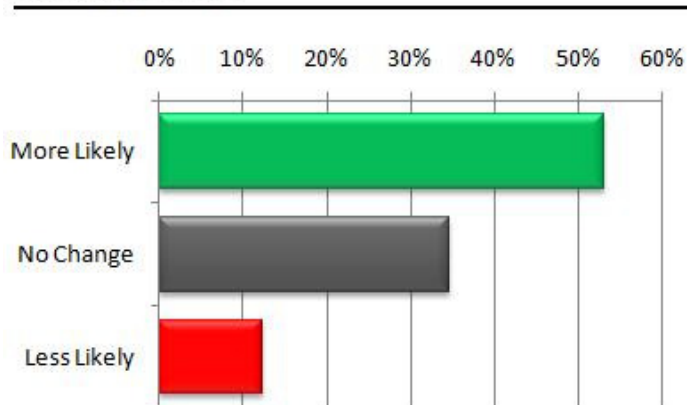


As the recession continues, consumers continue to evolve their travel thinking. The evolution represents possible opportunities and challenges. Compete recently surveyed its panelists on two aspects of travel planning: Likelihood to travel during off-peak periods, and likelihood to book packages.

The likelihood of traveling off-peak is one gauge of consumers managing a desire to travel against monetary pressures. Over half of respondents reported that they are more likely to consider off-peak travel vs. a year ago. Note that the trough of the recession was Q4 2008, so the 2009-to-2010 increase in off-peak potential is on top of changes from 2008 to 2009. The noble 12% less likely to consider off-peak may be responding to overall lower travel rates (i.e., less need to travel off-peak given lower prices).

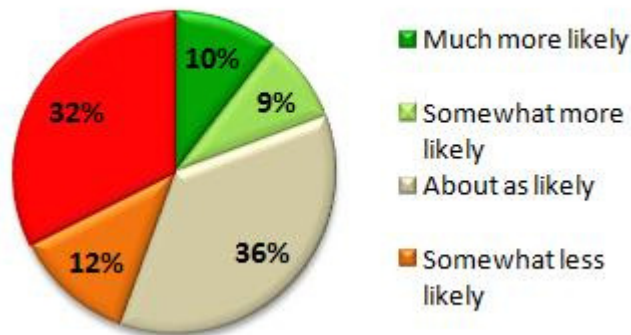
Change in Likelihood to Choose Off-Peak Travel, 2010 vs. 2009
 (Survey, July 2010, n=546)



Traveling off-peak is one possible way to save money.

Consumers may also be less committal to booking too much at once, such as booking air and hotel together. To investigate, Compete also asked about the likelihood of booking a package, this year vs. last. A total of 44% reported being less inclined to book a package, with nearly a third reporting much less likely. Only one in five reported an increased likelihood to book packages. The decline in package inclination may also be related to differences in [consumer perceptions of travel value by category](#).

Change in Likelihood to Book a Package
 (Survey, June 2010, n=811)



The above results highlight the mix of opportunity and challenges in the current travel environment. The likelihood to consider off-peak travel, for example, may represent an opportunity to capture travelers otherwise out of the market. However, the increased hesitancy to book packages may represent a key hurdle for travel entities seeking to compensate for less revenue from one category by tapping into secondary categories (such as an airline seeking to sell hotel nights). A great complement for the survey results would be adding the extent to which search engine terms contain “off peak” and “package,” coupled with the off-peak and package research volume across travel and on specific sites.

With consumers watching every travel dollar, it is important that travel industry watch every change in leaning (the “why”) in tandem with behavior (the “what”).