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Headline: Travelers' dilemma: Sustainability or better spending

Byline: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

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MANILA, Philippines—Amid rising global inflation and the impact of climate change, travelers are forced to choose between cutting costs and making sustainable travel choices, research by an online travel company found.

Based on survey responses from 33,228 respondents across 35 countries and territories across the globe, travel company Booking.com noted in its Sustainable Travel Report 2023 that 74 percent recognized the urgency to make sustainable choices and save the planet for future generations.

"At a time of general global uncertainty, with the turbulence of climate change and the rising cost of living, traveling more sustainably continues to be front of mind for travelers," the report said.

GRAPHIC Ed Lustan

Survey results also showed that 80 percent confirmed that traveling sustainably is crucial to them.

Out of 1,007 respondents from the Philippines, 97 percent said they place great importance on sustainable travel.

In an effort to make conscious choices during vacations, 60 percent of Filipino respondents said they planned their sightseeing "so that they could walk, bike, or take public transport."

"This shift in behavior highlights the urgent action travelers are taking as they strive to make more sustainable choices to save the planet for future generations," said the report.

GRAPHIC Ed Lustan

In 2021, independent research and analysis by Economist Impact, which was commissioned by travel company Airbnb, showed that the majority of Filipinos want to travel in ways that could create more positive and empowering experiences for the communities they visit.

Another research published in 2022 found that most Filipino travelers are committed to sustainability and take concrete steps to preserve nature. Among the top priorities of Filipinos when it comes to traveling sustainably included opting for environmentally friendly modes of transportation to minimize carbon emissions.

While people across the globe are recognizing the urgency to act now and travel more sustainably, changes in economic weather in the past 12 months have pushed people to be more conscious and choose between sustainability and spending.

Around 76 percent of the total survey respondents said they want to travel more sustainably over the coming 12 months. However, 76 percent also believe that the global energy crisis and the rising cost of living are impacting their spending plans.

“For these people, sustainability and travel combined can seem non-urgent when they are worried about bills and the energy crisis,” the research said.

GRAPHIC Ed Lustan

At least 49 percent of respondents believe more sustainable travel options are too expensive, and 43 percent said they would be willing to pay more for travel options.

Almost half of the respondents are seeking discounts and economic incentives to opt for eco-friendly options. Around 43 percent also said they “would be encouraged to travel more sustainably with reward points for making more sustainable choices that they could use for free extra perks or discounts through online travel booking sites.”

“Despite existing barriers and the tightening of purse strings, it’s clear there’s a huge appetite for solutions, with two-thirds (59%) more determined to make more sustainable choices now than when they traveled a year ago,” said the Booking.com report.

In the past year, people said they have been converting intent into action by taking small sustainable steps at home, such as:

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Some have also said they have taken sustainable steps while on vacation these past 12 months. These include:

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“The responsible traveler is switching up responsible travel in 2023 – and their every small step counts,” the research noted.