

# 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

Research continues to show more and more consumers are turning to travel advisors—and prospects for retail travel agents have not been brighter in decades.

- American Express data released in December 2016 showed 79% year-over-year growth in travel-agent usage and a 110% increase in the number of consumers who planned to use a travel agent to help them plan and book their holiday travel.
- Research by ASTA showed that consumers save \$425 and more than four hours when they use a travel agent.
- MMGY's *Travel Monitor* showed an increase in travel agent usage for the fifth straight year, with the highest growth coming from Millennials.
- At one leading group of independent agencies, 70% reported adding staff to meet growing customer demand.
- 66% of respondents to a TNS survey agreed that travel agents stop them from making costly mistakes, and 64% said agents find them better deals than they could find themselves.
- Consumer dissatisfaction with the OTA experience continues to grow.
- Consumer demand for experiences and the trend toward friend and family groups traveling together make booking travel online or direct with suppliers much more complicated.
- There has been more positive media coverage of the travel agent professional, including in *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Time*, *USA Today* and the *New York Times*, and on NBC's Today Show.
- Consumers want to have backup support to rebook their trips during travel disruptions from strikes, storms and terrorism, when supplier and OTA reservations staffs are typically backlogged with long waiting times.

Top-producing travel agents are multipliers, cost-effectively generating a stream of customers for suppliers' products that they understand and trust. They also play matchmaker, matching clients to the right suppliers and the right products, creating better vacations and more social media moments.

**In a travel-trade market being served by a combination of print trade publications and websites, this report is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the sites and publications that are being used by full-time travel agents. This is the third survey, in intervals of approximately six months, and so it provides insights into the trends among the different media.**

A total of 428 surveys were completed by full-time travel agents on December 20 and 21, 2016. An incentive of \$100 was offered to one respondent.

## Print Publications

As noted in the previous report (May 2016), print travel-trade publications are struggling for both advertising and readership. As more agents work from home and remotely, rather than in multi-agent locations, the pass-along readership that used to give trade publications extended reach no longer exists.

In this survey, as in the last one, 60% percent of travel agents say the **do not** regularly read **any** print travel trade publication, even if they receive them. A further 11% said they only read one trade publication regularly. In other words, print trade advertising has limited reach versus today's market of travel agents.

### Which print travel trade publications do you receive and read?

Publication	Receive	Read Regularly
Travel Weekly	49.1	18.4
Travel Agent	33.6	18.2
Luxury Travel Advisor	26.9	17.8
Recommend	31.5	17.5
Vacation Agent	25.7	16.6
Agent@Home	23.6	12.2
JaxFax	14.7	9.6

While Travel Weekly and Travel Agent are the most-read print trade publications, each reaches fewer than 20% of the agency market in terms of regular readership, and regular readership of both fell by double digits over the past six months (May 2016 to December 2016).

### Which publications do you read regularly (3 of last 4 issues)?

Publication	16-May	16-Dec	Change
Travel Weekly	20.5	18.4	-11.41%
Travel Agent	22.1	18.2	-21.43%
Luxury Travel Advisor	15.3	17.6	13.07%
Recommend	16.4	17.4	5.75%
Vacation Agent	17.5	16.5	-6.06%
Agent@Home	14.2	12.1	-17.36%
JaxFax	7.8	9.5	17.89%

With print publications showing lower readership and lessened reach, marketers should weigh whether print advertising is still having an impact on the trade.

## WEBSITES

### A note about Google Analytics

As stated in our previous reports, the purpose of this research is to definitively identify the trade website media habits and preferences of full-time travel agents, thus excluding many Google counted visitors who are not part of this travel agent target audience that advertisers are seeking to reach via their trade marketing. While Google Analytics provides an incredible amount of data, two media owners continue to claim Google unique visitors more than double the total number of estimated travel agents in the United States and Canada. In other words, **the vast majority of the audiences they reach are not full-time travel agents advertisers want to target.**

### Which websites do agents use?

To determine which B2B websites targeting travel agents to we should analyze, we selected the top four sites based on 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

**Over 99% of travel agents responding to the survey reported visiting at least one of the four websites regularly**, which we defined as a minimum of 1-2 times per week. The same question was asked in a similar survey in September 2015 and May 2016.

Travel Weekly continues to be the most-visited website among full-time travel agents, followed by **Travel Market Report, which saw a 19% increase since September 2015—making it the only site with a significant gain in regular viewership.** Travel Pulse saw a 15% decrease; Travel Agent Central saw traffic fall by nearly 3%.

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

Website	15-Sep	16-May	16-Dec	Change
Travelweekly.com	72.53	70.32	74.76	2.98%
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>46.56</b>	<b>57.91</b>	<b>57.78</b>	<b>19.42%</b>
Travelpulse.com	30.92	29.68	26.89	-14.99%
Travelagentcentral.com	30.53	26.52	29.72	-2.73%

Quality is considered an important aspect of providing an effective marketing platform with websites. Results from May 2016 were largely unchanged, and over the past year (since September, 2015) **only Travel Market Report saw an increase in the ranking of the quality of its reporting, at + 23.9%**. Travel Weekly, after seeing a double-digit drop in the May survey, had a small gain in this survey. Over the past year both Travel Pulse (-42%) and Travel Agent Central (-25%) saw large drops in agents citing them as “highest quality.”

### Which travel trade website do you consider the highest quality?

Website	15-Sep	16-May	16-Dec	Change
Travelweekly.com	50.00	42.78	45.19	-10.64%
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>30.71</b>	<b>40.98</b>	<b>40.38</b>	<b>23.95%</b>
Travelpulse.com	10.24	8.51	7.21	-42.02%
Travelagentcentral.com	9.06	7.73	7.21	-25.66%

Websites that are closely aligned with the interests and views of their readers lead to a more engaged audience, making these sites strong venues for B2B marketing. **Over the past year Travel Market Report saw a gain of +42% in travel agents saying it “best represents the interests of travel agents.”** Travel Weekly, which saw a significant decrease between September 2015 and May 2016 (-39%), was essentially flat, while Travel Pulse saw a - 67% drop.

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

Website	15-Sep	16-May	16-Dec	Change
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>24.93</b>	<b>40.33</b>	<b>43.51</b>	<b>42.70%</b>
Travelweekly.com	52.20	37.06	37.50	-39.20%
Travelagentcentral.com	12.02	14.99	12.50	3.84%
Travelpulse.com	10.85	7.63	6.49	-67.18%

Helpful information is, of course, the core reason anyone goes to a website—and **travel agents rank Travel Market Report as having “the most helpful information,” a whopping 40% higher than of Travel Weekly**, and ahead of Travel Pulse and Travel Agent Central by a fivefold margin. This question was asked for the first time in the May survey, and from May to December, Travel Market Report saw a 10% gain.

**Which travel trade website provides you the most helpful information?**

Website	16-May	16-Dec	Change
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>44.32</b>	<b>49.39</b>	<b>10.27%</b>
Travelweekly.com	39.61	35.11	-12.82%
Travelagentcentral.com	8.86	8.23	-7.65%
Travelpulse.com	7.20	7.26	0.83%

Audience trust provides credibility to a marketer’s messaging—and no publication is seen as more trustworthy than **Travel Market Report. Together, Travel Market Report and the #2 contender, Travel Weekly, are the most trusted by about 85% of all travel agents.** Travel Agent and Travel Pulse were deemed trustworthy by only about 15% of agents.

**Which travel trade website do you most trust?**

Website	16-May	16-Dec	Change
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>43.08</b>	<b>42.72</b>	<b>-0.84%</b>
Travelweekly.com	42.30	41.77	-1.27%
Travelagentcentral.com	7.05	8.59	17.93%
Travelpulse.com	7.57	6.92	-9.39%

**Summary of the data**

Based on the responses from the full-time agents surveyed, Travel Market Report and Travel Weekly are significantly ahead of competitors in terms of regular usage, quality of content, representing the interests of travel agents, providing helpful information to readers, and providing content that readers trust.

## Conclusions

- Multiple surveys show travel agents are in demand, and smart travel suppliers are evaluating how to drive more sales through this robust channel of high-yield business.
- While only 40% of full-time travel agents read even one print travel trade publication regularly, almost every single one (98.6%) visits a travel trade website every week of the year.
- With more travel agents working remotely, print publications no longer grow their reach through pass-along office copies.
- **Travelmarketreport.com and Travelweekly.com rank first or second on every measure, from quality to trustworthiness to relevance.**
- **Travelmarketreport.com has significantly improved its performance by every measure since the September 2015 survey.**
- As readership of print trade publications continues to fall, travel suppliers need to think digital to effectively reach full-time agents. And when it comes to digital, **Travelmarketreport.com and Travelweekly.com are clearly the leading publications in every category.**

Notes:

