What kind of marketing distribution mix can maximize revenues: The wholesaler travel agencies' perspective?

Leo Huang a, b, *, Kaung-Hwa Chen c, Ying-Wei Wu b

a Travel Management Department, National Kaohsiung Hospitality College, No. 1, Sung-Ho Rd., Hsiao-Kang, Kaohsiung 812, Taiwan
b The Graduate School of Travel Management, National Kaohsiung Hospitality College, No. 1, Sung-Ho Rd., Hsiao-Kang, Kaohsiung 812, Taiwan
c Department of Tourism Management, National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

Abstract

This study attempts to identify the variety of marketing channel efficiencies for marketing activities and sets up an optimal marketing distribution mix when using different distribution channels for wholesaler travel agencies. This research examines 12 large-scale travel agencies in Taiwan and offers seven direct and indirect distribution channels in order to establish an optimal marketing distribution mix and identifies the different forms of distribution involved. We also implement the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) to prioritize the seven main marketing distribution channels of travel agency: websites, cable TV, radios, professional magazines, retailer travel agencies, strategic alliances, and newspapers. Five criteria are categorized as a distribution channel selection: overall cost of the channel, target audience respondent rate, impression rates, transactional capabilities, and gross profit of the channel. The results show that Taiwan's wholesaler travel agencies adopt the retailer travel agency as their highest priority of channel selection, while travel agency websites hold it as their second priority. Transactional capabilities, gross profit of the channel, and overall cost of the channel are the top three favorable choices among the five criteria considered. This study proposes an innovative hierarchy model of marketing distribution mix to a wholesaler travel agency practitioner when making decisions in order to effectively exploit the different distribution mix, to maximize performances and revenues, and to overcome the traditional experience based on the shortcomings of the selection.

1. Introduction

With the appearance of the Internet as a new distribution channel in recent years, the intermediation function that travel agencies have assumed is constantly changing (Alvarez, Martin, & Casielles, 2007). In an increasingly competitive market place, tourism products require an effective distribution strategy in order for a firm to reach its target tourists and local markets (Smith, 2007). Developing an effective distribution system in such a market requires carefully assessing these different factors to evaluate the performance of individual channels and the distribution mix as a whole (Pearce & Taniguchi, 2008). For travel agency practitioners, marketing channels are much more diversified, have high risk, and show significantly different efficiencies. As such, the increasing number of distribution channels makes it difficult for travel agency practitioners to control their inventory as well as creates confusion for the different types of distribution channels’ efficiencies, and hence successful organizations need to take advantage of all potential distribution channels in order to reach their target markets (Buhalis, 2000; Gensler, Dekimpe, & Skiera, 2007).

Many wholesaler travel agencies today use different distribution channels for marketing activities as well as employ them as a profit resource. Wholesaler travel agency practitioners should study and analyze the primary sources of their business in order to understand how to sell to them, through whom, and at what cost. If wholesaler travel agencies know the effectiveness of their marketing distribution mix, then they can implement strategies to enhance market share and profits for the most effective distribution channels. Facing such conditions, wholesaler travel agency practitioners must find an optimal marketing distribution mix to reduce costs, target their marketing resources, and monitor the effectiveness of their distribution channels so as to develop incremental revenues.

1.1. Purpose of this study

Tourism distribution channels have attracted a growing amount of attention lately, because their importance, albeit slowly, has been
recognized by researchers (Pearce & Schott, 2005). There ironically appears to be no empirical or theoretical development of the optimal marketing distribution mix for the travel agency industry, as it is done only for other industries (Coelho & Easingwood, 2005, 2008; Cooper, Wakefield, & Tanner, 2006; Easingwood & Coelho, 2003) in the literature. Most of those related and empirical studies on marketing distribution mix are constructed only from the customers’ perspective (Ganesh, 2004; Gensler et al., 2007; Gupta, Su, & Walter, 2004; Neslin et al., 2006; Nicholson, Clarke, & Blakemore, 2002; Pearce & Schott, 2005; Vehoef & Donkers, 2005) and from the retailers’ perspective (Barlow, Siddiqui, & Mannion, 2004), but they fail to explore how wholesaler travel agency practitioners perceive and use different marketing distribution channels. Pearce (2008) presents a generalized tourism distribution model emphasizing the needs of tourists and the functions required to meet them, but the research lacks effective evaluation systems of a marketing distribution mix for travel wholesalers’ perspective in order to allocate appropriate company resources and make correct strategic decisions. Therefore, this article explores the priorities for wholesaler travel agency practitioners’ marketing distribution channels and efficiencies for marketing activities. The adoption of an objective monitor for marketing distribution channel performance could provide wholesaler travel agencies with a proactive means of distribution channel management. Specifically, the study targets the following.

1. Explore the criteria of the marketing distribution channel selection.
2. Examine if any different weight vectors exist in all the marketing distribution channels.
3. Assess if an optimal marketing distribution mix exists for using the different marketing channels for wholesaler travel agency practitioners.

1.2. Literature review

Distribution channels are the paths by which tourism organizations communicate and sell their products and services. To varying degrees, all tourism product suppliers depend on these channels for the distribution of their products (Bitner & Booms, 1982; Gartner & Bachr, 1994; Williams & Richter, 2002). A distribution channel is defined as a mechanism that provides sufficient information to the right people at the right time and in the right place to allow a purchase decision to be made, and this permits the consumer to make a reservation and pay for the required product (Buhalis, 2000). The distribution mix in tourism is seen as “the combination of the direct and indirect distribution channels that a hospitality and travel organization uses to make customers aware of, to reserve and deliver its services” (Morrison, 1989; Pearce & Tan, 2006).

The distribution channel is one of the most dynamic elements within the tourism industry and is one of the few elements of the marketing mix that contributes to the competitiveness of enterprises and also influences other aspects of the marketing mix such as price, product, and promotion (Pearce, 2002). Distribution channels play a critical role in cost formulation, as well as in differentiation strategies, and affect the profitability of all members of the tourism value chain (Buhalis, 2000; Coelho & Easingwood, 2008). Tour operators are often the distribution link and the channel between producers and consumers of tourism products. Since tourism products are to be experienced and consumed on site, tour operators are an integral link in the distribution system (Morrison, 1989).

Tour wholesalers play three roles in Taiwan. First, they assemble tour packages that are then sold to consumers through retailer travel agencies. Second, they directly sell their travel products and services to customers through their own distribution channels. Third, they coordinate ground service at the travel destination with the related travel industry. Some wholesaler travel agencies even build up their own overseas branch office in order to offer the features of a tour operator. Hence, Taiwan’s wholesaler travel agencies act in both the roles of supplier and distributor.

Travel agencies develop a distribution channel mix that makes up an effective portfolio toward determining the patterns of marketing activities, target markets, tangibility, and trust created for travel shoppers. Brand awareness and brand image influence the strategies of distribution channel management (Woodward, 2000). With the rapid growth of Internet-based distribution channels, the relationship among these channels is becoming more complicated, and in order to maximize revenue wholesaler travel agencies may adopt different marketing distribution channels for different types of guests. A key component of developing an effective distribution strategy is formulating an appropriate marketing distribution mix.

1.3. Traditional travel distribution channels

Different distribution channels are known to have their own strengths and weaknesses in delivering various types of services or products, with traditional distribution channels often separated between broadcast and print media. Broadcast media requires low and emotional involvement for the channels, whereas print media generally requires high and rational involvement (Chauduri & Buck, 1995). Television, for example, is based on action and therefore is more appropriate for those products requiring physical demonstrations, whereas radio is based on sound and thus offers a different platform with which to communicate to potential customers (Kim, Hwang, & Fesenmaier, 2005). While there are expensive distribution costs associated with remote TV, few travel agencies adopt this channel, even though cable TV has been well established in Taiwan. Print media, by contrast, enables the reader to set the pace and therefore provides the opportunity for making connections while dwelling on points of interest (Assael, 1992). For example, magazines offer high-quality reproduction and good color, but most importantly they are a self-interest medium for readers and they offer longer life than most media (Nylen, 1986). Newspapers are perceived as more informative, reliable, and believable (Kim et al., 2005).

Bitner and Booms (1982) observe that retailer travel agents play a pivotal role in the tourism distribution channel, and despite the impact of technology and the advent of online bookings, this observation still stands. Walle (1996) argues that a key strength of travel agencies is their ability to provide personal information and advice to travelers on a continuous basis. The role of travel agencies consequently remains secure if their advice-offering capability is strengthened by the Internet, rather than if they function according to the more negative image of being simply a “booking agency” (Law, Leung, & Wong, 2004). While it is likely that more complex products will continue to be distributed through traditional distribution channels, nevertheless, more and more consumers continue to gain information through the Internet, even as they still prefer to use traditional distribution channels and continue to appreciate things done in the old, traditional way (Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Lang, 2000).

1.4. New birth of the electronic distribution channels

E-commerce provides a boundless platform for marketing and advertising and is a channel of distribution to generate additional sales (Connolly, 2003; Heung, 2003), which means travel agencies need to adjust to change quickly and respond to new audiences through e-commerce (Siebenaler & Groves, 2002). E-commerce offers travel agencies a business opportunity by enabling them to
promote their products to a broader geographic market at a minimal cost compared to traditional distribution channels (Garces, Gorgemans, Sanchez, & Perez, 2004). This new channel helps tourism businesses improve their competitiveness and performance (Law et al., 2004; Tse, 2003). Additionally, e-commerce can achieve lower distribution costs, higher revenues, and a larger market share (Bennett & Lai, 2005; Cai, Card, & Cole, 2004; Law, Law, & Wai, 2001; Rachman & Richins, 1997).

Although the Internet provides a new distribution channel for hotel room reservations, a pleasant purchase experience for many hotel customers usually requires the professional assistance of a friendly and helpful travel agent (Law & Lau, 2004). Even though many Taiwanese travel agencies regard the Internet as an information distribution channel rather than an e-commerce channel (Bennett & Lai, 2005), e-tourism is maturing fast as a mainstream distribution mechanism (Buhalis & Deimezi, 2003). Empirical evidence has shown that the total revenue generated from the online purchase of travel products has indeed been increasing (Heung, 2003).

1.5. Distribution channels’ conflicts in the travel marketing structure

The structure of distribution channels reflects the different market segments drawn to or targeted by each operation and the relative importance of them (Pearce & Tan, 2004). Some tourism researchers argue that traditional distribution systems could be threatened or even replaced by electronic distribution systems (Buhalis, 1998; Sheldon, 1997). Others (Palmer & McCole, 1999; Pan, MacLaurin, & Crotts, 2007; Tsai, Huang, & Lin, 2005) state that although the volume of online travel sales and marketing keeps rising, travelers still rely on travel agents to provide a human touch and professional services, such that traditional channels can nonetheless find their niche market to survive. Niche marketing is also suggested for all members in virtual and physical channels (Shon, Chen, & Chang, 2003). Some researchers (Bennett & Lai, 2005; Law et al., 2004) take both views into consideration in that traditional and e-commerce distribution channels can supplement each other to provide travelers with the greatest satisfaction. The choice of direct or indirect sales and the selection of appropriate distribution channels essentially involve a trade-off between market coverage and cost (Pearce & Tan, 2006), and in order to increase market share, becoming more technologically orientated is inevitable for any firm.

In the context of Taiwan, the absence of related studies for travel agency practitioners’ views on the disintermediation of the traditional travel distribution channel is not absolutely true. No matter what changes to the business operating environment occur, travel agencies are still the most cost-efficient distribution system (Hatton, 2004). If a supplier adds a new channel, then differentiating its products sold through existing channels and any new channel, even if relatively small, may result in existing channels having more selling latitude (Hibbard, Kumar, & Stern, 2001). Such a trade-off between market coverage and cost involves intermediaries being remunerated by commissions or discounts (Pearce, 2002).

Little attention has been paid to the revenue–management implications of using various distribution channels (Choi & Kimes, 2002). This study therefore attempts to examine all marketing distribution channels, including traditional and new distribution channels in particular, and analyzes the optimal marketing distribution mix for wholesaler travel agencies. Research outcomes should shed light on an understanding of what marketing distribution mix creates maximum revenues.

2. Methodology

The decision-making process involves representatives of the catering industry, scholars, and experts (Tzeng, Teng, Chen, & Opricovic, 2002), and the evaluation’s hierarchical structure has been construed according to all aspects, where the criteria were established through an analytic hierarchy process (AHP) (Saaty, 1980). This research uses the processes of (1) identifying the distribution channels, (2) evaluating the selected channels’ efficiencies, and (3) analyzing the optimal distribution mix.

Having reviewed prior studies on the selection of distribution channels for wholesaler travel agencies’ marketing activities, seven distribution channels were selected: travel agency websites, cable TV, radio, professional magazines, retailer travel agencies, strategic alliances, and newspapers. Table 1 lists this study’s evaluation hierarchical structure for the marketing distribution channel selection. The first level is the goal, with the ultimate goal of evaluating the distribution channel selection by wholesaler travel agencies in order to determine the optimal marketing distribution mix. The second level is the variety of marketing distribution channels. Seven major types of travel agency-to-consumer distribution channels were identified from the literature and qualitative survey. This study includes a brief description of each category. The third level contains the crucial criteria that affect the ultimate selection of marketing distribution channels.

2.1. Analytic hierarchy process

The AHP was developed in the 1970s by Saaty (Saaty, 1977). It is a systematic and scientific multiple criteria decision-making (MCDM) method and is able to solve complicated and subjective decision-making problems. AHP not only can solve problems under uncertain circumstances with multiple criteria, but also is able to combine and order individual professional comments into a hierarchy and then analyze this hierarchy to increase the efficiency of the evaluation. The results are given as a numerical value in order to offer a clear hierarchy of the relative importance between factors and to construct a weighted system for use on resource distribution, investment combinations, and predictions (Wu, Lee, & Lin, 2004).

AHP employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches to solve decision problems. Qualitatively, a complex decision problem is decomposed into a hierarchical structure, while quantitatively it adopts pair-wise comparisons to rate the decision elements (Cheng & Li, 2002). AHP further employs redundant comparisons to ensure the validity of judgments and also presents a measure of inconsistency for discarding inconsistent judgments (Saaty, 1994). This study adopts AHP to prioritize the marketing distribution channels using a four-step AHP process.

2.2. Structuring the distribution channel hierarchy

The first stage of this research is a qualitative interview with travel agency CEOs. The interviews, using both unstructured and semi-structured questions, involved the following issues: types of marketing distribution channels, cost of distribution, share of distribution by channel, and incentives used to encourage a consumer to implement one channel over the other. Fig. 1 shows

| Table 1 |
|---|---|
| Evaluation of hierarchical structure for marketing distribution channel selection. |
| Goal | Type channels |
| Optimal marketing distribution mix | E-commerce channel |
| Traditional channels | Travel agency websites |
| Cable TV | Professional magazines |
| Radio | Retailer travel agencies |
| Strategic alliances | Newspapers |
the complex problem of distribution channels decomposed into a multi-level hierarchical structure. The first level involves the traditional/e-commerce distribution channels. The second level consists of the traditional/e-commerce marketing distribution channels.

2.3. Data collection by pair-wise comparisons of decision elements

The second stage of this research adopts a quantitative survey with the above same targets. To make a comparative judgment on the relative weight of the criteria, each one is compared with all the other criteria. As there are limitations to the amount of information (which usually does not exceed seven items that humans can effectively evaluate), a pair-wise comparison approach is used to help the experts make a comparative judgment. The concept of pair-wise comparisons has been implemented in the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) of Saaty (1977:234–281). AHP uses a 1–9-ratio scale to compare two alternatives, criteria, or events for addressing the strength of their relative preference. Applying this procedure to all \( m \) alternative results in a positive \( m \times m \) reciprocal matrix for all its elements \( x_{ij} = 1/x_{ji}, i, j = 1, 2, \ldots, m \).

2.4. Checking the consistencies of judgments

To ensure each expert without fail can identify his preference, the consistency ratio (CR) is calculated to evaluate the consistencies of experts’ judgments. Saaty (1994) suggests that a CR value of 0.1 or below is acceptable. To ensure consistency of judgments, any data with CR higher than 0.1 are discarded.

2.5. Calculating the relative weights of factors

With the findings of experts’ opinions, the relative weights of the distribution channels can be obtained, and the local weight, which is the priority of an element with respect to its preceding element, is first calculated. The global weight of each element with respect to traditional channel and e-commerce is then calculated by multiplying the local weight of an element by the weight of its preceding element. The judgments of each expert are finally synthesized using the geometric mean approach suggested by Saaty (1990).

2.6. Sampling and data collection

This study adopts snowball sampling. Because this survey is based on respondents running multiple-distribution channel experiences, random data collection sampling techniques could not be used. Although snowball sampling is adopted, several criteria have been put into place: First, the respondents include members of Travel Quality Assurance Association, Taiwan, R.O.C. Second, the respondents have experience in multiple marketing distributions. Third, this survey only chooses members of General Travel Agencies (GTAs) and wholesalers. The GTA members include Taiwan’s major travel agencies according to their capital assets, the number of professional managers, and the scope of business. If the chosen respondent does not match any one of the above criteria, or is unwilling to participate in the survey, then the next immediate snowball sampling unit is approached and interviewed.

The first stage, a qualitative survey, in the beginning was conducted on 8 of the top 10 primary wholesaler travel agencies in Taiwan’s travel market, over 50% of the total market, including Set Tour (www.settour.com.tw), Lion Travel (www.liontravel.com.tw), ez Travel (www.eztravel.com.tw), Star Travel (www.startravel.com.tw), Cola Tours (www.colatour.com.tw), Richmond Tours (www.travel4u.com.tw), ez Tour (www.eztour.com.tw), and Spunk Tour (www.4p.com.tw). The second stage of this research adopts a quantitative survey with the above 15 final snowball sampling targets. Finally, this study group consists of experts who are directly involved with travel agency management plus practitioners or researchers, including 12 major travel agent CEOs, two Chairmen of Taiwan’s main city Association of Travel Agents, and the Chairman of the Certified Travel Counselors Association of the Republic of
China. Fifteen evaluators were invited to evaluate the weights of the various marketing distribution channels. Data were collected by interviewing experts. An interview was conducted utilizing a questionnaire, and answers were expressed in the form of a pairwise comparison matrix. Two CR values of interviewers were higher than 0.1 and were discarded. The weights assessment procedure is based on the AHP, first starting with the hierarchy in Fig. 1, then analyzing data from the experts, and ending with weights in Table 2 and Table 3.

In traditional off-line distribution channels, many factors determine the appropriateness of a particular distribution channel, including the channel's overall cost, target audience respondent rate, impression rates, transactional capabilities, and the channel's gross profit. Each of the major wholesaler travel agencies uses multiple simultaneous marketing distribution channels and the most commonly available are retailer travel agencies and travel agency websites. Following the qualitative survey with the panel experts, we identify five evaluation criteria that can select the most effective marketing distribution channel for maximizing revenues.

3. Findings

The variety of distribution channels prompts wholesaler travel agency practitioners to maximize their revenues by attempting to use an optimal marketing distribution mix with various weighted channels. With this information, wholesaler travel agencies can tailor an appropriate marketing resource allocation for their own goals.

3.1. Identify evaluation criteria of the distribution channel selection

Table 3 lists the priority weights among the evaluation criteria and their ranking, while Table 2 compares the weighted value of the seven marketing distribution channels. The scores are obtained from the expert poll by the associated priority weights of the five criteria. We conclude that the transactional capabilities factor is the first priority of distribution channel selection, and the impression rate is the least desirable factor. The transactional capabilities factor earns the gold medal, because it is the highest concern of all interviewers. Due to Taiwan's traditional travel agencies having faced increased competition from the Internet since 1999, developing e-commerce has provoked cutthroat competition among them. In contrast, the impression rate ranks worst of the all criteria. Although most wholesaler travel agencies target brand loyalty and even promoting a high level of brand image, it is much more important for them to increase revenue while reducing operating costs.

3.2. Identify distribution channel selection preference of travel agencies

The travel industry market today is becoming increasingly competitive, because travel consumers have much more opportunity to access and purchase from multiple channels. Hence, most wholesaler travel agencies in Taiwan have developed diverted transaction mechanisms and an effective distribution mix. Table 2 evaluates the alternative channels through which these functions might perform, because wholesaler travel agencies have little choice to downsize transaction costs and upgrade marketing efficiency toward a multi-channel focus in order to compete effectively against new players.

Table 2 also demonstrates the retailer travel agency as the highest priority of channel selection. Although travel markets have become more competitive, traditional transaction profits have steadily eroded, forcing wholesaler travel agencies to retain their main sub-agencies or downstream retailers. Travel agency websites are the second priority of channel selection, because the founding of the e-commerce transaction model in 1999 has been an important part of travel agencies' response to globalized competition. The Radio Channel is the lowest priority in the distribution selection, as high program production costs and an unfocused customer base greatly diminish its channel effects and values.

4. Discussion and management implications

The results of the AHP analysis yield several insights that confirm previous findings and shed light on the future of the marketing channel mix in the travel agency industry.

4.1. What determines wholesaler travel agencies' marketing channel selection?

Transactional capabilities (Coelho, Easingwood, & Coelho, 2003; Dabas & Manaktola, 2007; Garces et al., 2004; O'Connor & Frew, 2004), Gross Profit of the Channel (Bennett & Lai, 2005; Coelho et al., 2003; Dabas & Manaktola, 2007; Heung, 2003; Law et al., 2001), and Overall Cost of the Channel (Buhalis, 2000; Cai et al., 2004; Coelho et al., 2003; Siebenaler & Groves, 2002; Smith, 2007) are the top three favorable choices among the five criteria considered. Hatton (2004) views travel agencies as members of the most cost-efficient distribution system which is often mentioned with respect to the measuring criteria of choosing a marketing channel, but Impression Rates (Woodward, 2000) does not offer high priority attributes as in the above related studies. It is imperative to note that wholesaler travel agencies form the optimal marketing distribution mix so as to gain economies of scale and profits, improve distribution channel management capability, reduce distribution investment risks, enhance distribution efficiency, and strengthen revenue–management performance by integrating new and traditional distribution channels.

4.2. Evaluating the major channel alternatives

All travel agencies desire to design the ideal channel coverage that matches their corporate goals. Creating an organized, market-focused, and a high performance channel mix requires a complete understanding of the characteristics of the products and different types of channel (Buhalis, 2000; Heung, 2003; Pearce & Tan, 2006; Pearce & Taniguchi, 2008). Compared to Pearce and Taniguchi’s (2008) studies in the hotel industry, there are similar results.
Wholesaler travel agency practitioners cannot ignore traditional distribution channels. Additionally, the revolution of e-commerce has impacted traditional distribution channels and squeezed traditional travel agencies’ business. E-commerce development is another marketing channel.

4.3. Achieving maximum revenues through the optimal marketing distribution mix

This study provides tips that inspire firms to make the right decisions in designing a marketing channel mix that ensures coverage as well as profitability (Bennett & Lai, 2005; Choi & Kimes, 2002; Ganesh, 2004; Law et al., 2004; Pearce, 2002, 2008; Pearce & Taniguchi, 2008). The optimal marketing channel mix is built with maximum revenue objectives, whereby no objective is built in vain. In short, travel agencies need to examine the performance of the different channels employed. These findings should be useful to wholesaler travel agencies, as well as retailer travel agencies and marketing professionals in the travel agency industry when formulating their distribution strategies in order to increase maximum revenues throughout all marketing channels.

5. Conclusions

This research makes an initial attempt to investigate the optimal marketing distribution channels’ portfolio for wholesaler travel agencies. If an optimal marketing channel mix has been built, then wholesaler travel agency practitioners can clearly monitor the performance of all their marketing distribution channels, and as a result this could help identify and resolve distribution problems. In short, the results of an evaluation performance system provide an effective basis for distribution channel management. This new portfolio of marketing distribution channels presents an opportunity for wholesaler or even retailer travel agencies to improve channel effectiveness. This study offers several implications for practitioners in the travel-related industry as noted below.

- Travel agency practitioners must evaluate the effectiveness of distribution channel management on their revenue–management practices and determine how to benefit from it.
- Most travel agency practitioners do not expect to use all marketing distribution channels, but they do expect to determine the priority of each marketing distribution channel.
- Marketing distribution channels contribute directly to the competitiveness of travel agencies through cost reductions, product differentiation, and revenue–management relationship marketing activities and enhancement.
- Travel agency practitioners should examine all marketing distribution channels and insure the use of them to their fullest extent.
- Travel agency practitioners might differentiate their products sold through different channels.

5.1. Limitations of the study

This study is based on respondents with 12 large-scale wholesaler travel agencies running multiple-distribution channel experiences. Hence, random data collection sampling techniques cannot be used, prompting several limitations in the results of this study. First, this study defines that the marketing distribution mix in the travel agency industry can only be seen as a “combination of the direct and indirect marketing distribution channels that a travel agency uses to make customers aware of, to transit information and deliver its partial services”, and is not included in the reserve function. Second, the relatively small sample size may not necessarily represent all Taiwan travel agencies, hence limiting the general applicability of the findings of the study. Third, the snowball sampling is a non-probability approach that may lead to sampling bias.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the National Science Council of the Republic of China in Taiwan for financially supporting this research under Contract No. NSC 96-2416-H-328-002 and NSC97-2416-H-328-004.

References
