

TRAVEL AGENCY AND TYPES OF TRAVEL AGENCY

The beginning of travel agencies goes back to the glory years of railroads and steamship lines when agents sold tickets for these carriers and received a commission for their efforts. Thomas Cook started the concept of the travel agent. By making travel arrangements simple and affordable, he was able to attract a large number of people to explore places away from their homes and villages.

Generally, a travel agency is a private retailer or public service that provides travel and tourism-related services to the public on behalf of suppliers such as airlines, car rentals, cruise lines, hotels, railways, and package tours. In addition to dealing with ordinary tourists, most travel agencies have a separate department devoted to making travel arrangements for business travelers. Some travel agencies specialize in commercial and business travel only.

There are also travel agencies that serve as general sales agents of foreign travel companies, allowing them to have offices in countries other than where their headquarters are located. From small service-oriented travel agencies, travel agencies have grown and adapted to an electronic world to become an integral link in the tourism distribution system, make –my- trip and yatra.com are a few of examples.

Many travel agencies are brick-and-mortar as well as online, specialized by focusing their efforts on large target markets such as business or leisure customers, while others serve a general group of customers or a specific market niche such as cruise-only customers. There are many types of agencies serves different types of travel needs which are mentioned below:

Independent agencies: These are privately owned small agencies, unaffiliated with any larger organization, serves clients from walk-in-office locations or over the telephone.

Agency chains – wholly owned: These are the mega agencies that have dozens to hundreds of branch offices throughout the region, country or worldwide.

Examples:

- o American Express
- o BCD Travel
- o Carlson Wagonlit Travel Inc.

Agency chains – franchises: These constitute the semi-independent agencies affiliated with the Owner Company through a franchise agreement. These agencies have the right to use a chain 's name, preferred products, and services. These agencies sign such agreements in the hope that the fee they pay for franchise status will result in such benefits as brand recognition (which will attract more customers), training support, business guidance, higher commissions, and greater profitability.

Examples:

- o Make My Trip India Private. Ltd.
- o Easy Trip Planners Private Ltd.
- o Club Mahindra Holidays.

Consortium–affiliated agencies: It includes independent agencies that link together through a consortium to gain the financial benefits of a chain but have lower fee and commissions. There's no brand name involved, however.

Consortium builds preferred-supplier relationship on behalf of its member agencies and provides them with marketing aid, training support, financial advice. Some small and medium sized agencies join consortia to further influence their position in the industry.

These agencies have more independence than if they were an agency franchise.

Examples:

ABC Global Services:

- o ABC Represents 70% corporate and 30% leisure business.
- o More than 30,000 hotels participate in ABC's programs.
- o ABC agencies include Altour International, Boeing Travel Management, Casto Travel, Frosch International, Garber Travel, Protravel International, Tzell Travel, Ultramar Travel Management and Valerie

Wilson Travel.

- o ABC also provides its hotel programs to prestigious agency networks including: ATPI, Lufthansa City Center, MAST, Nexion and Thomas Cook.

Specialty agencies: Such types of agencies provide only limited services like cruise-only agencies for examples:

- o Jetabroad: it is a Sydney-based, global online travel agency focused on selling highly competitive international airfares and travel insurance.
- o Edelweiss Bike Travel: specialist in providing BMW bikes on any continent.
- o Late deals UK: This travel company is operated by TUI UK Retail Ltd., deals in best holidays and flights around the world from UK.

Corporate travel agencies: These are the agencies that provide services to corporate clients only. These types of agencies have offices in the location which are business hubs.

Corporate travel department: Sometimes in the travel agency a different department handle the needs of the organization 's employees.

Home based agencies: Several agents serve their clients from their homes using electronic technology, rather than form an office. These types of agents may be independent or affiliated with some organizations.

Online travel agencies (OTA): OTAs which stand for Online Travel Agents/Agencies are internet-based travel websites. They are basically online versions of traditional travel agents. These may be home-based or office-based serve clients through the internet and use telephone, fax, and postal communication to a lesser degree.