

Consumers return to travel, they turn to advisors for help

By [Jamie Biesiada](#) | Feb 22, 2021

Consumers, including many who never worked with a travel agent before, are turning to travel advisors as they anticipate resuming vacation plans.

Some consortia have noticed increases in traffic to their websites that house travel advisor profiles and information on connecting to travel professionals.

Virtuoso said consumer inquiries via [Virtuoso.com](#) doubled from June to September 2020, and January saw a **50% increase over December in requests to connect with an advisor**. Virtuoso attributed the increase to consumers having more money to travel after skipping 2020 trips, heightened desire to get away from home and an increased appreciation for what travel advisors do for their clients.

Many have predicted that once consumers feel confident traveling again, they will flock to advisors to help meet pent-up demand.

"We give some credence to that thought," McGillivray said. "But we think what dominates that uptick in people searching for travel advisors is the fact that travel is more complex right now, and all these things just beg for the use of a travel advisor."

The top terms from a keyword analysis on more than 12,000 leads Travel Leaders Group received since Jan. 1.

1 Plan	6 Need
2 Help	7 Inclusive
3 Book	8 Family
4 Confusing	9 Complicated
5 Vacation	10 Please

Keyword analysis on more than 12,000 leads TLG has fielded since Jan. 1 paint a picture for 2021. Things like "plan," "help," "confusing," "complicated," "please" and even "hope" dominate the list. Other previously popular terms, like those indicating a consumer is looking for a deal or promotion, have fallen off the list.

TLG marketers have, in particular, mulled the term "please," Hegarty said. It either means consumers are getting more polite, or, more likely, they are confused by rules and regulations and are asking an advisor to "please, help me," he said.

To McGillivray, that indicates more than just pent-up demand.

"This is great news for the human touch, [for] us," he said, referencing the entire industry, not just TLG. "Consumers looking to book travel are looking to us."

Tara Hyland, owner of Tara Hyland Travel, a Travel Edge affiliate based in League City, Texas, agrees that consumers will be increasingly drawn to advisors. Tracking and complying with different regulations in different countries is confusing and time-consuming, she noted.

"And potentially, it could be very unpleasant if things aren't done correctly, so I just think that professional guidance is going to be key to having a seamless trip," she said.

Hyland also believes do-it-yourself travelers who found themselves untangling canceled trips and chasing refunds and vouchers after the pandemic hit will also seek the guidance and advocacy of advisors going forward.