

# Travel in a Post-Pandemic World: The State of the Industry According to Travel Advisors

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*“Travel and technology can work together to enhance client relationships, generate higher profits, provide travelers with unforgettable experiences, and open up the field of opportunity more than ever before.”*



# Foreword

## ABOUT VOYAGU

Founded in 2020, Voyagu is a San Francisco-based travel management platform that connects premium travelers with travel experts to ease and improve their trip planning, booking, and managing processes.

This study was conducted to gather relevant information regarding the state of the travel industry as it is perceived by one of its key stakeholders, travel advisors. Even as their business gets significantly disrupted by the implementation of new technologies and the emergence of OTAs, the human touch and deep expertise that travel advisors possess are very valuable to keep the industry alive. As the travel sector aims to revamp its indicators following the changes driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, an integration between travel advisors and technology companies can open up opportunities to offer an integrated service that can elevate the customer's experience to new heights.

In this report, you will also find highlights regarding future industry developments, and how travel advisors are looking at the impact of new trends and the myriad possibilities that they can now take advantage of.

My heartfelt thanks to all the participants who, in the midst of their busy schedules, made the time to participate and gave us invaluable feedback by sharing their insightful comments and personal views and experiences. Thank you for making this possible!



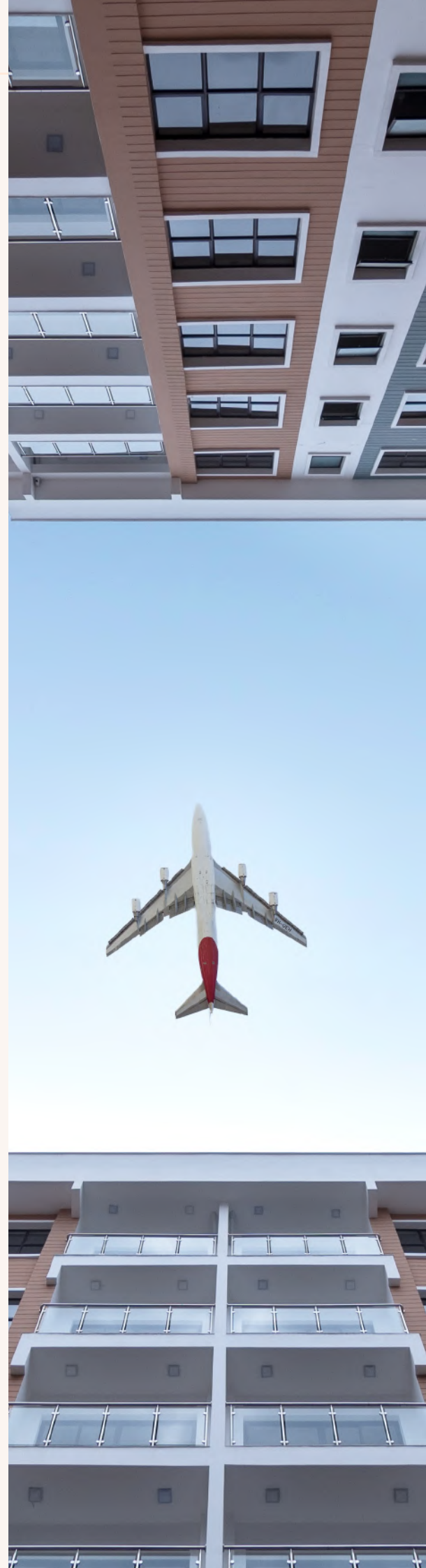
**Ivan Saprov**  
Founder & CEO Voyagu

# Research Description and Mission

In order to maximize the impact of our findings, we segmented our research into the next few categories: technology, clients, income, travel content, and industry outlook.

Identifying how travel advisors feel about these five key areas of their business was paramount for us to be able to detect trends and patterns that could be effectively conveyed to decision-makers and encourage collaboration between travel advisors and technology companies to craft unforgettable travel experiences.

Similarly, our research supports our mission of integrating the innovative solutions pioneered by travel tech startups and large tech firms with the human touch and destination expertise that makes travel advisors unique.

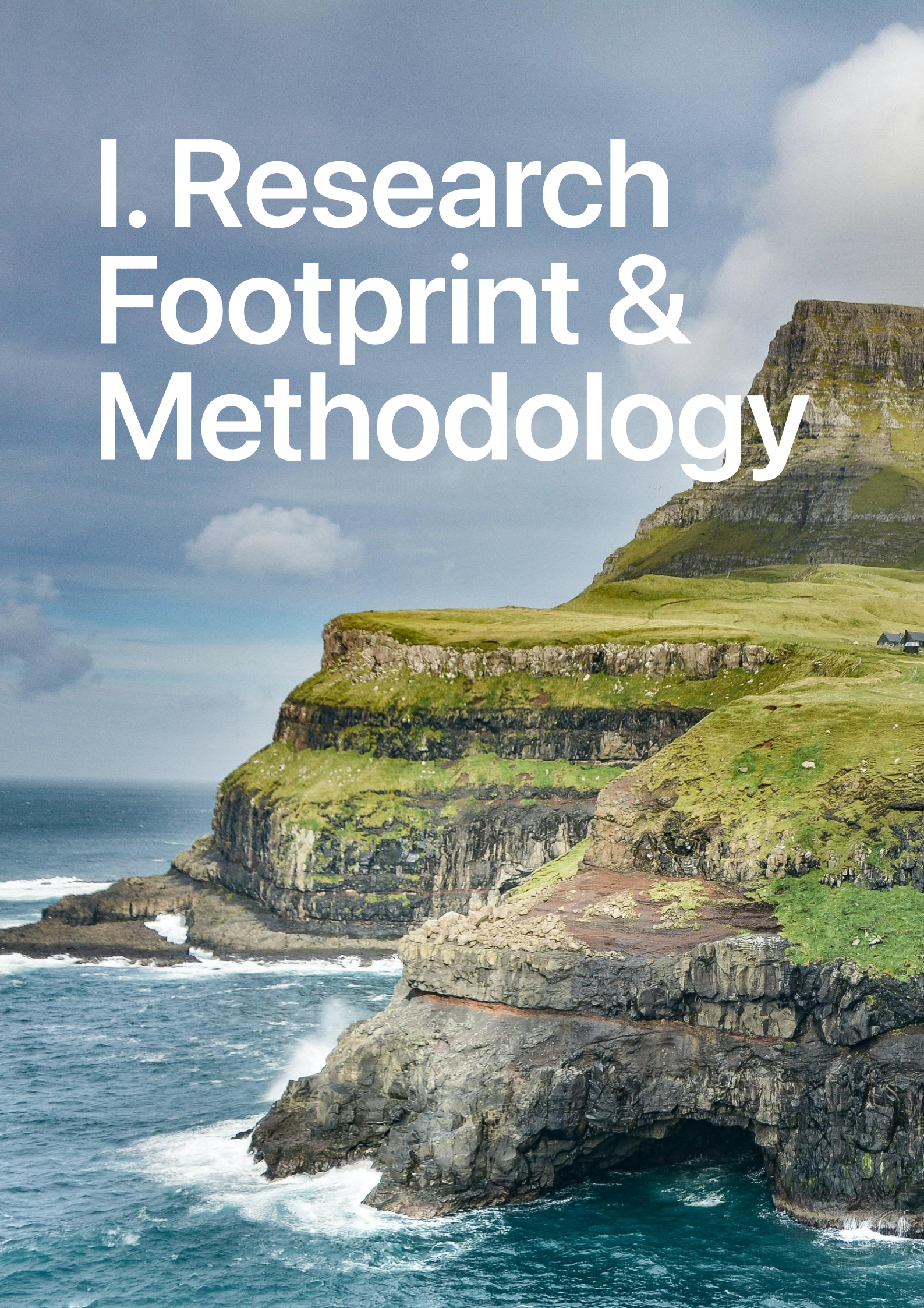


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# I. Research Footprint & Methodology





# Research Footprint and Methodology

The research was conducted from March — April 2023, almost two years after the travel sector began to recover from the devastating effects brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and a year after the unprecedented disruptions caused by the rapidly growing travel demand.

We invited about 1000 randomly selected travel agents\* and travel agency owners to participate in the discovery study, and we received 110 responses and 20 in-depth interviews from 10 active travel agents, 5 travel agency owners, and 5 ex-travel agents.

*\*Voyagu agents did not participate in the survey*

## RESEARCH TAKEAWAYS

- 01 There is a higher demand for personalized services, and overall, the travel market is expected to grow.
- 02 Digitalization of travel inventory and client relationship management technologies will help travel advisors increase their profits.
- 03 Strong relationships with clients and a solid reputation boost the effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing through referrals.
- 04 Travel advisors can expect more opportunities to increase their earnings from the latest trends, such as niche markets, blended travel, and micro trips.



# II. Key findings

# Technology

Following the research, Voyagu's study discovered that a majority of travel agents are looking at technological implementations within the industry with positive eyes. Travel agents and specialized operators perceive technology as a potential catalyst that can both boost their revenues and make their operations more efficient, reducing their costs and the time they need to spend servicing each client, and they rely on tech.

Nevertheless, travel agents are facing tough competition from big technology companies. **Firms like Expedia, Booking.com, and others are fighting travel agents for clients, and agents are losing this fight since technology firms have a broader product offering, and have the necessary economic scale to sell these products at a lower price without sacrificing their profitability.**

Agents, on the other hand, do not have the necessary volume to reduce their already constantly-diminishing margins without sacrificing the sustainability of their business.

Through our study, here are some of the key findings in regard to how travel advisors are looking at technology:

- 69% of travel agents believe that the way the travel industry is evolving is influencing them to adopt technological tools in their business, which can reduce the tech-debt that

had plagued the industry prior to the pandemic. In the same vein, 62% of the participants in our survey believe that digitalization and travel management technologies will ease their life as a travel agent, by providing them with tools to streamline their communications with customers, suppliers, and their booking procedures.

- The flip side of this is that 65% of the respondents consider that online travel agencies (OTAs), together with the direct-to-consumer online platforms offered by airlines, hotels, cruise lines, and other providers, present a strong competition that challenges their travel advisory business. Since large travel companies, in order to cut their commission costs, encourage customers to book directly, this lures business away from specialized advisors who now get bypassed, especially by customers who are trying to save costs.



- However, even if this is perceived as competition, not everything is grim. Only 16% of the participants strongly agree that technology is squeezing the travel agent out of the industry. (Figure 1) A potential rationale for this is that **the type of customers that seek to save costs and the type of customers that look for the services of a specialized travel advisor are very different.** They have different needs and different budgets, which is why 53% of travel agents believe that technology will be a key driver for increased revenues and business growth, and 62% of participants mentioned that they are looking forward to the job improvements it will bring.
- In this regard, 53% of the participant advisors believe that integrating technology-based solutions to manage new client relationships and travel inventory is positive for the industry, as it helps to streamline the booking process and to make better decisions in real-time. Only 26% of the interviewed agents reported having any struggles when implementing new tools or upgrading their technological infrastructure. (Figure 1)

There are several conclusions that can be reached from this. One of them is that travel advisors—at least in what the gathered information reveals—are highly looking forward to becoming more tech-friendly and to leveraging the tools available to improve both their service offerings and their back-office processes.

However, while some of the tech tools available, such as platforms that provide agents with access to real-time inventory, have been lauded as “the great equalizers,” when it comes to equilibrating competition between small travel advisory firms and large corporations, the reality is that no such impact has been made in terms of restoring the balance between both. Travel advisors still face stiff competition from dominant tech companies like Expedia and Booking.com, and it is likely that these firms will keep snatching a majority of the retail market given their competitor-acquisition spree, gobbling firms like Travelocity, Orbitz, and Hotels.com.

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***“I am working on building relationships and referrals. I don’t think that will go away over the next 10 years, so folks who build strong client relationships will continue to do well. However, technology will probably offer quick and easy solutions, so it will be a strong competitive force that can possibly squeeze profits.”***

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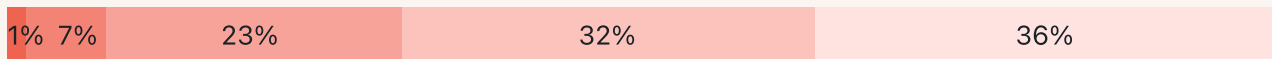
–Verbatim. Travel agent

Nevertheless, as it was stated before, the overall impact that technology can have in the travel advisory business is positive. Implementing technological tools can help travel advisors enhance the human touch where it matters the most, and with its help, be more fluent

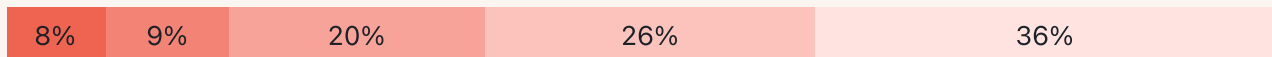
at developing a niche market that is capable and willing to pay for their services. Technology can help travel advisors to go after the market that it is worth going after, and leave the rest to OTAs and companies that can survive on volume and slim margins.

**Figure 1. Reflections on technology and main tools used**

I believe that the travel industry pushes travel agents to adopt digital tools



I believe that the digitalization and travel management technologies make my life as a travel agent easier



I believe that the digitalization of travel inventory and client relationship management technology allows me to increase my profits



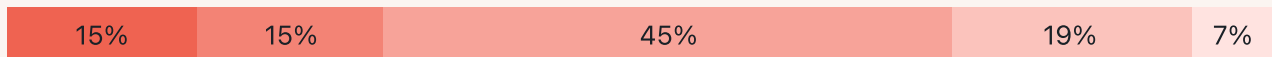
I would like to have access to the latest digital travel inventory and client management tools



I am constantly looking for new ways to digitize my work process as a travel agent



I struggle with improving the digital tools I'm using now *(negative scale)*



I believe that technology is squeezing travel agents out of the industry *(negative scale)*



1 - Strongly disagree    2    3    4    5 - Strongly agree

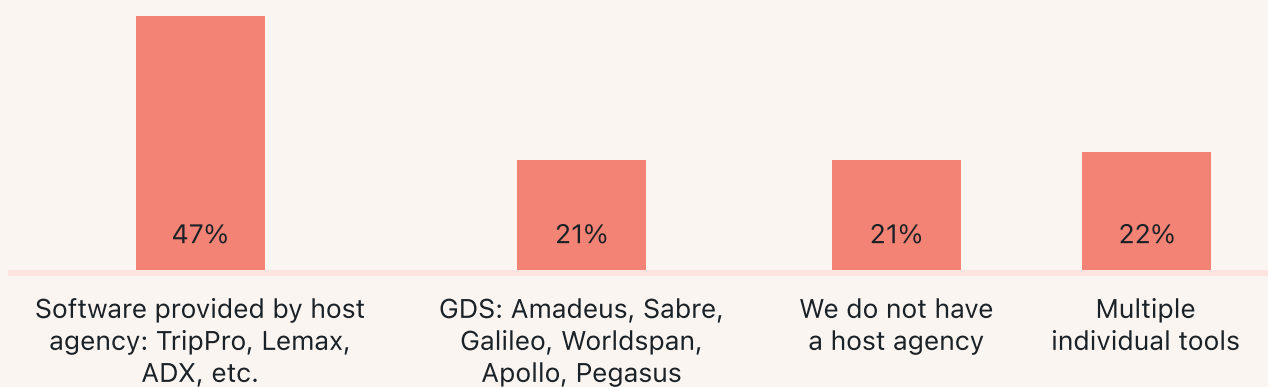
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***“If hosts don’t focus more on teaching true foundational business methodologies to their agents, the agents will lose economic traction. It is imperative that more agents begin to run their agencies as true businesses and not as mere hobbies. Business knowledge and implementation are truly lacking.”***

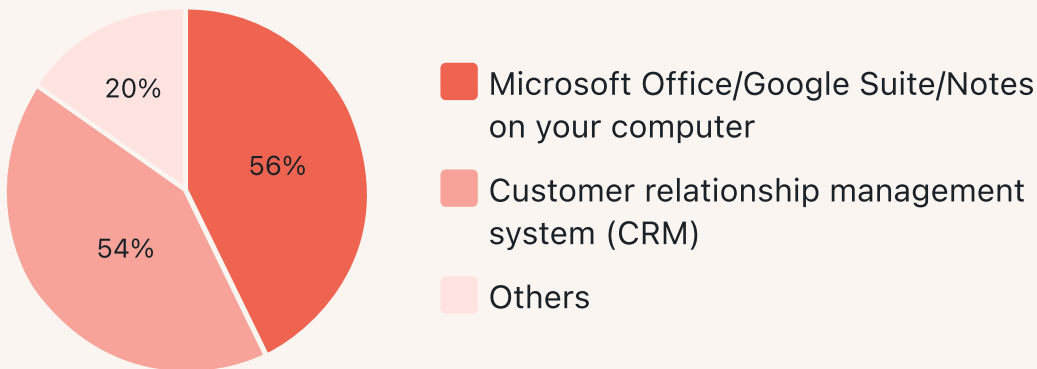
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-Verbatim. Travel agent

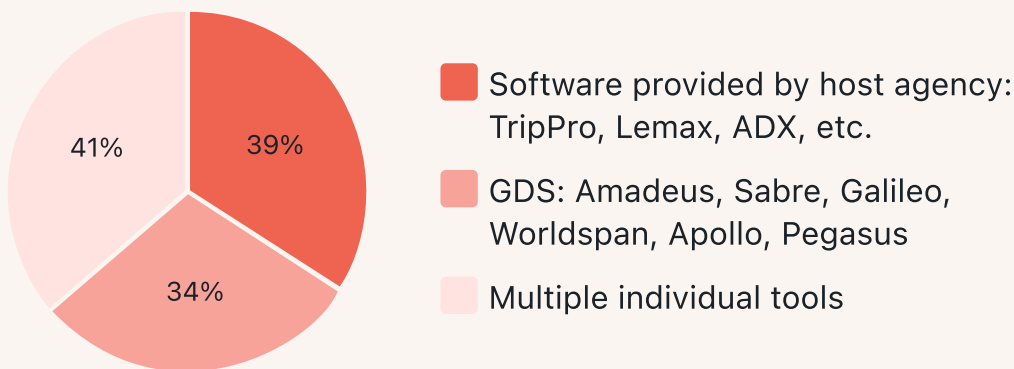
**Figure 2. Tech tools used to work with the host agency**



**Figure 3. Software used to communicate with clients**



**Figure 4. Tools for working with travel inventory**




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***“New technology could help make sure preparations are made for the influx of travelers who are 70 years older or more or that have different abilities.”***

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-Verbatim. Travel agent

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***“AI and having clients that respect why partnerships are needed to enhance their trips and know how to value them are the best earning opportunities for the future.”***

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-Verbatim. Travel agent



# Clients

The findings in the technology sector have a direct connection with the second point, which is clients. As mentioned, there is a specific type of client that still values and is willing to pay for the support of a travel advisor. Hence, there is a continued demand for those who can provide personalized services and expertise. Key drivers in this line of business include referrals and word-of-mouth-driven marketing. Even if technology can help travel advisors in many ways, our study reveals that word-of-mouth is still the best channel for organic business growth.

There is another reason for this. If travel agents attempt to scale their company through conventional marketing channels, **they encounter the challenge of dealing with a large volume of inbound requests from unqualified leads**. This results in a time-consuming and uncompensated process of negotiating and quoting trips for people who are only looking for the best deal and have no loyalty to the travel advisor per se.

On the other hand, OTAs thrive in this market segment, where customers have no hesitation in spending hours browsing through Expedia or Google Flights, but they will balk at the prospect of having to pay a fee to a travel advisor.

Therefore, what we can conclude from the findings is that **travel agents are still in demand by existing loyal clients**, who

in turn refer them to new prospects and strengthen their business pipeline. This is reinforced by the following fact: 84% of the agents surveyed consider that referrals are the best way of growing their business, as this establishes a channel of organic growth. Because of this, travel agents have developed solid relationships with their clients, forging a deep bond of trust in which the traveler relies on the agent's knowledge and network base to deliver a good experience.

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***“You don't only build an experience, but you also grow the relationship and emotional connections, which are hard to break.”***

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–Verbatim. Travel agent

Unlike OTAs or operators who cater with a mass-market approach, agents deliver specialized post-booking support, manage changes and cancellations, and solve any problems that might arise as the trip takes place.

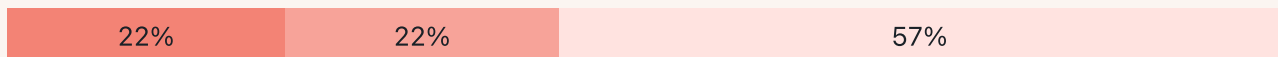
In the same line, 79% of interviewed agents reported experiencing a high demand for personalized services, and 46% of them highlighted that clients prioritize expertise and personalized services over cheaper prices. This supports the point that was

discussed above, in which **technology is an enhancer of the human touch so that operators can serve the right clients.**

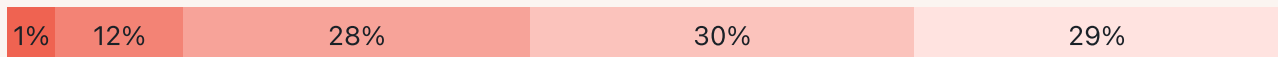
When it comes to changes, 59% of agents shared that their clients have expressed their preference for flexible itineraries that permit changes and cancellations. (Figure 5) This highlights an important point that **travel advisors need to adjust to in present times,** which is, things need to be a lot more flexible than they were.

**Figure 5. Evaluation of the statements regarding relationships with clients**

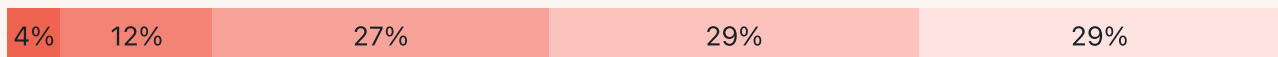
Clients trust advisors because of the personalized service and care they provide, as well as for the opportunity to access exclusive offers



Clients are looking for more flexible travel bookings with potential changes/cancellations in mind



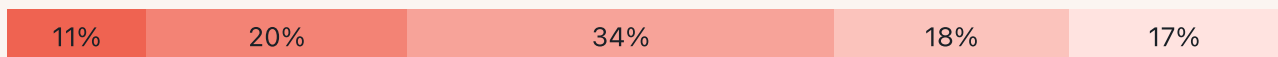
Clients see the role of the travel advisor as providing post-booking support, managing changes and cancellations, and problem-solving



Clients chose the expertise of a travel agent and personalized service over cheaper prices



Clients are losing loyalty and diminishing the competence of the travel advisor in favor of cheaper options they find online



1 - Strongly disagree    2    3    4    5 - Strongly agree

We've talked about the good things, but now, let's talk about some of the challenges that the study found. Beyond offering flexible itineraries and lenient cancellation policies, a pressing need that agents reported is that they are constantly on the hunt for more clients, a process that, without the proper niche, can be exhausting.

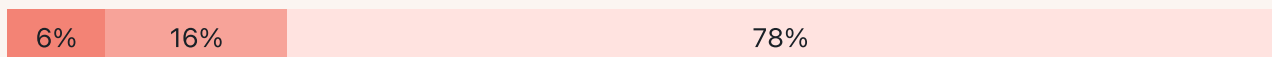
Therefore, the conclusion from this segment is that **travel advisors are better off developing a niche market, one that focuses on those that can afford and are willing to pay money for their services**, and with whom a loyal bond of trust can be developed. Then, these clients will likely refer the travel advisor to other people in their network, resulting in an organic escalation of the travel advisor's business.

***“People are seeing the value of a travel advisor with the recent challenges presented by the pandemic. Also, I think people value travel more now than they did before.”***

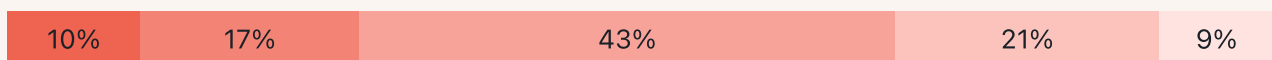
-Verbatim. Travel agent

**Figure 6. Ranking of the sources to get new clients and grow business**

Referral / word of mouth



Online marketing leads



Off-line marketing: posters, ads in the local paper, etc.



Leads purchased from/provided by your host travel agency



1 - Least effective    2    3    4    5 - Most effective

# Income

Every business needs to be sustainable, and travel is no exception. And because the sector was hit so badly by the travel restrictions generated by the COVID pandemic, agents and advisors are now actively looking for ways to replace that income that they didn't make during the period of time when travel came to a halt.

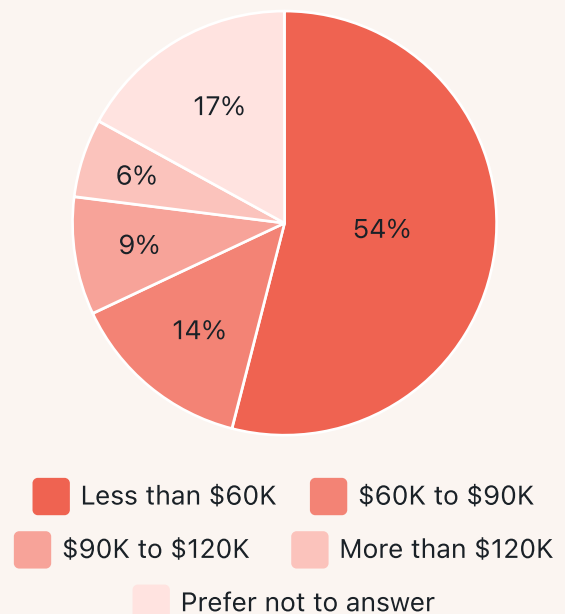
Now, it is true that travel is rebounding. However, while income has grown for many travel advisors, there are increased challenges, such as more competition, lower commissions, and other operational complexities such as the need to offer flexible packages.

Therefore, the potential for earning more comes from focusing on niche markets, offering blended travel services, and leveraging strong client relationships that can lead to organic growth.

This organic growth will be important, as the report has discovered that a significant portion of travel advisors are still dissatisfied with their earnings. This is no surprise, as 54% of agents reported that they earn less than \$60,000 annually, with only 6% of agents reporting that they earn over \$120,000. (Figure 7) This makes growing agents' income a considerable area of focus if the sector wants to be kept alive and thriving. Amidst agents, the outlook varies. 23% of agents are on the pessimist side,

stating that they disagree that the travel industry offers more opportunities to earn money now than it did before COVID started. However, 40% of agents have confidence that they have the potential to earn more, and 77% of agents feel "somewhat positive" regarding market growth potential and how it can benefit them.

**Figure 7. Annual travel agent income in USD**



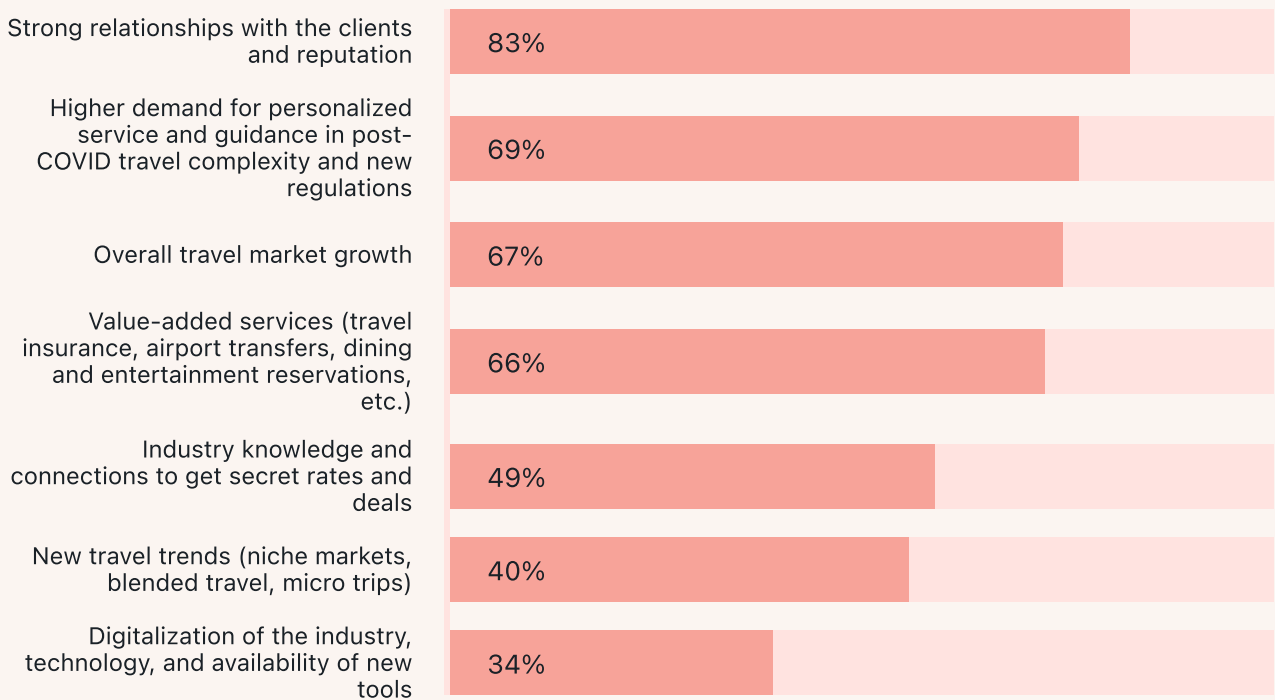


When asked about the factors that drive income growth and what they believe they need to do in order to accomplish this, **83% mentioned strong client relationships and reputation, once again solidifying the point that developing a small but loyal customer base is critical for agents** especially to navigate through turbulent times—since these customers tend to still require their services—and as a growth vehicle, since it will be, again, these customers that can give the necessary referrals so that the business can grow.

Following relationships and brand reputation, 69% of agents attribute business growth to a higher demand for personalized services and to the state of the overall travel market, especially as

people, given the halt to travel brought on by the COVID pandemic, are now eager to get back on the road or to fly to new and exotic destinations and make up for the lost time. Other aspects considered important by some travel agents include value-added services, with 66%, industry knowledge and connections, with 49% and the potential of technology, which was cited as a factor for growth by 34% of the advisors surveyed. In addition to this, 40% of them believe that the emergence of new trends, such as bleisure, the growing emphasis on niche-oriented travel, and microtrips, are opportunities that they will be able to capitalize on to increase their income. (Figure 8)

**Figure 8. Opportunities to earn more compared to pre-Covid**



The study found that **66% of agents are expanding their offering with customized products** such as travel insurance, private transfers, and transit, as well as making dinner and entertainment reservations to enhance the customer experience. (Figure 8) In the same vein, agents are constantly looking for unique products that they can upsell, which increases both their profitability and crafts unique travel offerings that move their business up the value chain, delivering value that is rare, hard to imitate, and that the organization (even though it can be an individual travel agent) is in a good position to capitalize on. Agents consider that offering these unique travel packages can help them grow their revenues, as they provide a differentiating factor from the standardized products sold by OTAs.

Practically all travel agents who participated in the study provide multiple travel services except car rental, which is the service that is offered less frequently.

Offering a wider travel portfolio allows travel agents to offset increasingly-lower commissions on flights, hotels, and car rentals, which pays the lowest fees. When asked about other travel services, 24% of travel agents mentioned booking villas, retreats, airport transits, city tours, and entertainment activities. (Figure 9)

Some agents also mentioned providing help with travel expenses for clients who are combining business and leisure trips and noticed that clients have a high appreciation for this service, and that there is a consistently **growing demand for blended travel.**

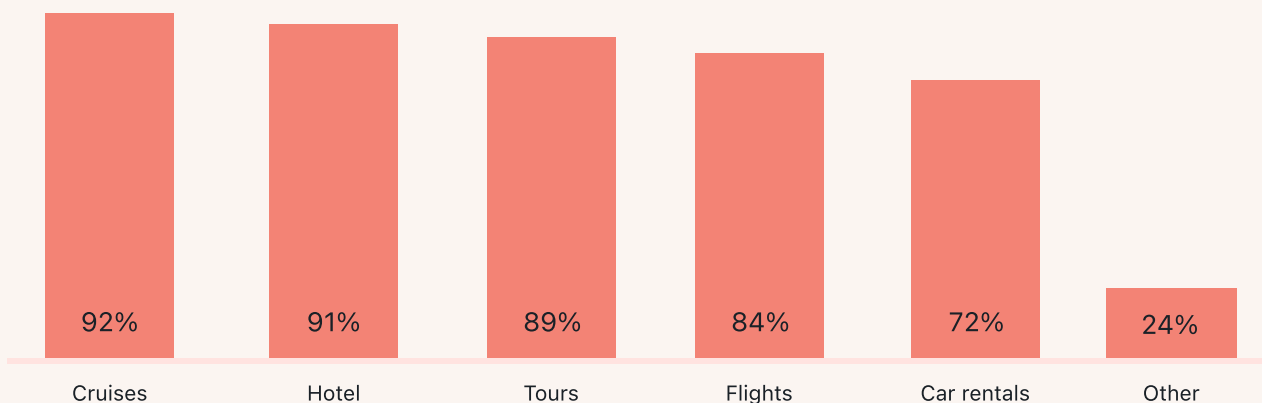
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***“If a travel agent is focused on speed and price, they will become obsolete. If an agent focuses on service and quality, they will always be relevant.”***

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-Verbatim. Travel agent

**Figure 9. Booking service providing for the clients**



This provides a window into the future, where **blended travel can become the main travel modality and something that travel agents need to be fluent at in order to be appealing to a market that is driven by flexibility, creativity, and disruption.** For those agents that are successful, though, the prospects are enormous, and the potential profits too.

The opportunities seem to be very exciting, but agents reported that there are barriers in the way that have prevented them from taking full advantage of them. The toughest obstacle that advisors consider on their way to growing their revenue includes the competition from direct-to-consumer online platforms, with 65% of agents seeing it as an obstacle, the increased complexity of bookings, which was mentioned by 61% of agents, and the post-COVID limitations of inventory

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***“The main challenge is that suppliers now allow clients to book directly on their platforms, which cuts out the travel advisor.”***

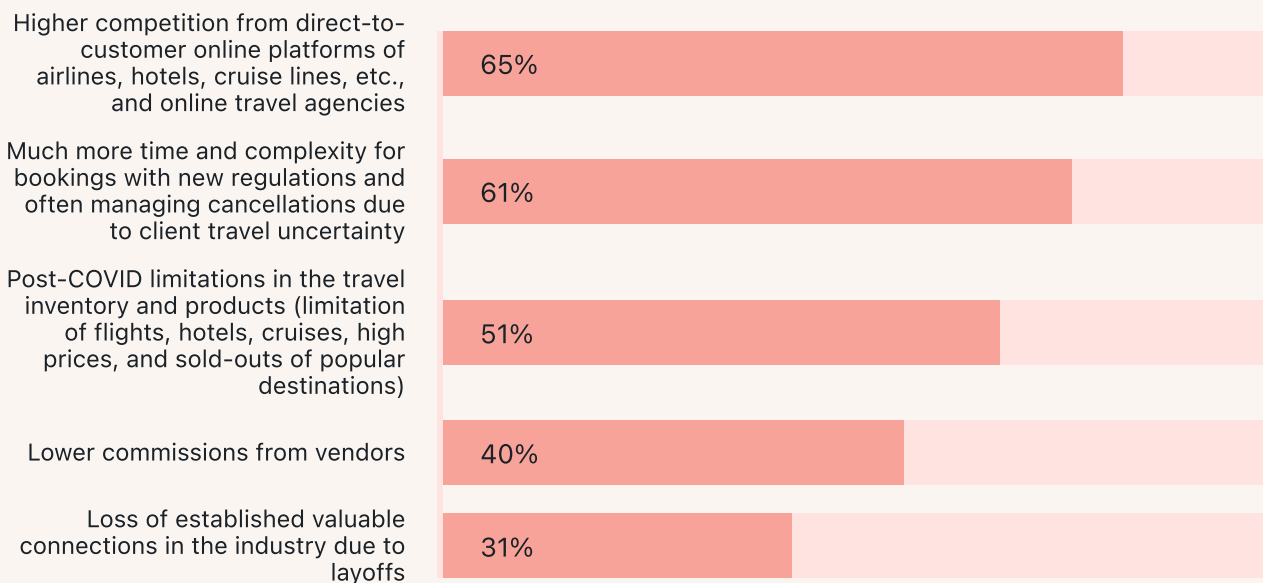
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–Verbatim. Travel agent

and travel products, with 51% of advisors reporting it as a hindrance on their way to success. (Figure 10)

Other issues that were mentioned include lower commissions from vendors, with 40% of agents mentioning it as a barrier, and the loss of valuable connections due to layoffs, something that affected 31% of the agents surveyed. Similarly, 33% of agents expressed concerns about diminishing client loyalty and the growing customers’ preferences for cheaper online options.

**Figure 10. Current barriers to revenue growth and causes of frustration**



Because of this, 30% of agents have introduced service retainers and opted to outsource certain services, which has helped them hedge the risk of spending a lot of work on preparing a trip proposal for a client for nothing. (Figure 11)

While the opportunities are there, travel advisors need to keep implementing innovative solutions that can help them develop a niche and increase customer loyalty throughout their community, as it is not possible to compete in terms of pricing with OTAs or with travel providers directly. However, the knowledge and expertise that permits advisors to offer certain unique experiences is definitely something that can help them increase their income and take their business to new heights.

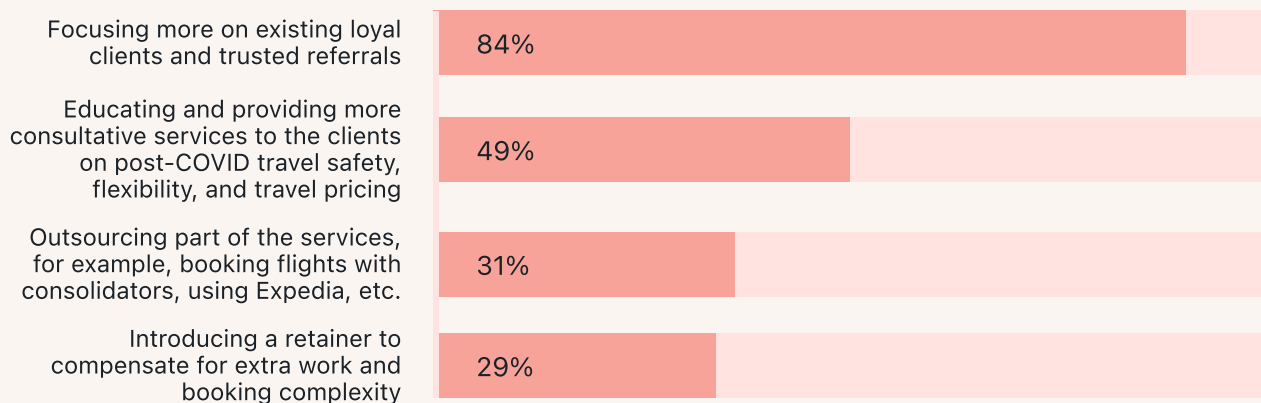
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***“My main frustrations are low commissions/means to increase revenue and a lag in technology, which could help me find easy ways to effectively research suppliers, destinations, etc.”***

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-Verbatim. Travel agent

**Figure 11. Recently implemented changes to adapt to post-COVID challenges**





# Travel Content

The study found that while there is a high demand (70%) for personalized travel services, clients are often seeking to get this customized support for the same price that they can book a trip online, which leaves very little room for travel agents to make a profit.

At the same time, relying on these personalized services is not enough for travel agents to counter the push of big tech firms in terms of travel content and technological implementation. Hence, finding a balance between a tailored service and competitive pricing, while at the same time improving travel content and leveraging technology to monetize it properly is a key challenge for travel advisors.

In this regard, we identified three main reasons why travel agents are losing the “content battle” with tech giants such as Booking.com, Expedia, and Airbnb.

The first reason is search and discoverability. **Even though there is a lot of available travel content, individual travel agents or small travel advisory firms do not have the same technological infrastructure or tools to access this extensive array of offerings and make them available to their customers.** On the other hand, large companies can easily do this since they have the proper tools in place to process large amounts of information and capitalize on them.

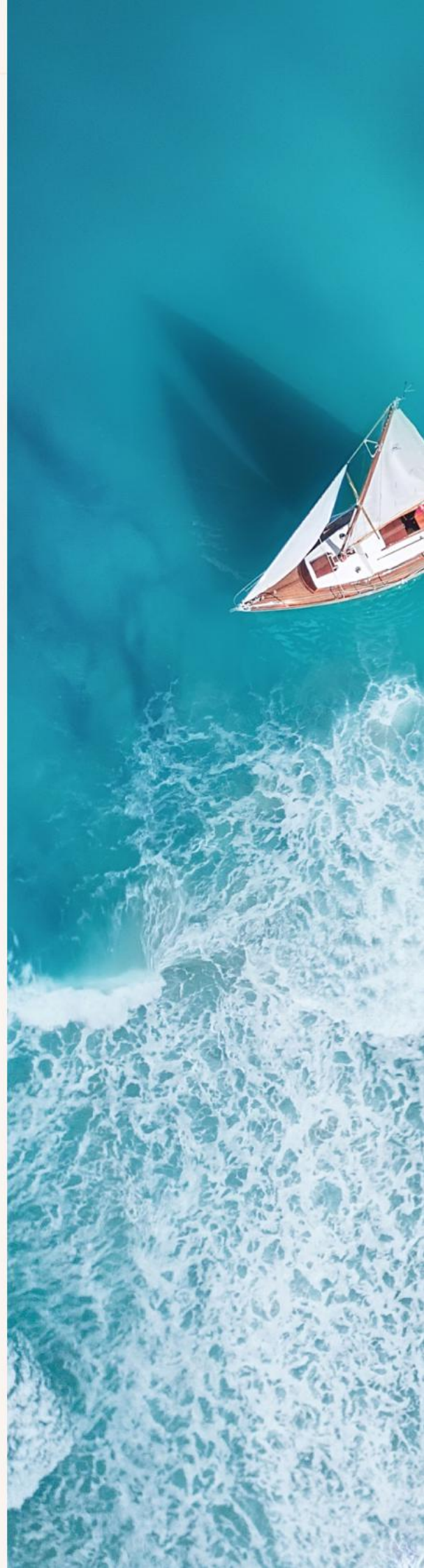
Secondly, it is very challenging for advisors to compete with online prices, partly because the commissions are not enough anymore. It is hard to find good travel deals that earn agents a good commission, and even for products that sell well, the fee for selling them keeps diminishing. Because of this, charging a service fee has become another vehicle through which the advisor makes a profit for the time invested in personalizing an experience. However, not all customers are willing or able to pay this fee, so it is very important that there is some work done in educating the customer, so that they can see the value that the travel experiences offer, and the value that the advisor brings to the table.

Yet, while advisors struggle charging enough for their work, large tech companies can leverage their economies of scale to offer low deals that are able to reach a large volume—millions of people—and grow their profits that way. It is through this strategy that they have been squeezing advisors out of the market.

There has been extensive reporting on how tech companies had a very heavy tech debt, which means that the travel sector has been one of the most sluggish in terms of adapting to all the technological changes. Sure, there have been some changes in this driven by the COVID pandemic and the digitalization that ensued, but still, many advisors operate in a very archaic way.

Advisors that can overcome these shortcomings in travel content and technological capabilities will be more likely to find a balance between personalized service and competitive pricing, meeting customers somewhere in the middle and giving them a reasonable price point where the agent still makes money, but where customers don't feel the service is so out of reach.

This marks one of the most important findings of the report, which is that, for travel advisors, a critical challenge right now is to find a way to make enough money, one that makes justice to their expertise, knowledge, and time, while at the same time, offering a price point that a client is willing to pay and that fosters a good customer-service provider relationship.



# Overall Industry Outlook

We have covered the technological, financial, marketing, and customer relationship segments of the travel advisory business, and found some of the key challenges that travel advisors are facing as well as some of the main opportunities that they have access to.

Then, there is the overall industry outlook. Let's remember that the travel industry was battered due to the COVID pandemic, since it is one of the main industries that had to come to a complete halt. This generated trauma within the sector, and many businesses did not make it alive from this. This is called the residual impact of post-COVID trauma. However, what the report finds is that despite the limitations and challenges that travel

companies are facing, the overall outlook on the industry is still somewhat positive. **Travel advisors still find passion in what they do, and this is proven by the fact that over half of the travel agents surveyed find their job emotionally rewarding, and they express satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment with the opportunities available.** It is this 50% of the agents that would recommend people to join the industry. (Figure 13)

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***"Strong market growth, enhanced technological developments, and new travel segments are what I expect to see in the future."***

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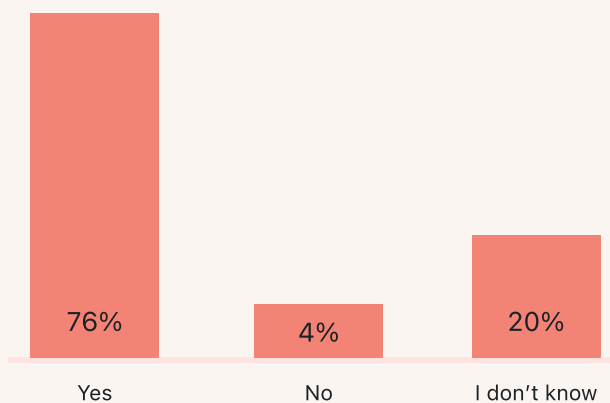
–Verbatim. Travel agent



On the other hand, 31% of agents are still feeling the effects of post-Covid trauma, and they are uncertain as to whether they would recommend someone else to join the travel industry. 19% of advisors surveyed would definitely stand against joining the industry if they had to choose again.

This statistic reinforces another question, in which 76% of travel agents reported that they plan to stay in the industry. This is a validation for the positive outlook that exists within the public consensus of industry leaders, one in which a good amount of the people involved believe there are more opportunities than threats. 40% of the agents interviewed mentioned that the travel industry offers them the opportunity to earn more money, while 45% of agents revealed feeling already satisfied, stating that they find the financial rewards of working in the travel industry already satisfactory. Only less than 5% consider exiting, and mainly because of retirement. (Figure 12)

**Figure 12. Plans regarding staying in the travel industry**



The financial rewards come coupled with the emotional rewards of working in travel. 56% of agents mentioned that they feel happy and joyful about partaking in the industry, and 50% believe that the industry is rebounding, reporting feeling satisfied with the overall trends in the industry and with the market growth. Still, there are some limitations, and 51% of agents reported that limited availability, sellouts, and higher prices still get in their way of potentially earning more or being able to provide a better service to their customers. (Figure 13)

Last, but not least, the fact that the industry still has work to do in addressing its tech debt means that travel agents reported that it is complicated to recruit people from Generation Z as travel agents and to appeal to that community, given that Generation Z is highly technological and finds the lack of tech mechanisms available in the industry quite unappealing.

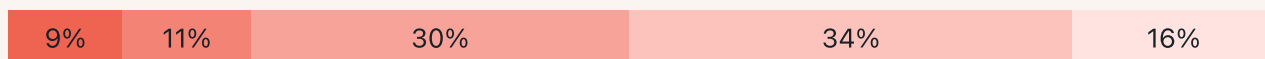
Nevertheless, it seems like the travel sector is doing its job of becoming more technologically-adept and adapting to the latest trends, and that it has a very committed group of people who enjoy their job as advisors and who believe that, by finding a niche, they can increase their earnings, create more epic travel experiences, and carve out room for themselves in an industry that tech giants insist in making more homogenous.

**Figure 13. Evaluation of statements on the emotional impact of working in the travel industry**

I find working in the travel industry these days emotionally rewarding



I am satisfied with the current travel market growth and travel industry trends



I believe that there are more opportunities to earn in the travel industry now compared to the pre-COVID-19 era



I find working in the travel industry these days financially rewarding



I am satisfied with my income post-COVID-19, including the impact of inflation



1 - Strongly disagree
  2
  3
  4
  5 - Strongly agree

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***“Opportunities are abundant for those who develop a niche market. The main challenges are having clients who expect that you know every destination, hotel, and restaurant.”***

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–Verbatim. Travel agent

# III. Respondents: Demographic profile, industry experience





# The demographic profile of the participants

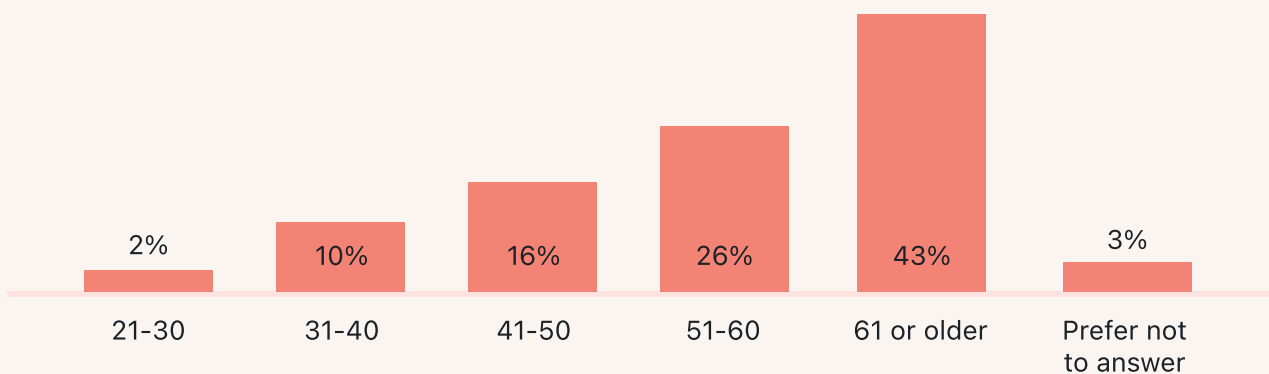
Over 85% of the agents interviewed are 40 years of older. Consequently, the share of agents who are under 40 is below 15%. It is important to disclose this generational gap accordingly, as insights may vary according to the demographic profile of travel agents. (Figure 14)

During the interviews, almost all participants commented that the industry is considered to be "traditional," and cited an average age of 45 years or more. However, the COVID-19 pandemic additionally impacted the age distribution of travel agents because many agents decided to retire sooner. According to the opinion voiced during the interviews, a faster

technological adoption could rejuvenate the industry and make it attractive for younger professionals. For example, recruiting new agents, especially millennials and Gen Z, has been stated as "almost impossible because they are used to multiple apps and gadgets, and this is quite a gap in the current state of travel." (Verbatim. Travel agency owner)

In terms of industry experience, almost 50% of agents have over 15 years of service, while the remaining half are split in half between agents with 5-15 years of experience (25%) and new entrants (less than 5 years of experience) at 26%. (Figure 15)

Figure 14. Age

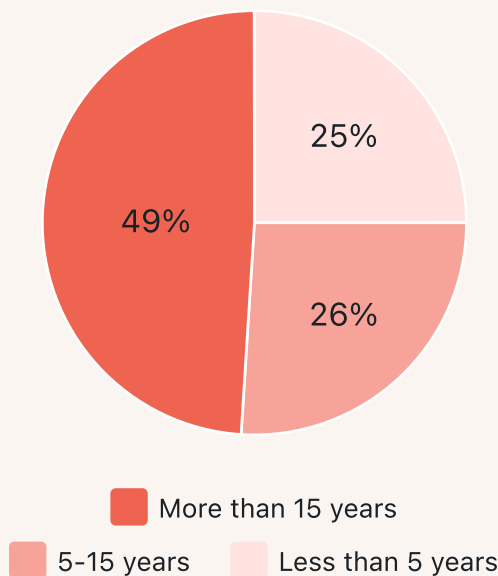


During the interviews, travel agency owners mentioned that once the agent has been in the industry for over five years, they will most likely stay in the sector for ten years or more. Conversely, the churn rate for agents with less than 5 years of experience can be close to 50%. (Figure 15)

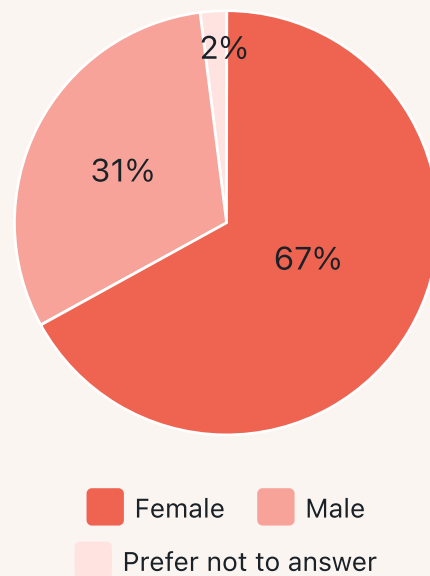
An attractive selling point that can help to provide a fresh outlook to the industry and lure younger travel agents is that, for advisors who recently joined the industry, the job of the travel agent offers the possibility for self-fulfillment and creativity. The expectation is that new travel products and services will give more excitement to the job.

This idea of self-fulfillment was more strongly expressed by female travel agents who participated in our survey. Historically, the U.S. travel industry has been perceived as a "feminine" industry, as it has had a higher share of female workers compared to some other industries. Our study shows that 67% of respondents are female travel agents. (Figure 16)

**Figure 15. Experience in the travel industry**



**Figure 16. Gender**



Several factors account for the much higher proportion of female travel agents:

- The U.S. travel industry has grown significantly over the past few decades, leading to an increased demand for travel services and more job opportunities. This growth has attracted more women and empowered them to pursue careers in travel because of the possibility of becoming travel agency owners and senior executives.
- Another fact is that female travelers make up a larger share of the clientele. According to multiple recent publications, women are the primary decision-makers for travel in the majority of U.S. households. Additionally, women take approximately two-thirds of all leisure trips in the U.S. and about half of all business trips. Therefore, there is a logical opportunity for travel agency owners to hire women, as this would present a better appeal to existing client demographics and reinforce their aim to offer better customer service.
- Naturally, women have strong relationship-building and communication skills, which are critical for the role of travel agents.
- The possibility of working flexible hours, having family-friendly schedules, and working part-time presents a strong appeal and is a decisive factor that women consider when joining the travel industry.

This flexibility factor was heavily mentioned during the interviews, and it is important to say that flexibility was listed as a consideration not only by female travel agents, but also by male travel professionals. Other issues mentioned in relation to flexibility were economic factors, such as inflation, and the increased risk of losing a job, which leads to many people becoming travel agents as a side gig. Several advisors who were interviewed mentioned that they are working part-time or as a second job in order to supplement their income or pension. This is a good option for people who have broader career aspirations or financial goals.

When we asked travel agency owners their opinion about doing it as part-time work or as a second job, the feedback was rather positive. Hiring part-time workers is a cost-effective way to manage staffing needs. Given the residual post-Covid impact, there is a need to grow revenue and keep costs in check, especially in relation to the increasing travel seasonality and demand fluctuations.

## Credits

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