

# 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

Prospects for retail travel agents have not been brighter in decades, with research continuing to show more and more consumers are turning to travel advisors.

- American Express data released in December 2016 showed 79 percent year-over-year growth in travel agent usage, and a 110 percent increase in the number of consumers who planned to use a travel agent to help plan and book holiday travel.
- Research by ASTA with the support of Carnival Corporation showed that consumers save \$425 and over 4 hours of time when using a travel agent.
- For the sixth straight year, MMGY's Travel Monitor showed an increase in travel agent usage, with the highest growth coming from Millennials.
- 70 percent of agencies reported they are adding staff, according to one leading group of independent agencies.
- 66 percent of respondents in a TNS survey said agents prevent them from making costly mistakes; and 64 percent say 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 towards friends and family traveling together as a group make booking travel online and directly with suppliers more complicated and less advantageous.
- There has been more positive media coverage of the travel agent professional, including in Forbes, Fortune, Time, USA Today and on NBC's "Today" show. Conde Nast Traveler and Travel + Leisure continue to promote agent usage through "best" lists; and a new consumer magazine focused on family travel says travel agents are a core part of its strategy.
- Consumer media has come to recognize, and actively reports on, the benefits of using travel advisors in trip planning.
- Consumers want to have somebody who can 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 they understand and trust. They also play matchmaker, connecting 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 by full-time travel agents. This is the fourth survey completed, in intervals of approximately six months, so this report provides insights into trends among the different media.**

A total of 450 surveys were completed by full-time travel agents from July 28-29, 2017. An incentive of \$100 was offered to one respondent.

## **PRINT PUBLICATIONS**

As discussed in our previous reports (May and December 2016), print travel trade publications are struggling both with advertising and readership. **As more agents work remotely from home, and fewer agents work in multi-agent locations, the pass-along readership that used to give trade publications extended reach no longer exists.**

In this survey, over 60 percent of travel agents say they **do not** regularly read **any** print travel trade publications, even if they are receiving them. Our last survey contained the same finding.

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

<b>Publication</b>	<b>16-May</b>	<b>16-Dec</b>	<b>17-Jul</b>
Travel Weekly	20.5	18.4	24.3
Travel Agent	22.1	18.2	18.5
Luxury Travel Advisor	15.3	17.6	18.9
Recommend	16.4	17.4	15.1
Vacation Agent	17.5	16.5	15.7
Agent@Home	14.2	12.1	17.3
JaxFax	7.8	9.5	7.6

With lower readership and lessened reach, marketers should weigh if they are still making an impact with print advertising to 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. Google counts visitors who are not part of the travel agent target audience whom advertisers are seeking to reach via their trade marketing. While Google provides an incredible amount of data, two media owners continue to claim Google-reported unique visitors more than double the total number of estimated travel agents in the U.S. and Canada.

### *Which websites do agents use?*

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

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

### *Which travel trade media websites do you visit regularly (minimum 1-2 times per week)?*

**For the fourth straight survey, over 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.**

Travel Weekly continues to be the most visited website among full-time travel agents, followed by **Travel Market Report, which saw a 25 percent increase since September 2015, the only site with a significant gain in regular viewership.** Travel Agent Central saw traffic fall by 8 percent during that same period, while Travel Weekly travel agent readership slipped 3 percent. Most notable is the steep fall-off of TravelPulse from second place to third place (succumbing to Travel Market Report) — with Travel Market Report providing nearly 87 percent more regular readers.

<b>Website</b>	<b>15-Sep</b>	<b>16-May</b>	<b>16-Dec</b>	<b>17-Jul</b>	<b>2- Year Trend</b>
Travelweekly.com	72.53	70.32	74.76	70.16	-3.27%
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>46.56</b>	<b>57.91</b>	<b>57.78</b>	<b>58.09</b>	+24.76%
Travelpulse.com	30.92	29.68	26.89	30.75	-0.55%
Travelagentcentral.com	30.53	26.52	29.72	28.02	-8.22%

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

Quality is considered an important aspect of providing an effective marketing platform with websites. Since September 2015, **only Travel Market Report saw a significant increase of 22 percent.** At the same time, the number of agents who said Travel Weekly was the highest quality website dropped by 13 percent. That said, both Travel Market Report and Travel Weekly dominate the field garnering over 80 percent share with agents.

<b><i>Website</i></b>	<b><i>15-Sep</i></b>	<b><i>16-May</i></b>	<b><i>16-Dec</i></b>	<b><i>17-Jul</i></b>	<b><i>2-Year Trend</i></b>
Travelweekly.com	50.00	42.78	45.19	43.32	-13.36%
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>30.71</b>	<b>40.98</b>	<b>40.38</b>	<b>37.38</b>	<b>+21.72%</b>
Travelpulse.com	10.24	8.51	7.21	10.15	-0.88%
Travelagentcentral.com	9.06	7.73	7.21	9.16	+1.10%

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

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 two years, Travel Market Report saw a gain of 50 percent in travel agents saying its site “best represents the interests of travel agents.”** Travel Weekly, which saw a significant decrease over that period, dropped 30 percent. It should be noted Travel Market Report and Travel Weekly are statistically tied, and both enjoy a 300 percent advantage over TravelPulse and Travel Agent Central.

<b><i>Website</i></b>	<b><i>15-Sep</i></b>	<b><i>16-May</i></b>	<b><i>16-Dec</i></b>	<b><i>17-Jul</i></b>	<b><i>2-Year Trend</i></b>
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>24.93</b>	<b>40.33</b>	<b>43.51</b>	<b>37.33</b>	<b>+49.74%</b>
Travelweekly.com	52.20	37.06	37.50	36.53	-30.02%
Travelagentcentral.com	12.02	14.99	12.50	12.47	+3.74%
Travelpulse.com	10.85	7.63	6.49	10.67	-1.66%

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

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.**

<b>Website</b>	<b>15-Sep</b>	<b>16-May</b>	<b>16-Dec</b>	<b>17-Jul</b>
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>Did not ask</b>	<b>44.32</b>	<b>49.39</b>	<b>44.34</b>
Travelweekly.com	Did not ask	39.61	35.11	38.94
Travelagentcentral.com	Did not ask	8.86	8.23	11.76
Travelpulse.com	Did not ask	7.20	7.26	8.96

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

With unlimited sources of news and information, audience trust provides marketers credibility for their messaging. **Travel Market Report and Travel Weekly continue in a dead heat when it comes to being seeing as trustworthy with over 80 percent of agents splitting their votes between the two**, and both holding a 400 percent advantage over third place Travel Agent Central and fourth place TravelPulse.

<b>Website</b>	<b>15-Sep</b>	<b>16-May</b>	<b>16-Dec</b>	<b>17-Jul</b>
<b>Travelmarketreport.com</b>	<b>Did not ask</b>	<b>43.08</b>	<b>42.72</b>	<b>45.24</b>
Travelweekly.com	Did not ask	42.30	41.77	43.88
Travelagentcentral.com	Did not ask	7.05	8.59	9.69
Travelpulse.com	Did not ask	7.57	6.92	9.18

**Based on the responses from the full-time agents surveyed, Travel Weekly and Travel Market Report 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 hot again, and travel suppliers should evaluate how they can drive more sales through what is a robust channel of high-yield business.
- While less than 40 percent of full-time travel agents read even one print travel trade publication regularly, 99 percent visit at least one travel trade website weekly. Suppliers should consider directing more of their trade budget to digital to expand reach.
- 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.**
- Travel Market Report is the only trade media to track significant improvements in readership and quality scores over the past two years. While Travel Weekly has seen the largest decline, it remains the leader with Travel Market Report — and both remain significantly ahead of competitors.

