

## Mobile Travel Analysis

Mobile travel represents the next major wave for travel applications and its influence will be enormous.

Waiting for mobile technologies that will impact the way that travel is sold, marketed and experienced has been a long process. Promised by pundits (often with vested interests) over the last few years, the critical point is always given as a tantalising 18 months away. It seems that mobile is in the travel press again, surrounded by phrases such as 'tipping point', 'critical mass' and 'sky-rocketing revenues'. It is easy to be cynical.

However, if we look past the hyperbole of industry pundits, there are changes in the market place that indicate the critical mass has finally been reached. The following points indicate why:

1. The rapid adoption of the new technology 4G standards by industry heavy weights. This heralds the rolling-out of wireless broadband networks. This should dramatically change the way mobile web is used.
2. Consumer demand. High speed mobile data is now in demand with handsets that make rich content accessible on smaller mobile devices. Fast mobile web access becomes a reality.
3. GPS enabled hand-sets now enable location based search, contextual advertising and travel specific revenue streams.
4. The breaking down of the 'walled garden' (a mechanism to restrict user experience by confining them to a specific digital space) protecting the traditional operators and a move to open-source software development independent of the telecoms sector (Wimax has its routes in the computer industry rather than the telecoms industry – this marks an attractive shift in attitude).
5. Industry partnerships such as recently between Google and Nokia (who have 40 per cent of the mobile market) to put Google's search engine directly onto Nokia's high end multimedia phones. Mobile search is becoming a 'must-have' feature on any phone.
6. The emergence of Google's Android, an open-source software phone and the unveiling of the Open Handset Alliance in November 2007. Both should lead to vastly accelerated development of the mobile space.
7. Exponential growth of mobile penetration in emerging markets. Asia will hold 50% of the WiMax market by 2013, far surpassing traditional internet access (cellular-news.com 16.01.08) Global mobile penetration is expected to exceed 50% this year.

All these factors point to a convergence of supply and demand that will finally allow mobile to step off the merry-go-round of false predictions and genuinely represent the next major wave of travel applications.

*Source: Nick Gay, EyeforTravel*