

Three Business Travel Profiles for 2026

Behavioural Archetypes, Observed Trends, and Practical Tips





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Introduction

The goal of business travel has undergone a fundamental evolution. It is no longer sufficient for organisations to simply track trips; success now hinges on maximising the value of every journey. In this context, efficiency and intentionality define the new standard for corporate mobility.

To better understand this transformation, we went directly to the source. Our analysis draws on corporate travel data, complemented by direct observation and insights from our top clients on how they manage their programs. This research surfaces three distinct ways these travel patterns manifest in practice.

Each category represents a cohort of companies grouped by shared travel behaviours and operating patterns observed in the data.

By understanding the unique DNA of these three profiles, organisations can better empower travellers, optimise spending, and evolve their travel programs into finely tuned strategic assets.



1 The Premium Strategist

Common Industry Manufacturing & retail

Travel Context Sales-driven & training

This profile embodies a quality-over-quantity approach to business travel. They're making fewer trips overall compared to the year before, but are consolidating them into longer, more impactful journeys. Instead of constant, short-haul trips, they're opting for high-value travel that maximises productivity and justifies the spend. This group effectively uses travel management tools, with a healthy balance of self-booking and manager-approved trips.

Key behaviour

The Strategist balances self-booking with a high degree of manager oversight. Their habits show a sophisticated "trade-off" pattern: they often save on airfare by booking economy for long-haul flights, but "spend" those savings on higher-quality hotels. This keeps them productive on the ground without ballooning the total budget.



Concentrated Spend: Total spend remains stable year-over-year, despite a significant drop in the number of individual bookings.



Strategic Loyalty: High adherence to major carriers like Singapore Airlines, balanced with an increasing use of regional hubs.



Approval Bottlenecks: While 91% of trips are approved, the reliance on traditional manager-led flows (rather than automated paths) led to slower average response times.

What was Achieved

By consolidating travel, the organisation preserved commercial impact while reducing overall trip frequency. Longer itineraries improved meeting density and reduced repeated travel disruption for teams.

However, slower approval timing likely limited access to lower fares, particularly for higher-value, long-haul trips where pricing is more sensitive to booking windows.





Takeaways

This profile shows how organisations can maintain travel impact while travelling less, provided trips are intentionally designed. It also highlights how approval timing—not just approval rules—can materially influence cost outcomes, especially when trips are of higher value.

In this case, tools like advance approvals (where trips are approved before booking begins) and fare comparison prompts were used selectively, but broader adoption could further align speed, cost, and governance without changing travel intent.



2 The Efficient Maximizer

Common Industry Technology & Software

Travel Context Events, site visits, and operational scaling

This profile is the growth engine of the business travel landscape. They travel frequently and strategically, increasing trip volume while simultaneously controlling or reducing individual trip spend, allowing the same budget to go further. Their core focus is on efficiency and maximising the value of every dollar spent, heavily leveraging corporate agreements and established supplier relationships to scale travel responsibly.

Key behaviour

With no major negotiated corporate rates, they rely on a "best-price-on-the-day" situation. They are decentralised, meaning many different people book, but they are unified by a strict focus on Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) and budget-friendly, local hotel chains.



Volume vs. Cost

Bookings increased significantly, yet total organizational spend actually saw a slight reduction.



Fare Optimization: By using *Smart Fares**, the company identified potential savings equivalent to around 10–15% of travel spend, with a portion of those savings realised as actual, bankable cost reductions.



Velocity: Adoption of *Advanced Approvals** reduced the approval window by over 75%, significantly accelerating booking decisions and improving the likelihood of securing lower fares.

- **Smart fares:** an AI-powered fare recommendation logic that is integrated in booking and approvals.
- **Advanced approvals:** A TruTrip feature that allows for automated and customised travel approvals with multi-rule-based and fast approvals

What was Achieved

Faster approvals allowed bookings to be made earlier, when fares are typically lower. Even partial adoption of fare recommendations resulted in significant savings, while tighter approval loops reduced friction for frequent travellers.

The organisation scaled travel without increasing overhead—achieving higher volume, faster turnaround, and improved price discipline simultaneously.

Takeaways

This profile illustrates how process efficiency compounds financial outcomes. Speed, visibility, and consistency—rather than strict restriction—enabled cost control at scale.

It also shows that fare optimisation tools don't need universal adoption to deliver value; even incremental behaviour change can unlock meaningful savings when travel volume is high.





3

The Regional Operator

Common Industry Non-profit organisation

Travel Context Relationship building and regional operations

This organisation relies on frequent, short-haul regional travel to support on-the-ground operations. Travel is essential but highly cost-sensitive, managed across a large and decentralised group of users without access to negotiated corporate rates.

Key behaviour

Travellers prioritised the lowest available fares, favouring low-cost carriers for point-to-point routes. Accommodation choices remained firmly within the budget-to-midscale range.

The organisation segmented users into operational groups (e.g. core teams vs. leadership) to better track spend and approval flows across a large user base.

Some travellers used fare comparison tools that surface cheaper alternatives after an initial selection, while others continued booking based on familiarity or speed.





The Operational Shift

While flights remain the core spend, hotel stays are increasing in length, signalling a move from "day-trips" to multi-day regional deployments.



Efficiency

Despite being the most cost-conscious group, they were the most effective at using technology. They realised significant savings through automated benchmarking.



Leaders:

High Adoption:

Their realised savings were 105% of the potential benchmark, showing they consistently found better-priced alternatives even after their initial selection.

What was Achieved

Despite operating without negotiated rates, the organisation achieved the highest realised savings through consistent cost-conscious behaviour combined with automated fare benchmarking.

The gradual shift toward longer stays reduced repeated travel while supporting deeper regional engagement—suggesting an operational evolution rather than pure cost-cutting.

Takeaways

This profile demonstrates that price sensitivity alone isn't enough—visibility matters. Even highly cost-aware travellers benefit from tools that systematically compare options, especially in high-frequency environments.

It also highlights how decentralised organisations can maintain control through segmentation and pattern monitoring, rather than heavy-handed restrictions.

Final Say

The era of blanket travel policies is over. Our data-backed analysis, drawn directly from proprietary corporate travel metrics and best-in-class client management practices, proves that a single approach is no longer sustainable for a multi-faceted business. The clear differentiator for companies moving forward will be their ability to segment, empower, and automate.

Organizations that are winning today have moved from a mindset of restriction to one of precision. They are not just managing costs; they are leveraging advanced tools—like smart fare visibility and automated advanced approvals—to turn potential savings into realized ROI, dramatically improving traveler efficiency and well-being in the process.

The mandate for 2026 is clear: Stop chasing compliance and start engineering better outcomes. By understanding and catering to the specific needs of these three distinct business travel profiles, you can transform your travel program from a cost centre into a strategic lever for growth, productivity, and profitability. The path to a smarter, more valuable travel ecosystem begins now.

**Your journey to optimised
business travel starts here.**



About TruTrip

TruTrip Pte. Ltd (TruTrip) is headquartered in Singapore with offices in Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. Founded in 2019, TruTrip is a business travel management solution company on a mission to make travel management more intuitive, straightforward, accessible and useful.

Many businesses in the region still struggle with fragmented travel processes, manual workflows, limited visibility, and unmanaged traveller behaviours that significantly inflate travel costs. TruTrip fills these gaps by delivering impactful, end-to-end travel management that helps organisations reduce spend, streamline operations, and support travellers better.

With access to over 6 million properties and 90,000 flights through partners like Agoda, Skyscanner, Sabre and more, TruTrip offers one place for all business travel needs — supported by smart tools, automated workflows, 24/7 human support, and powerful business integrations.

Why TruTrip?



Consolidation and Care

We unify travel activity, data, policies, payments, and support into one seamless operating system.



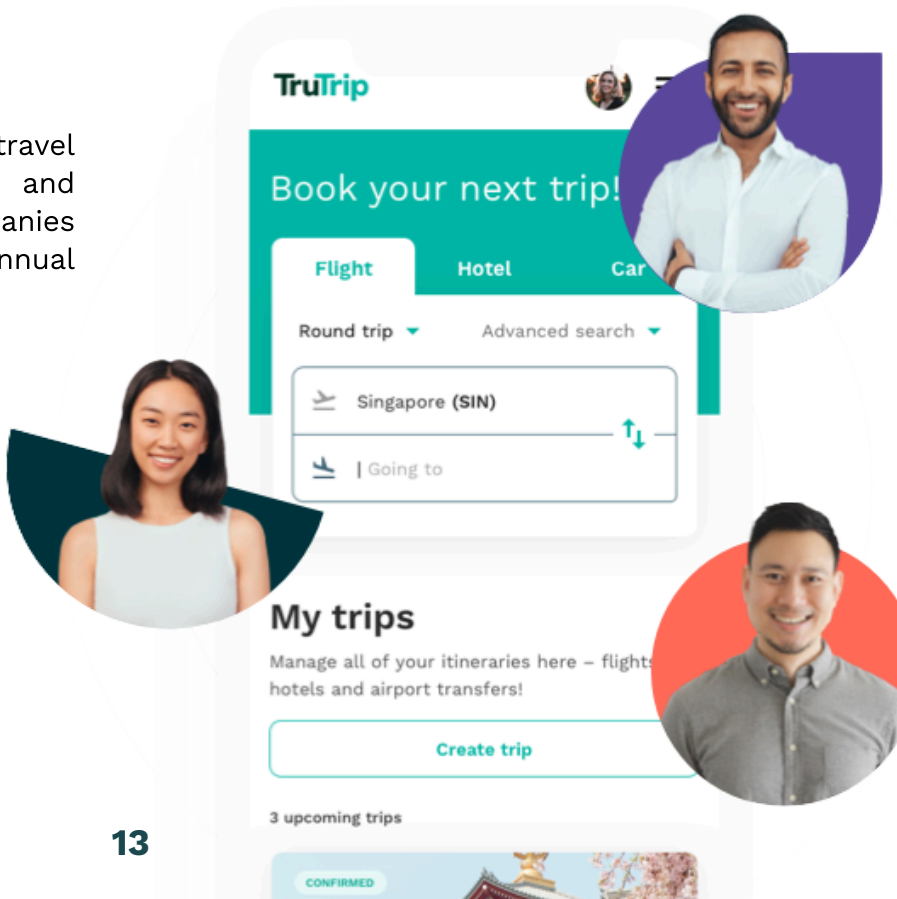
Compliance and Automation

We eliminate administrative burden and ensure policy adherence through intelligent automation.



Spend Optimisation

We help businesses cut real travel costs by fixing price, behavior, and workflow inefficiencies. Companies can save up to 20–30% on their annual travel spend.



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More data-driven insights?

Ready to apply these insights to your own operations? Collaborate with us. We can help unlock proprietary behavioural insights within your travel data, moving you beyond generalised trends to precise, actionable strategies. We are also open to media content partnerships to further showcase how data-driven travel management is defining the future of business efficiency.

Contact

For partnerships:

Martin Go

martin@trutrip.co

For media & content collaborations:

Krizia Mojado

krizia@trutrip.co

For social media collaborations:

Bea Sanchez

bea@trutrip.co