Prior to the pandemic Destination Canada had good quality information about tourism arrivals into Canada. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, 9 of 10 people lived in countries with travel restrictions. Once they slowly lifted and trickles of travel reappeared, destination marketers (DMO’s) realized that travel intelligence and data would become an even more critical tool in the recovery. Not only did Destination Canada historically use travel data intelligence to boost tourism to Canada, but they will continue to do so, utilizing IATA’s GAP tool, to bring back tourism to Canada in a post-pandemic world.

Michel Dubreuil, Manager of Market and Consumer Intelligence at Destination Canada, shares his story.

Obtaining data from source markets

In order to achieve timely and proactive marketing investment decisions, Destination Canada ran a comprehensive research program in close collaboration with Statistics Canada. For example, tourist arrival surveys were an inexact science and could not be relied on to capture the details that were needed for fact-based decision making. More pertinently, Destination Canada was not getting data from important travel agencies in key markets. Travel agencies are a key promotional channel for Destination Canada in international markets and it was essential to track individual agency sales trends to implement more effective inbound campaigns. Destination Canada needed the level of detail and real-time accuracy only GAP could provide.

“GAP gives us access to rich, timely data... and allows us to frame that data through market intelligence, so we have a complete picture. That makes GAP a very powerful tool.”

- Destination Canada
The results from GAP is a business intelligence tool based on the world’s largest repository of travel agency ticketing data.

For example for a given trip GAP contains booking agency details and point of origin. This allowed reliable estimations of passengers’ country of residence and enabled Destination Canada shift more advertising spend to those countries.

Because of the accuracy of GAP data, Destination Canada was able to quickly develop marketing strategies with pin point accuracy, targeting the agencies that provided the biggest opportunity to attract inbound traffic to Canada.

Drilling even deeper they found that some 13% of passengers captured by Global Agency Pro had a final destination in Canada beyond the three main gateways of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Destination Canada used this insight to promote not just the gateway cities but specifically the northern landscapes and aurora borealis trips to Japanese outbound travel agencies.

In 2016, flights tickets in Japan for flights between a Canadian O&D represented 28% of total inbound arrivals based on agency issued tickets.