

REVOLUTION IN TRAVEL

Read the text and write in the appropriate word for each gap.

Less than a decade (0) ago, mainstream travel agencies reigned supreme over a booming holiday industry. Only they had the technology which (1) could search the reservations systems of airlines, hotels and package-holiday firms. Many were (2) merely more than order-takers but enjoyed a 10 per cent commission (3) on package tours. But (4) those days have gone. Travel and the Internet are made (5) of one another, connecting a global inventory of seats, beds and rental cars with millions of travellers, all with individual needs and all now with the power to book for themselves. Even the traditional package tour operators, (6) with their own chains of retailers, are now offering online discounts (7) which undercut their travel agencies. (8) Even if agents were willing to take a cut in commission, it would do them little good. Hundreds of agencies are still going to close (9) as a result of the recent consolidation of the big tour UK holiday firms into the big two. The future for mainstream travel agents looks bleak, (10) unless they can add value by offering real expertise. It is this sort of knowledge that companies (11) market as *Travel Counsellors* use to market themselves. (12) By recruiting experienced agents and equipping them with the technology necessary for telephone sales, they (13) can offer customers a professional service (14) from the comfort of their own home. Catering for a new market of people that have not been near a travel agency (15) since they first acquired a broadband connection may be the only way to survive for tour operators.

