

Travel Agents - UK - December 2010

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What is this report about?

The recession has brought mixed fortunes for travel agents in the UK. On the one hand, as the demand for protection on holiday has grown (spurred by high-profile holiday company failures and spring 2010's ash cloud airspace shutdown), bookings have actually increased somewhat as a share of the market. On the other, the recession-driven drop in overseas holiday volume has meant that the number of holidays abroad booked through agents fell in both 2009 and 2010.

This report provides an overview of the travel agents, investigating consumer attitudes towards the subject, core internal and external market factors, strengths and weaknesses, innovations of relevance, reasons for use and likely future developments.

What have we found out?

- Amongst travel agent users, more than one in four booked in order to make sure they were protected on holiday.
- Travel agent use continued to decline in the lead up to the recession. However agents' share of bookings has increased since 2008, driven by the increased desire for protection on holiday.
- The proportion of consumers saying they may use a travel agent in future is low, at approximately one in five. Of even greater concern for agents is the fact that only one in five travel agent users currently plan to continue booking this way – despite the fact that one in three report being happy with their agent-booked holidays.
- Approximately one in four people from households earning £15,500 or less (annually) are travel agent bookers. The same percentage of non-workers are, as are one in four from the ACORN group 'Hard Pressed'.
- Just under six in ten travel agent users say they like to visit somewhere new each holiday, a higher percentage than online or phone-only bookers.
- Approximately one in five people with no internet access make travel agent bookings - however approximately one-third of people with internet access also do, slightly higher than the average across the entire population. Only one in ten people do so because they feel uncomfortable/not confident enough when using the internet. And given that broadband access, connection speed and (thus) what people can do via the web are all going to improve over the coming years – and that older consumers who avoid the internet will gradually be replaced with people who do not – appealing to internet users as well as those not online is only going to increase in importance for agents.

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EMEA: +44 (0)20 7778 7151
Americas: +1 (312) 932 0600
APAC: +61 (0)2 8284 8100