

Travel agent career prospects in the travel industry research paper

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Abstract

Travel agents help clients with travel arrangements and provide information on destinations, transport expected weather and accommodations. The job of a travel entails several tasks from providing information to advising clients on their travel information. This is just one of the arrays of careers available in the large tourism sector. In order to gain entry and succeed in the profession of travel agents there are certain educational and skills requirements. Most travel agency require that the person seeking the job of the travel agent to at the very minimum posses a certificate or associate degree from a vocational school or community college. Various factors determine the salary and benefits of the travel agent's among them being the size of the agency, the location and the education and experience of the agent; generally the travel agent earns between \$24, 000 and \$48, 000 annually. Several factors affect career prospects as a travel agent such as globalization, technological advances, competition, changing consumers taste, and economic factors. This paper will review the prospects of a career in this sector and particularly as a career agent. The paper will be divided in three main sections as below:

1. Industry overview
2. The Travel Agent's Job
3. Factors affecting the Travel agent's career prospects

From the literature reviewed it is clear that travel agent career is colorful and has good returns as well as benefits. However due to the effects of

globalization, technological advancement and economic factors career prospects as a travel agent are dwindling.

Industry Overview

Travel agency is part of the impressive tourism industries and therefore it is imperative to briefly review the tourism industry as a whole before delving into the subsector. Tourism affects several industries including travel agencies, hotels, restaurants and airlines thus tourism is not just a single industry but an amalgam of a number of industries [CITATION Éla99 I 1033]. The tourism industry has been rated as one of the fastest growing industries in the world in terms of the revenue generated and job creations. Canada, which is the focus of this paper, is ranked as the eighth most popular tourist destination. The tourism industry has earned Canada an average of \$ 24 billion dollars every year for the last ten years contributing about 2. 5% of the country's GDP and employs approximately 663, 000 jobs in different tourism related industries every year[CITATION Sta09 I 1033].

Travel agents generally assist travel agencies customers with travel arrangements. They help clients to choose and research destinations and book tickets and accommodation reservations[CITATION job11 I 1033]. There are over 2, 2000 travel agencies represented by the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies that provide excellent job opportunities for travel agents[CITATION Assnd I 1033], in addition there are travel agents that are self employed. The job market for travel agents has grown steadily since 2003 to 2008 from about 40, 800 to 47, 600 employees[CITATION Sta09 I 1033]. This increased demand is partly due to an increase in the number of

tourists visiting Canada and partly due to an increase in domestic tourism over the same period of time. Another factor contributing to the growing demand for travel agents is the increasing interest of Canadians to travel to other country in search of warmer climates. The Also albeit the growing demand for travel agents in the said period more recently the demand has been dwindling as a result of the economic recession and the tighter family budgets.

Job Description

As earlier mentioned the job of the travel agent involves making travel arrangements for their clients travelling for various reasons such as vacation, business and honeymoons[CITATION Dawnd I 1033]. Travel agents offer advice and information on the destination, available accommodation, transportation and the weather. They are information providers thus must keep themselves updated on the subjects above in order to be able to advice the clients on their destination's weather conditions, documentation requirements and travel advisories. Travel agents must therefore keep abreast of the happenings in the foreign countries[CITATION jam08 I 1033]. The travel agents consult publications and online sources on departure and arrival times, transport costs and accommodation costs. In addition they visit hotels, restaurants and even tourist attractions to analyze their comfort and quality of services provide[CITATION Annd1 I 1033]. Travel agents can also specialize in specific areas of the business such as leisure travel, business, geographical location and medical tours.

Requirements for the Job

Different travel agencies demand different educational qualifications from their employees, but generally to be a travel agent one needs training in travel and hospitality at a vocational school or community college [CITATION AGw10 | 1033]. Usually a certificate or associate degree is the minimum entry requirement for this job but there are employers that insist on a bachelor's degree in travel and hospitality.

Some agents begin their careers as assistant travel agents or receptionists in a travel agency and climb up the ladder through experience and apprenticeship. Certification by an international Airline or the Association of Canadian Travel agencies is not mandatory but shows high level of seriousness which is an attractive quality to many employers. It may also be useful to have knowledge on other subjects such as geography and history in order to be able to adequately advice clients. Travel agents aspiring to enter management positions may also need training in management and business subjects. It is worth noting that higher educational qualifications improve the chances of advancing in the career of a travel agent.

In addition to these educational qualification travel agents must possess certain skills and attributes. In the digital world an aspiring travel agent must be literate on information systems and computer applications. To be a good travel agent one must be an astute researcher with a good reading culture so as to be able to get information from various sources. The travel agent must be a good sales and marketing agent with good customer skills such customer needs assessment, meeting predetermined quality standards and

assessing customer satisfaction[CITATION Annd1 | 1033]. Knowledge in various international languages can also prove very valuable in the travel agent's job. Other qualities useful in the career of a travel agent include active listening, effective communication, time management, social perceptiveness, coordination and many more[CITATION KMo06 | 1033].

Wages and Benefits

A number of factors determine the salary and benefits of a travel agent. Chief among these factors are the agent's educational qualifications and job experience. Other thing such as the size of agency that has employed the agent, the location of the agency, the ability of the agent to sell effectively and the number of working hours also dictate the agent's earning.

In most markets travel agents earn between \$24, 000 and \$ 48, 000 per year depending on the factors mentioned above. Obviously travel agents working on part time basis earn less while those who are self employed tend to earn more. The greatest benefit of being a travel agent is access to various tourism products at a reduced cost. Travel agents also have opportunities to travel to many different places at a reduced cost. Most travel agencies have comprehensive medical cover and insurance for their travel agents.

Despite the benefits mentioned above the demands for the travel agents is on a decline in today's world. As will be seen in the next section there are several factors contributing to this, however it is suffice to say that there is a lot of competition for those aspiring to join this profession. With many young people preferring dynamic jobs that are fairly flexible and involve a lot of

travelling the travel agents job market is attracting a lot of young graduates. With globalization and the market liberalization there are many immigrants coming into Canada in such of greener pastures, these immigrants certainly offer great competition in all job sectors.

Factors Affecting Career Prospects in Travel agencies

Despite the colorful picture portrayed by recruiting agencies concerning travel agents' jobs the sector is facing some major challenges. It has been predicted that with the ongoing restructuring of the airline industry that reduces commissions for travel agents and the internet booking half the jobs held by travel agents will be lost[CITATION Gornd I 1033].

Globalization , Neo-liberalism and Technology

It important to not at the very onset of this section that globalization is very closely linked to technological advancement. As the world, which once had stringent restrictions, becomes a global village there is easier access to information and even destinations. Given that a travel agent basically sells information on destination globalization possess a major challenge to career prospects as a travel agent. The internet and mobile phones have made access to information easier and cheaper thus travelers would rather “ Google” about their destination rather than pay travel agents[CITATION buz00 I 1033]. Due to globalization and neo-liberalism trade and travel restrictions between countries have greatly reduced. As result some of the services offered by travel agents such processing documentation have either been greatly reduced or eliminated all together. Generally the error of ecommerce is rendering travel agents redundant[CITATION Ver061 I 1033].

Climate change, competition and Change in Customer Taste

Changes in the global climates have had a major impact on the tourism industry in Canada and thereby the travel agent career prospects. The phenomenon of global warming has made weather patterns rather erratic and unpredictable and as earlier mentioned part of the travel agent's job is to give advice on the weather[CITATION JGB06 I 1033]. Changes in weather patterns have particularly affected Canada's position as a tourist destination with most tourists, both local and international, preferring warmer destinations. In addition changing customer taste, with most tourist today preferring destinations with a variety of products such as historical sites and wildlife, has impacted negatively on the tourism industry. All this coupled with an increasing number of travel agencies has meant that the many travel agencies have to compete for fewer travelers. Of course this translates into fewer jobs for the travel agents. Other sources of competition for the travel agents are the increasingly popular travel websites and virtual travel agencies. The internet has offered cut throat competition to the travel agents as the services are provided at a lower cost and from the customers comfort zone[CITATION RAC10 I 1033].

Economic Factors

The recent economic recession has meant the reduction of available resources for leisure activities. This has impacted negatively on the entire tourism sector as families and individuals use the few available resources on other more important things than travel. In addition government and other players in the industry have had to cut down their budgets. The government

has had to reduce its expenditure on marketing the tourism sector.

Commissions for travel agents have also been reduced drastically especially with the restructuring of the airline industry. These economic factors have a negative impact on career prospects in the travel agencies.

Conclusions

From the available data it is clear that travel agent career is colorful and has good returns as well as benefits. However due to the effects of globalization, technological advancement and economic factors career prospects as a travel agent are dwindling. In fact an MP made this point in a discussion in the House of Commons remarking that travel agents probably ought to start for other courses for new careers because e-commas may soon make them redundant[CITATION Gornd I 1033].

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