**



**SPECIFIC INTEREST (HOBBIES, SPORTS CLUB) FRIENDS**



**SPECIFIC PLACE (BAR, COFFEE SHOP) FRIENDS**



**MIXED FRIENDS**



**CLOSE AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY**



**EXTENDED FAMILY**



**HOUSEMATES / FLATMATES**



**OTHER GROUPS OF FRIENDS**

Our research proves that being sociable and spending time with our friendship groups is important to people of all ages. Two-thirds (66%) agreed that their experience is enhanced when they do activities as part of a group. 65% of those questioned said that they would like to do more with their social groups and 58% said that social events are important to maintain the solidarity of the group.

“Despite the claims that we live in an individualistic society (Bauman 2003) human beings remain a highly social species. This means that while it is not uncommon that people will do certain activities alone, especially the so called “unconspicuous activities” (Sullivan and Gershuny 2004) for example; shopping, cleaning, paying bills etc... there is an expectation that social activities will be shared.”

41% of people said that travelling as a group was more enjoyable than travelling alone, with almost half of respondents (48%) stating that they felt safer travelling as part of a group. Dr Bellotti explains:



“Research shows that people often feel uncomfortable to go out on their own for a drink, or to the cinema, to other cultural and entertaining events, or to go on holiday (Bellotti 2008 and 2014). Solitary activities gain more attention and are perceived as brave or unusual (like solo travelling), and are usually associate with some specific needs of solitude (Bellotti 2008 and 2014). Social events instead are normally expected to be attended in groups, and this is especially true for young people and for women as groups can provide a peer reinforced and shared identity and a sense of security (Bellotti 2008 and 2014).”

Of the 1,000 respondents questioned 60% agreed that they enjoyed more memorable

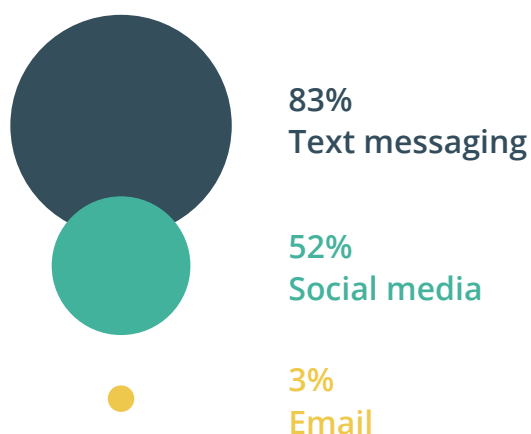
experiences when on a group holiday, event or activity. The most popular group memory was ‘eating lots of lovely food’ 53% and just over a third (39%) took a group photo and shared it online.

Our research revealed that within a group people are more likely to lose their inhibitions, with almost half (46%) admitting that they remember getting ever so ‘slightly tipsy’ or ‘having too much to drink’ during their group experience while 20% said that they danced a lot and 20% sang too loudly!

22% of those questioned said that they ‘found the perfect spot’ thanks to being with a group and 20% expressed ‘finding happiness’ as something they remember from their last group outing or holiday.

“A group activity makes an event a special occasion that falls out the weekly routine, because people go the effort of attending something that is specifically organized for a certain event (be it, a holiday, a trip to the cinema or attending a festival). The status of “out of ordinary” also facilitate the loosening of normal rules and inhibitions, and these event become what Goffman calls “symbolic spaces of leisure” (1959:22), special settings where ordinary rules are loosened and minor transgression may take place. Also, because of the extraordinary status, group events create out of ordinary memories that are reinforced by the collective participation: these activities become part of the shared history of the group, which will recall them as anecdotes in subsequent meetings and events (Bellotti 2008 and 2014).”

**But how do we keep in touch with our nine social groups?**



We use a variety of methods according to the research, most respondents in the UK and US use text messaging (83%) over half (52%) use social media - only 3% said that they used email to contact their social groups.

72% agreed that social media was a useful tool to organise group activities, with Facebook being the most popular social media channel to do so. 50% of respondents said that using social media 'allowed everyone to have their say' and 50% also said that it was 'impossible to get everyone together to discuss it in person'. Over a third (36%) said social media can be used for the whole experience, from planning to sharing the photographs afterwards. 25% agreed that it was a fun way to share ideas and make plans.

Dr Berlotti explains: "Social media largely

facilitates group interactions: via social media people can easily keep in touch with multiple groups, can find and organize events, can share comments, photos and videos that help creating and maintaining collective memories and anecdotes of groups' activities. Research largely shows that the fear that social media will eventually substitute face to face interaction is largely unfounded. Online networks do not substitute offline interactions, but mainly reinforce existing relationships (Subrahmanyam et al. 2008; Quan-Haase and Wellman, 2002; Wang and Wellman 2010). In other words, while we might have a large number of contacts and followers on facebook, twitter, Instagram, and the like, we actively engage with only a minor part of them, who are usually the people we also interact face to face, or with whom we have a strong connection."



### About Elisa Bellotti

**Elisa Bellotti** is lecturer in sociology at the University of Manchester. Her research interests mainly focus on relational sociology and its link with other mainstream sociological theories; and on social network analysis and mixed methods. She has taken this approach in several sociological substantive areas, such as the study of intimacy and personal relationships, sociology of science, inter and intra organizational ties, and sociology of consumption.



# AT A GLANCE





## How many groups are in your social circle?



2

### SCHOOL / UNIVERSITY FRIENDS

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

6 8



2

### WORK AND BUSINESS FRIENDS

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

7 8



2

### CLOSE AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

5 7



2

### SPECIFIC PLACE (BAR, COFFEE SHOP) FRIENDS

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

5 6



2

### SPECIFIC INTEREST (HOBBIES, SPORTS CLUB) FRIENDS

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

8 11



2

### HOUSEMATES / FLATMATES

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

4 4



2

### EXTENDED FAMILY

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

5 8



2

### MIXED FRIENDS

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

6 7



2

### OTHER GROUPS OF FRIENDS

AVERAGE GROUP SIZE

7 8

## Who do we socialise with most?



85%

Family



34%

Specific interest friends



53%

Work and business friends



31%

Specific place friends



43%

Mixed Friends



18%

Other groups of friends



37%

School / university friends

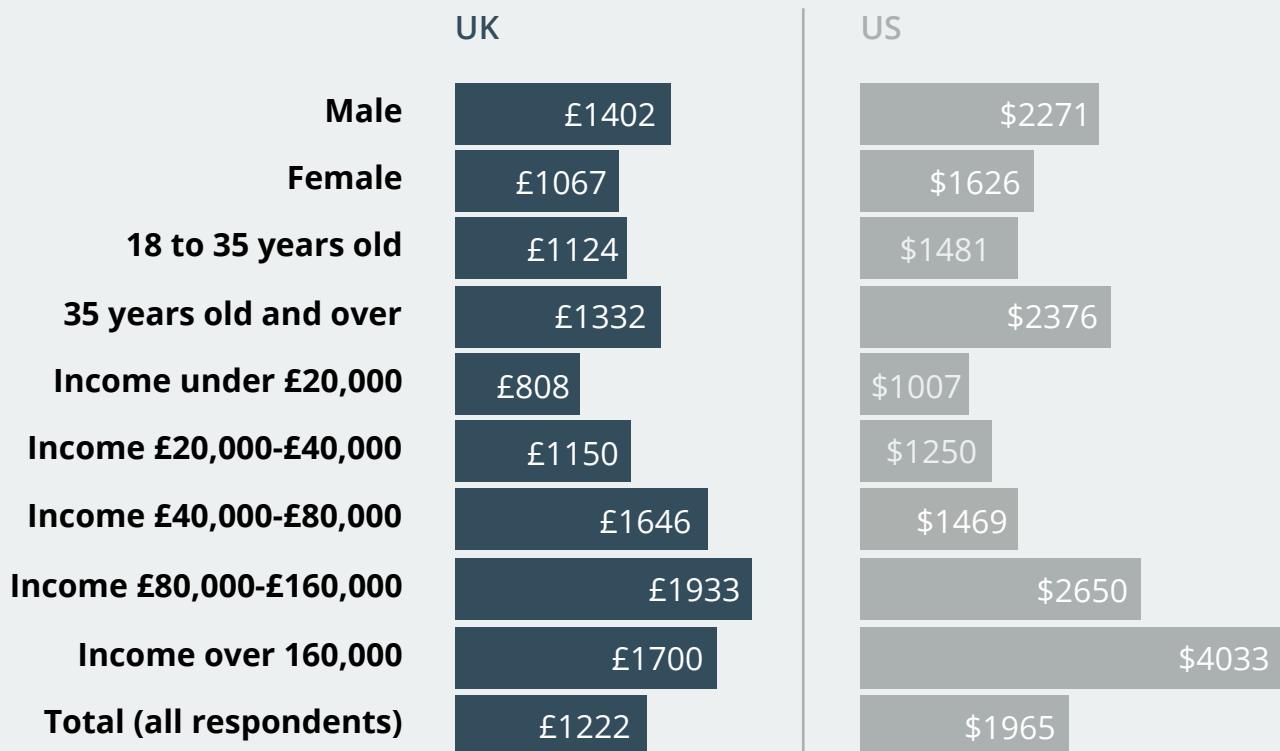


13%

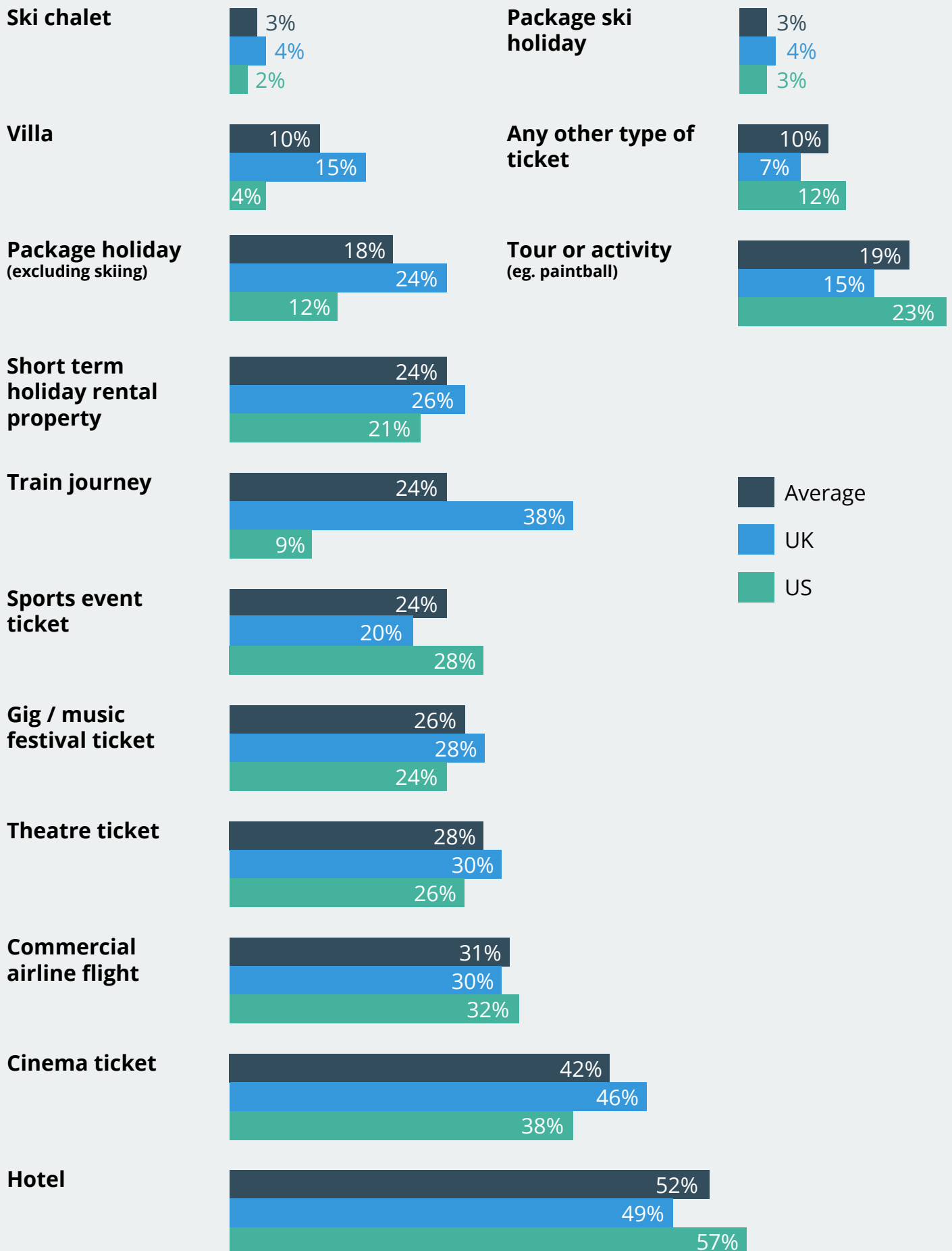
Housemates / flatmates

## How much would you spend on all of the activities with your social groups?

Please count up what you think you spent in total over the year.



In the last year have you planned to, or successfully booked, any of the following as a group?



# INTERVIEW

## ABOUT MILLENNIALS



**Jeff Fromm,**  
**Author of Marketing to Millennials**

Q

What are the main challenges when marketing to millennials?

A

It is without question that brands and marketers recognize the influence of the millennial generation. However, it is important to remember that this is not a homogeneous cohort. Through our research we have learned that already one in four millennials are parents and their spending behaviors and attitudes are significantly different than their non-parent peers. Additionally, there is

another cohort of affluent millennials making a household income of more than \$100K annually. Without a doubt, targeting millennials should be a priority for nearly every brand. However, it is important to understand which group of millennials you are targeting and create custom messages for them.

## MILLENNIALS:

*"THEY HAVE TROUBLE MAKING DECISIONS. THEY WOULD RATHER HIKE THE HIMALAYAS THAN CLIMB THE CORPORATE LADDER. THEY CRAVE ENTERTAINMENT BUT THEIR ATTENTION SPAN IS AS SHORT AS ONE ZAP OF A TV DIAL"*

**TIME MAGAZINE**

Q

According to a study done by HVS in 2013 - 58% of Millennials (20% higher than older generations) prefer to travel with friends – how can travel and hospitality companies capitalise on this?

A

One in four millennials are more likely to want to spend money on an experiences rather than a product. Going even further, it is more likely that they will be willing to spend more money on experiences with their friends. This is an extremely inclusive generation that will

not make any sort of purchase decision, travel or otherwise, without first getting input from their friends and networks. Creating opportunities that encourage peer affirmation, sharing and group experiences will set one brand apart from the other.

Q

We know that Millennials are mobile and like to buy online but what turns them on and off when it comes to 'checking-out' online?

A

We have found that while millennials are extremely active on their mobile devices when it comes to research and inspiration for their travel plans, they are activating and booking on their desktops. A millennial looking at Instagram on their phone may be at different phase in the trip planning process than someone else on Kayak.com on their desktop. The brands that are creating the right messages for their audiences based on the platform they are using at the time are earning the

most millennial love.

Additionally, the common narrative is that millennials are not connecting with travel agents and instead are opting for an entirely DIY trip planning process. In fact, travel agents still have a strong hold on today's travelers they are just taking shape in different forms. Online booking sites often offer a live chat feature with booking agents and successfully integrate the traditional agent experience with a new digital facelift.

Q

## How can companies make this generation loyal to their brand?

A

Too often marketers pass millennials off as the “un-loyal” generation. Fortunately, this could not be farther from the truth. Millennials are extremely loyal to the brands that give them what they want. However, the moment their expectations are not met, they are not afraid to move on to the next best thing. Instead of assuming you know exactly what your audience wants from your brand, ask them. Millennials value co-creation and participation and are more likely to take ownership and build strong relationships with brands that ask for their opinion than those that don't.

Q

## What's next after the Millennial?

A

The question is not what is next, it's how can we expect the millennial influence to expand? As millennials are becoming parents at rapid rates, they will pass on their beliefs and buying behaviors to their children. Millennials are an extremely pragmatic and entrepreneurial generation and we can expect to see them pass those values on to their children. Already the number of entrepreneurs under the age of 15 is astonishing and we do not expect for this to slow down any time soon.

## What is a Millennial?

Millennials are people born between 1980 - 2000 - also known as generation Y

There are around 80 million millennials in the US - almost 25% of the population

In the UK there are approximately 14.7 million millennials - 23% of the population

Millennials are digital natives

Younger millennials are still living with their parents, but the older end of the spectrum is already experiencing their peak spending years\*

Known as the 'Now Generation' because they demand information as it occurs\*

Millennials grew up bombarded with advertising, and they are too sophisticated to be “tricked” by marketers. Thus, Millennials turn to their peers for “expert” opinion\*

Millennials feel the need to share their current location, activities, and opinions with others, and this becomes their method of interaction. Additionally, Millennials are sociable offline as they are a generation that enjoys traveling with others, whether or not they have met previously\*

Millennials value brands that involve them in the creation process of the product itself and brand experience\*\*

\*HVS - Top 10 Trends of the Next Generation of Travel: The Millennials 2013

\*\* FutureCast

---

65%

of millennials would like to do more with their social groups.

---

32%

of millennials book a group activity on the spur of the moment. They are the most spontaneous age group!

---

63%

of millennials agree that experiences are more memorable when shared with a group.

---

93%

of millennials organise group activities via social media.



On average millennials are the age group that engage in the most ticketed events with their social circles: they reported more trips to the theatre, the cinema, music events and festivals compared to all other age groups.



Millennials went on twice as many package holidays with friends compared to those aged over 35.



## About Jeff Fromm

Although not a millennial as defined by his age, Jeff Fromm is the Millennial Marketing Guy. Jeff is President of FutureCast, a marketing consultancy that specializes in millennial trends and is a contributing writer at Forbes.com. Jeff is also a frequent speaker on marketing and consumer trends and brand innovation. Jeff has spent significant time researching the millennial audience and is the co-author of "Marketing to Millennials" (2013) and "Millennials with Kids" (2015). Jeff has over 25 years of marketing consulting experience across dozens of brands ranging from Build-a-Bear to Whole Foods Market. He is a member of the Board of Directors at Three Dog Bakery, Service Management Group, Tickets For Less & FutureCast. Jeff is a graduate of The Wharton School of the

University of Pennsylvania and remains actively involved in the alumni network as a regular content contributor. Jeff is the co-author of "Marketing to Millennials; Reach The Largest & Most Influential Generation of Consumers Ever" (2013) and his new book "Marketing to Millennials as New Parents" is forthcoming (Q1 2015). Jeff has 25+ years of hands-on experience with brands, including SONIC, Hallmark, Build-A-Bear Workshop, KC Masterpiece, Sprint, Whole Foods, Warsteiner Beer and Payless. Jeff holds a degree in economics from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and studied at The London School of Economics.

[www.thefuturecast.com](http://www.thefuturecast.com)





# LEADERS & FOLLOWERS

The survey results revealed that within any social group, a leader must come forward if a group activity is to be successfully researched, planned and eventually booked.

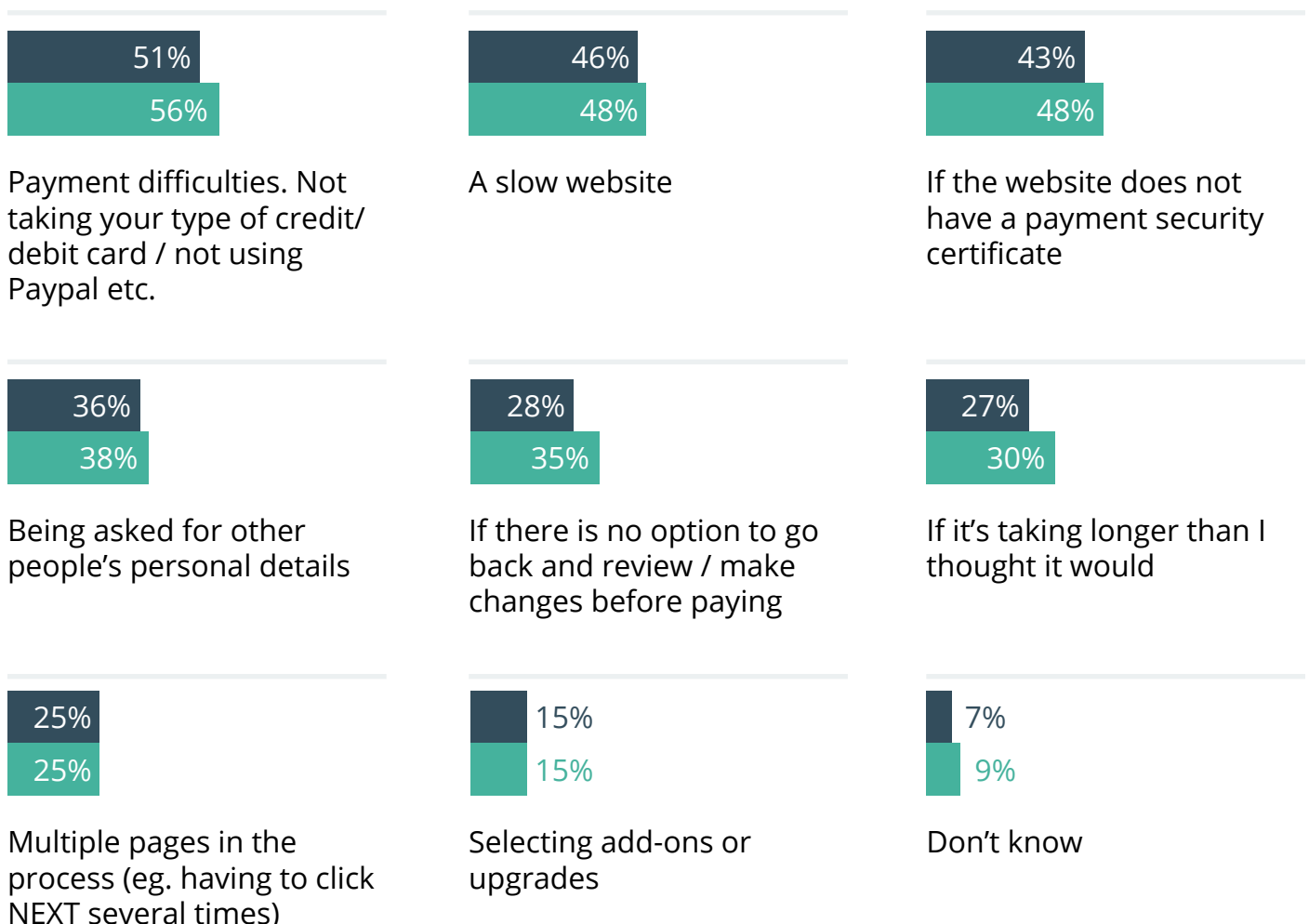
However, according to our respondents the role of group leader is not an easy one... The vast majority of group leaders (65%) book activities online, which should be simple, yes? No, on average, almost a quarter (23%) of those who had successfully booked a group activity experienced some level of frustration.

Certain activities, such as booking group accommodation appear to cause higher

levels of frustration, 31% of group leaders who had booked accommodation had experienced stress and that statistic was even higher (44%) for those booking a villa for a group.

Of those questioned more than half (54%) said that they would give up on the booking if they had problems paying online, other gripes that may result in the booking not going ahead online included; a slow website, being asked for other people's details and not being able to go back and review / make changes before paying.

## WHEN ACTING AS A GROUP LEADER, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MIGHT MAKE YOU GIVE UP ON MAKING THE ACTUAL BOOKING?



Another common pitfall for group leaders is that they often have to pay upfront for an activity and then collect the monies from the group members afterwards. In fact, 19% of those questioned admitted that this prevented them from completing a booking, despite having the desire to plan a group activity.

The report reveals that 13% of group leaders found themselves out of pocket after booking a group holiday, flight or event ticket. The figure is even higher for those booking a ski chalet – with 36% of group leaders taking a hit after the activity. Among the most unfortunate group leaders are those who book flights, the average financial hit for them is £788 in the UK and \$517 in the US. Booking a villa can also prove expensive with the average group leader being £1310 out of pocket in the UK and \$700 in the US. The

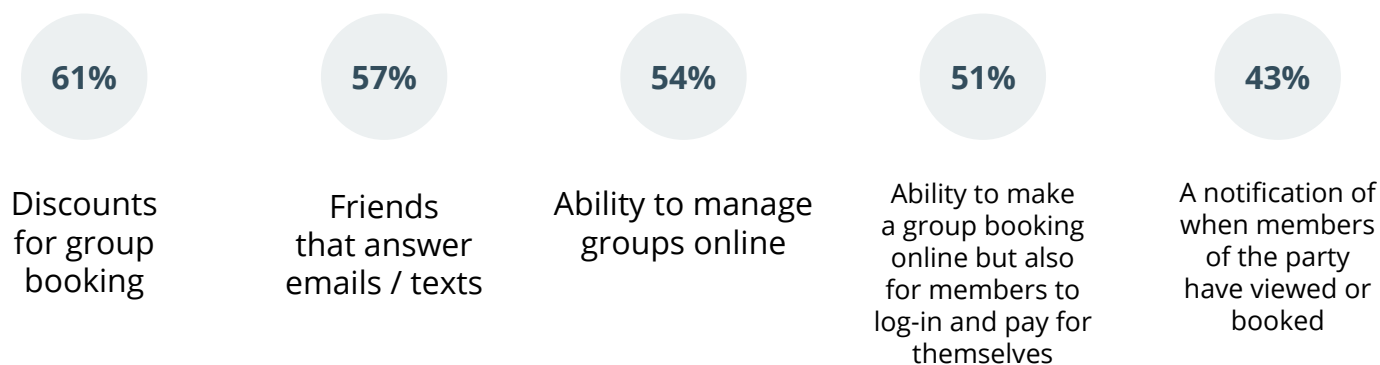
cost for those booking a ticketed event for their group (theatre, cinema, sport, gig or music festival) was much lower at just £84.50 / \$82.50 – but still not insignificant.

And as if that wasn't bad enough, the role of group leader is also time intensive, with the average activity taking six days to organise. Booking a villa takes a whopping 13 days, 10 days for a package holiday, eight days for a hotel and surprisingly it can take someone three days to organise a cinema trip for a group!

It's no wonder then that many people are simply not prepared to put themselves forward as group leader, 12% admitted that they were not up to the job and because of this their activity never got off the ground – literally in some cases!

## THE KEY TO A HAPPY GROUP LEADER AND YOUR ACTIVITY ACTUALLY BEING BOOKED?

These are the top five resolutions as identified by our participants:



### There were some other differences amongst age groups and genders:

For the 18 to 25 year age group, friends that answer emails / texts was seen as most useful (66%).

The over 55 age group were significantly less likely to mention this factor (59%).

Female respondents were significantly more

likely to mention the ability to make an online group booking and for everyone to log in and pay for themselves (58%), than male respondents (44%).

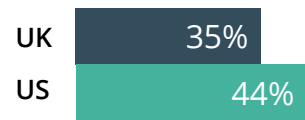
Female respondents were significantly more likely to mention a notification of when other members of your party have viewed or booked (48%), than male respondents (37%).

## HOW DO YOU GENERALLY MAKE GROUP BOOKINGS WHEN YOU ARE THE PERSON IN CHARGE?

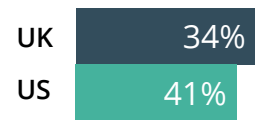
### Online



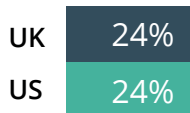
### Talking on the phone



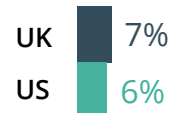
### By email



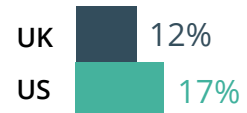
### Face to face (eg. box office)



### Some other way



### Depends on the activity





# CONVERSIONS

**Group activities are fun, bonding experiences that enrich our lives and provide lasting memories – even travelling to the destination becomes part of the experience when we're in a group. Our research demonstrates that people have a wide range of groups in their social circle and that they have a desire to plan group activities. We have discovered that people love to make plans using social media platforms and then boast on Facebook, look at me and my amazing friends having fun!**

Why then, do one in four group bookings, which are in the planning process, fail to come to fruition? On average 10% of activities made it to the 'detailed' planning stage, but are not converted to an actual group booking. The figure is even higher for package holidays; 18% fall short at the 'detailed planning' stage.

Despite over half of respondent using open forms of social media to plan activities, this system is open to errors and frustrations.

57% of people admit to missing posts, or replying to old posts and getting confused, 29% (34% in the UK and 23% in the US) of people agree that a downside to planning via social media is that you cannot then book from the

same site and a quarter of people find that decisions are not made as they tend to go round in circles, 14% find multiple links to information unhelpful and one in ten people said that not having direct access to up to date pricing was a pitfall for using social media to plan group activities.



Another issue, as we have already discussed, is the problems faced by the group leaders (collecting money, time taken to plan and being out of pocket) and how too many passive, go-with-the-flow group members can prevent an activity from getting any further than initial planning, but what are the other barriers, specific to each industry, to making a group booking conversion? And what is the real value of these lost sales?

## VILLA



*"Too much hassle getting answers."*

## HOTEL



*"One person having to pay."*

## SHORT-TERM RENTAL



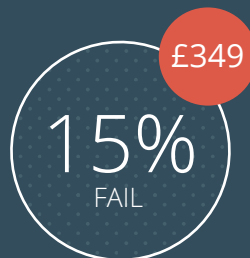
*"Fear that someone will drop out."*

## PACKAGE HOLIDAY



*"Nobody in the group wanted to take charge."*

## FLIGHTS



*"Too much hassle coordinating travel."*

## TRAINS



*"One person having to pay."*

## SPORTS TICKET



*"Too much hassle getting answers."*

## CINEMA



*"Too much hassle getting answers."*

## GIG, FESTIVAL



*"Nobody in the group wanted to take charge."*

## TOUR



*"Nobody in the group wanted to take charge."*

All respondents were asked how many days off over the last year (including weekends, bank holidays and holiday days) they felt they had wasted. Around one in five said that they wasted 3-5 days and a quarter agreed that they had wasted up to a week, doing not a lot, when they could have been having fun with one of their social groups!

The majority hung around the house and almost a third couldn't say what they had done with their time! Why is this time not being better spent? It can't be a lack of inspiration as over half of those those questioned said that they had seen an advertisement or a post on social media which made them think 'I wish I could do that with a bunch of friends.'

It's not lack of funds either; respondents in the UK felt that they could have made an additional £673 available to do groups activities and in the US the figure was \$1,106. When asked what would have prompted them to spend more on group activities; 20% said 'if it was easier to organise my mates', 13% said 'if there was a quick and easy way to make a booking' and 15% said 'if someone else organised it'.



# MAKE IT SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY

We have one clear mission: To make the world a truly social place. Whilst today's online world means we have never been so well connected, it's still as difficult as ever to get together with your friends and enjoy the real physical offline world.

We're living in the era of the antisocial social network. Through our innovative and reliable technology we will make it easier for people to do more with more of their friends.

## GROUP BOOKINGS MADE SIMPLE

We provide a set of APIs that allow you to integrate a social group booking functionality with a pre-determined user experience or as a completely white labeled solution. Through integrating our solution organisations will be able to attract and cater for the missed market opportunity detailed in this report.

For more information visit our [website](#).



# CONCLUSION

## SIGN OFF FROM EDDIE ROBB CEO OF MAKE IT SOCIAL

As a young person myself, or should I say millennial, with a varied mix of friends, collected from school, university, work, travelling and the rugby team - I know the pitfalls of booking events, travel and accommodation with a group - that's what triggered the idea for Make it Social. Surely it doesn't have to be that difficult, I've got all my friends a few clicks away yet trying to arrange anything with them is still as difficult as before the days of the internet! We're missing a trick in this fantastic online world we now live in.

Our latest batch of research, which is the basis of this industry report, undoubtedly supports this view but it also tells a much more revealing story about our social lives - they're complex, contradictory and well, not very efficient.

On the one hand we're social beings who agree that nothing, not even social media, can replace sharing an experience with our friends and family. We don't have just one group of friends, the average person has nine! (Personally, I only have six, I'm feeling a lot less social than I did before I started this report). We feel safer, have more fun and create stronger memories when we do things as a group. We invest a significant amount of money socialising with our groups throughout the year and we'd happily spend more. But something is getting in the way of the fun... hang on a minute, it is the companies who are trying to sell us the experiences that are putting the barriers in our way!

We've embraced social media, and I'm not just talking about the under 35s, it inspires us and we love to share our own experiences, it helps us to keep in touch with our social

circles and suggest activities, but it doesn't help us to actually get together, face to face.

As a nation we're time-poor, but we are wasting precious weekends and bank holidays frittering time away, as that good old cliché goes... we're for a good time not a long time!

People want to socialise with their groups, they have the time, the money and the inspiration - but in many cases it's not happening. Make it Social will deliver fantastic technology that allows you to harness that time, money and inspiration and convert it into a powerful, influential and vocal social group booking. Working with our technology will increase your bottom line, this report I'm sure will have highlighted the opportunity... it's now down to you to act on it and grasp the opportunity.

Our social lives have become complicated, we need to keep things simple and make way for the fun.



**Eddie Robb**  
CEO, Make it Social

eddie@makeitsocial.com

@EddieRobb



# METHODOLOGY

## THE RESEARCH

Why Research Ltd was commissioned by Make it Social to undertake an online survey related to group bookings. The survey was conducted using a Research Now online panel and ran on two different occasions; from the 4th until the 10th August 2015 and from the 23rd until the 27th November 2015.

1000 adults completed each online survey in full, 500 from the UK and 500 from the US.

## ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Interviews with industry experts and comments from an independent sociologist allowed us to gain a deeper understanding and gain qualitative data about groups, group bookings and trends.

## ABOUT WHY RESEARCH LIMITED

Why Research Limited is a full service, independent market and social research agency based in Edinburgh. They work with clients throughout the UK and in a variety of sectors. Their mission is to provide cost effective research solutions to the questions which keep us awake at night, or the dreams we want to see enacted.

[whyresearch.co.uk](http://whyresearch.co.uk)

## REFERENCES

Bauman, Z. (2003) *Liquid Love. On the frailty of human bond*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bellotti, E (2008) What Are Friends For? Elective communities of single people, *Social Networks*, 30, 318-329.

Bellotti, E. (2014) *Qualitative Networks: Mixed Methods in Sociological Research*, London, Routledge.

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., Cook, J.M., (2001), Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 415-444.

Martin, W.E., Gross, N., Darley, J.G., (1952) Studies of group behavior: leaders, followers, and isolates in small organized groups, *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 47(4), 838-842.

Goffman, E., (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York: Doubleday.

Subrahmanyam, K., Reich, S.M., Waechter, N., Espinoza, G., (2008) Online and offline social networks: Use of social networking sites by emerging adults, *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29, 6, 420-433

Quan-Haase, A., Wellman, B., Witte, J., Hampton, K. (2002) Capitalizing on the Internet: Social contact, civic engagement, and sense of community. In B. Wellman & C. Haythornthwaite (Eds.), *Internet and everyday life* (pp. 291-324). Oxford: Blackwell.

Wang, H. and Wellman, B., (2010) Social Connectivity in America: Changes in Adult Friendship Network Size From 2002 to 2007, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53, 1148-1169.

Simmel, G., (1976a [1903]) 'The metropolis and mental life', in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, New York: Free Press.

Sullivan, O. and Gershuny, J., (2004) Inconspicuous Consumption. Work-Rich, Time-Poor in the Liberal Market Economy, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4, 1, 79-100



© Make it Social Ltd. 2016