

Key Points

- Britain is not a key destination for the Russian business travel market, which makes it a challenge to get business travellers to extend
- However, Britain is considered to be an attractive leisure destination
- Barriers that may discourage travellers from visiting are perceptions that Britain is expensive and visa difficulties

Research Objectives and Methodology

The main objectives of the research were to explore the key factors which influence business visitors to extend their business trips and to determine the likelihood of these business visitors to return to Britain as leisure visitors. The research was primarily qualitative but included an extended screening exercise in the form of an online survey.

KEY FINDINGS

General Business Trip Behaviour

- The research showed that amongst our research respondents, the frequency of business travel is fairly high with two thirds claiming they have travelled abroad twice or more in the past 12 months. On average, 11% of Russian business trips were international whilst 89% of Russian business trips were spent in Russia.
- Not surprisingly, travelling within the European continent is common. However, Britain is not a key business trip destination for Russians. The top three business destinations are Germany, Finland and Austria.
- The main reasons for business travel were to attend conferences, training and trade shows.
- Business trips are extended fairly frequently and are often co-funded by companies. The company usually pays for flights and accommodation.
- The majority extended for 1-3 days but longer extensions are also reasonably common.
- Motivations to extend include: getting to know a particular destination, sightseeing and attending events of interest.
- Key barriers to extend include getting permission from company to extend, other work related matters such as the inability to take time off and family related reasons.

Decision Making and Booking Characteristics

- Business trips are generally initiated by the company but sometimes higher level staff have the opportunity to initiate a business trip.
- When it comes to making the actual travel arrangements generally the travellers are the final decision makers.
- A wide range of sources are used for planning the trip, but the internet is the most common source used. The internet is used across all stages of planning – from deriving inspiration to actually booking the trip.
- General search engines are most commonly used websites followed by travel network websites.
- Most people decided to extend their trip prior to booking their main business trip. The decision to extend also had to be agreed with the company (manager) to ensure it doesn't affect the business trip.
- As the company often covers accommodation costs, travellers tend to stay in the same hotel for both the business and extended trip.
- Business extenders usually travel independently, unlike on their main trip where they tend to travel with colleagues. The presence of colleagues has no influence on length of stay, hotel and activities.
- Language is not purported to be an issue as most Russian business travellers can converse in basic English.



Perceptions of Britain

- Perceptions of Britain are mainly positive and it is seen as a place with a long history, rich culture and is full of contrasts
- Britain is considered to be an attractive travel destination, mainly due to its abundance of sightseeing opportunities, rich culture, football events and reputation as a developed nation.
- Key barriers that may discourage travellers from visiting or extending their business trips revolve around perceptions that Britain is expensive and difficulties of obtaining a visa.
- Attitudes towards British people are mostly positive. Brits are stereotyped as being polite, honest, 'free', traditional, helpful and reserved. They are also seen to be famous for their love of football.
- British food does not appear to have a good reputation and is not seen to be particularly flavoursome. However, this is more likely to be based on limited knowledge than actual experience. Interestingly Russians perceive British food to be tea, jam and porridge.
- Britain is seen as an attractive travel destination, especially when extending business trips but Italy is most valued by Russian travellers due its to long cultural history and weather.

Britain as a Destination to Extend

- Britain is seen as a suitable place to conduct business due to its standing as a leading economy with plenty of opportunities and its trustworthy reputation.
- Encouragingly, those who had travelled to Britain on business extended their trips for leisure purposes.
- London was the most popular destination for business trips and as it is perceived to have a lot to offer, extenders tend to stay there. All of those that visited Britain were pleased with their experience and were keen on re-visiting London in the future with their families. Additionally, during potential future trips, they would like to see more of the country and travel outside of London.
- Interestingly, having to obtain a visa to visit Britain is not seen as a barrier for those that actually extended; instead affordability was a bigger concern.

Way Forward

- Russian business travellers are a challenging target market as traditionally Britain is not a key destination for Russian business trips. Britain is also perceived as an expensive destination compared to other European countries.
- As the company often covers the extended trip flights and accommodation this allows the traveller to spend more money on leisure activities.
- Russian business travellers make their own travel arrangements (or are at least key influencers) and therefore can be targeted directly relatively easily.
- A strong internet presence is important, as travellers do a lot of researching and planning on the internet.
- Internet content should be customised to the needs of the Russian traveller and show discounts on major attractions, excursions, accommodations and restaurants. It is also important to show the plethora of free attractions and activities available in Britain. Also list major events happening in Britain (especially football events) and provide information on the visa application procedures.
- Finally the research findings show that in general many attitudes and characteristics displayed by Russian Business Extenders towards international travel and Britain are broadly similar to those shown by Russian consumers. For more information about Russian travellers http://www.visitbritain.org/Images/Russia_tcm139-167262.pdf

