

Smartphones seen driving travel bookings: Abacus

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More people are set to book their travels while on the move due to a phenomenal rise in the number of smartphones, with Asia leading the way, a key industry player said Wednesday.

Abacus International, which provides travel information and reservations tailored to the Asia-Pacific region, said travel agencies needed to adapt to the emerging trend.

"There is ample scope for travel agencies to get involved in mobile. It's still emerging," said Abacus International president and chief executive Robert Bailey.

While the trend is still in its early stages, adoption is likely to pick up "through to 2011 and going forward," he told reporters.

"It really is more than hype now, it's becoming a reality," he added. "Mobile travel booking will be coming into play, we got the tools now."

As the world's biggest [mobile phone market](#), the Asia-Pacific region is likely to lead the trend, Bailey said.

The region accounts for 30 percent of worldwide [smartphone](#) penetration, with 54 percent of all devices sold in Asia by 2015 likely to be smartphones, up from five percent in 2009, he said.

Smartphones are mobile phones that have multi-media capabilities on

top of making calls and sending text messages, including browsing the Internet and sending emails.

The number of applications allowing individuals to use their mobile phones for travel-related transactions has been rising, Abacus said.

It said there were likely to be about 123 million [mobile payment](#) users in the Asia-Pacific by 2012.

"The apps opportunity is one that is being scrutinised at the moment," said Brett Henry, Abacus vice president for marketing.

"Airlines and travel providers see the value in mobile," added Henry.

"With its vast population and mobile usage, Asians will pave the way in determining the future face of travel through mobile, especially with the dominance of smartphones in the region."

Bailey said booking transactions in the Asia-Pacific region rose 11 percent to record highs in 2010, and was expected to slow to a more sustainable pace of six percent this year.

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