Reaching Today's Travel Agents

.

A comprehensive look at which travel trade magazines and websites travel agents are using today

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Conducted via Survey Monkey

Overview

Multiple forces are driving consumers back to retail travel agents, making agents once again a critical marketing target:

- Consumer dissatisfaction with the OTA experience.
- The growth in experiential, adventure and friends/family group travel, each of which is hard to arrange via OTAs and supplier websites.
- The increasing complexity of travel choices with new hotel brands, fuzzy categories such as “lifestyle,” the growth in unbranded properties, larger ocean cruise ships with diverse accommodations and add-on options.
- New categories, such as river cruises, new destinations, and increasingly complicated options.
- The ability of travel agents to “save” their clients’ trips when strikes, weather disruptions and terrorism impact travel plans.
- The ability of travel agents to work from the road, scouting out and personally inspecting hotels, ships and destinations.
- The use by travel agents of social media to generate bookings from clients and followers.
- Less time for today’s swamped consumers to “do it yourself.”

What this means, is that trade marketing is once again becoming a high priority for suppliers. Top producing travel agents are multipliers, cost-effectively generating a stream of customers for suppliers’ products they understand and trust. They also play matchmaker, matching clients to the right suppliers, creating better vacations and more social media moments.

With the travel trade market being served by a combination of print trade publications and websites, this report is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of which sites and publications are being used.

Most of all, as trust is a critical element of B2B relationships we sought to understand how the full-time travel agents we surveyed view the various trade media. A total of 417 surveys were completed. An incentive of $100 was offered to one respondent.

About Google

The purpose of this research is to definitively identify the media habits and preferences of full-time travel agents, thus excluding many Google counted visitors who are not part of the travel agent target audience that advertisers are seeking to reach via their trade marketing. While Google provides an incredible amount of data, two media owners claim Google unique visitors double the total number of estimated travel agents in the US and Canada, although one owner discloses about 50 percent of its audience is not travel agents.

Print Publications

Dating back to 1930, print travel trade publications played an important role in B2B marketing to travel agents. As recently as 2000, Travel Weekly and Travel Agent each carried more than 100 ad pages per week publishing on a weekly or twice-weekly basis. Since then, Travel Weekly frequency has reduced from 102 to 51 issues per year, while Travel Agent has declined from 55 to 25 and Travel Age West from 52 to 27 print issues per year.

Publications such as Leisure Travel News, Travel Trade, ASTA Agency Management, Travel Age East, Travel Age Midwest, Travel World News and Travel Counselor were discontinued, although new publications such as Agent @ Home, Vacation Agent and Luxury Travel Advisor were launched. Compared to the heyday of the '80s and '90s, all publications are much smaller, typically with a total of 48 to 64 pages and limited advertising support.

Further, the trend toward full-time agents working remotely, as they travel or from home, has dramatically cut down on the possibility of office pass along readership, the core pillar of circulation that for decades gave print travel trade publications effective reach.

According to the full-time agents who participated in our survey, their usage of print trade publications and their perception of the quality being delivered are seeing significant declines:

- 69% say, "The quality of printed traded publications seems to be declining."

- 61% say, they **do not** read regularly (3 or 4 of the last 4 issues) any of the print travel trade publications we asked about; a further 9% regularly read only one trade publication.

- 56% say, "It's hard to keep up with printed trade publications."

- 46% say, "My readership of printed trade publications has been declining and continues to decline."

- 30% say, they wish publishers would "stop sending me print trade publications."

While many agents still report receiving print travel trade publications, there is a huge fall-off in terms of those who say they regularly read those publications, defined as 3 or 4 of the last 4 issues. Sixty-one (61) percent of travel agents say the **do not** regularly read any print travel trade publications, even if they are receiving them. Respondents commented that even when they try to unsubscribe print trade publications, they often continue to receive them.

Which print travel trade publications do you receive and read?

	Receive	Read Regularly
Travel Weekly	**56.7%**	20.5%
Travel Agent	41.4%	**22.0%**
Recommend	39.2%	16.4%
Agent @ Home	32.1%	14.2%
Vacation Agent	29.9%	17.5%
Luxury Travel Advisor	28.4%	15.3%
Jax Fax	18.7%	7.8%

Websites

To determine which B2B websites targeting travel agents to analyze, we reviewed overall rankings and traffic as reported on Alexa, Compete and SimilarWeb selecting the top four sites.

Those four sites are:

Travelweekly.com
Travelmarketreport.com
Travelagentcentral.com
Travelpulse.com

After these four websites, there was a sharp drop in terms of traffic, with some of the services deeming traffic too low to measure the sites.

Nearly 99 percent of travel agents responding to the survey reported visiting at least one of the four websites regularly, which was defined as a minimum of 1-2 times per week. The same question was asked in a similar survey in September 2015.

Travel Weekly continues to be the most visited website among full-time travel agents, followed by Travel Market Report, which saw a 24 percent increase between surveys, and has nearly double the number of full-time agent regular readers as the next website, Travel Pulse (with Travel Agent Central last).

What travel trade media websites do you visit regularly (Minimum 1-2x per week)?

	15-Sep	16-May	% Change
Travelweekly.com	**72.5%**	**70.3%**	-3.1%
Travelmarketreport.com	46.6%	57.9%	**+24.4%**
Travelpulse.com	30.9%	29.7%	-4.0%
Travelagentcentral.com	30.5%	26.5%	-13.1%

Quality is considered an important aspect of providing an effective marketing platform. Travel agents rate Travel Weekly as the “highest quality.” Only Travel Market Report saw an increase in agents who selected it as “highest quality,” and the two sites are virtually tied in this measure. Both Travel Pulse and Travel Agent Central saw double-digit drops and are both in single digits.

Which travel trade website do you consider the highest quality?

	15-Sep	16-May	% Change
Travelweekly.com	50.0%	42.8%	-14.4%
Travelmarketreport.com	**30.7%**	**41.0%**	**+33.4%**
Travelpulse.com	10.2%	8.5%	-16.9%
Travelagentcentral.com	9.1%	7.7%	-14.7%

Websites that are closely aligned with the interests and views of their readers provide a more engaged audience, making these sites strong venues for B2B marketing. Over the past eight months, Travel Market Report saw a 62 percent gain in agents who said the site "best represents the interests of travel agents." This large jump puts Travel Market Report ahead of Travel Weekly in this category. Again there is a large falloff between Travel Weekly and the third place finisher, Travel Agent Central and fourth place Travel Pulse.

Which travel trade websites best represents the interests of travel agents?

	15-Sep	16-May	% Change
Travelmarketreport.com	**24.9%**	**40.3%**	**+61.77%**
Travelweekly.com	52.2%	37.1%	-29.00%
Travelagentcentral.com	12.0%	14.9%	+24.71%
Travelpulse.com	10.9%	7.6%	-29.68%

Helpful information is a core reason for anyone to go to any website, and to that end travel agents rank Travel Market Report as having "the most helpful information," ahead of Travel Weekly, which is ahead of Travel Pulse and Travel Agent Central by a fivefold margin.

Which travel trade website provides you the most helpful information?

Travelmarketreport.com	**44.3%**
Travelweekly.com	39.6%
Travelagentcentral.com	8.8%
Travelpulse.com	7.6%

With millions of websites offering information, trust is a key to building a high-quality audience of value to marketers. Travel Market Report and Travel Weekly

are clearly the most trusted travel trade websites, with Travel Market Report having a very small advantage over Travel Weekly. Again, Travel Pulse and Travel Agent Central are very distant third and fourth.

Which travel trade website do you most trust?

Travelmarketreport.com	**43.0%**
Travelweekly.com	42.3%
Travelpulse.com	7.6%
Travelagentcentral.com	7.1%

In terms of website usage, forty-seven (47) percent of full-time travel agents only visit a single travel trade website frequently (at least 1-2x per week), with Travel Weekly and Travel Market Report accounting for over 90 percent of the viewership.

Only travel trade website visited during a week?

Travelweekly.com	**24.6%**
Travelmarketreport.com	18.0%
Travelpulse.com	2.9%
Travelagentcentral.com	1.7%

Reach is a critical part of building an effective media plan. After obtaining the reach goal, spending can then build enough frequency to effectively increase awareness.

To provide media buyers an analysis of which combinations most effectively reach the full-time travel agent marketplace, we analyzed various combinations via a duplication analysis model.

Buying Travel Weekly and Travel Market Report provides 94 percent coverage of the market, 14 percent more than a three-site program featuring Travel Weekly, Travel Agent Central and Travel Pulse, which would also likely dilute frequency.

Travel Trade Website Reach Analysis:

TMR/Travel Weekly	**93.9%**
Travel Weekly/Travel Agent/ Travel Pulse	82.2%
Travel Weekly/Travel Pulse	77.9%
Travel Weekly/Travel Agent	77.1%
TMR/Travel Agent/ Travel Pulse	75.2%
Travel Weekly only	70.3%
TMR/Travel Pulse	69.3%
TMR/Travel Agent	68.1%
TMR only	57.9%
Travel Agent/Travel Pulse	40.9%
Travel Pulse Only	29.7%
Travel Agent Central Only	26.5%

A media plan that doesn't include Travel Market Report misses a large percentage of the market. Some 73 percent of Travel Market Report readers **do not** visit Travel Agent Central on a weekly basis, while 69 percent **do not** visit Travel Pulse. Additionally, 44 percent **do not** visit Travel Weekly on a weekly basis.

Do not visit weekly:

Travelagentcentral.com	73.1%
Travelpulse.com	69.3%
Travelweekly.com	43.7%

Conclusions

- While only 40 percent of full-time travel agents read even one print travel trade publication regularly, 98.6 percent visit at least one travel trade website weekly.

- With more travel agents traveling more of the time or working remotely, print publications no longer have the large reach via pass along office copies they once did.

- In website usage, Travelweekly.com and Travelmarketreport.com rank first or second in every question we asked. Travelpulse.com and Travelagentcentral.com shared the third and fourth position, in all questions significantly behind Travelweekly.com and Travelmarketreport.com. In other words, Travelweekly.com and Travelmarketreport.com are clearly the leaders in every category.

- Travelmarketreport.com earned a significant improvement in every question where the same question was asked in the September survey.

- The most effective way to reach full-time travel agents is a media buy that includes Travelweekly.com and Travelmarketreport.com. This buy reaches 94 percent of agents.

PASSPORT