

電子化旅遊的難題與機遇

Challenges and opportunities of e-tourism

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中小型旅行社善用資訊通訊科技(Information and Communication Technologies)，就能扭轉頹勢。

SME travel agents can reverse their dire situation by skilfully using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

以電子化旅遊瞄準內地市場

資訊通訊科技的發展，給商業世界帶來巨大衝擊，對旅遊業也沒有兩樣。旅遊業應用資訊通訊科技，即所謂電子化旅遊，雖然是提升營運效率的一道良方，但在香港的發展卻有眾多問題與障礙，如資金限制，知識與經驗不足，專業人才短缺等等。不過，中港經濟融合，迎合電子世代的市場崛起，網絡與流動通訊科技結合，這些因素都使香港的電子化旅遊可以大顯身手。

根據《內地與香港關於建立更緊密經貿關係的安排》的最新補充協定，在內地設立的港資旅行社，可以把內地居民前往香港及澳門的團隊旅遊業務範圍，由泛珠三角省區及北京、上海擴大至全國，這必定會為香港的旅行社帶來巨大商機，而由互聯網及資訊通訊科技驅動的電子化旅遊，則可以大大提升香港旅行社的競爭力。

以資訊通訊科技拓展業務

旅行社甲於一九七八年成立，早在一九九七年已設立本身的旅遊網站，是香港的電子化旅遊先驅之一，多年來已發展成多元化的旅遊服務公司，專長是會議展覽旅遊，以及網上機票和酒店預訂服務。

黃女士是旅行社甲的負責人，在本地旅遊業有三十多年經驗。她講述本地旅行社的興衰道：「在上世紀八、九十年代，中小型旅行社只要為顧客預訂機票及酒店，已有很不錯的收入。可惜的是九七年後這項收入每況愈下，因為互聯網及資訊通訊科技興起，航空公司和酒店集團可以直接與旅客交

Tapping mainland market through e-tourism

The development of ICTs has made a profound impact on the business world, and the travel and tourism industry is no exception. Whereas adoption of ICTs in tourism, or e-tourism, is conducive to increasing operational efficiency, its advancement in Hong Kong has faced with many problems and obstacles such as constraints of capital, a lack of knowledge and experience, and a shortage of skilled professionals. Nevertheless, there is much room for the development of e-tourism in Hong Kong, following the economic integration of the mainland and the city, the emergence of markets catering to the e-generation, and the consolidation of Internet and mobile technologies.

Under the latest supplement to the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), Hong Kong's travel agents established in mainland China will be allowed to operate group tours to Hong Kong and Macau, not only for residents of the nine provinces of the pan-Pearl River Delta region plus Beijing and Shanghai, but for all other residents of China as well. This will definitely become a huge business opportunity for local travel agents, whose competitiveness will be immensely enhanced by e-tourism driven by the Internet and ICTs.

Expanding business with ICTs

Established in 1978, Travel Agent A has developed into a multi-service travel company over the years, specialising in MICE travel and online air ticket and hotel bookings. A pioneer in e-tourism among local traders, the travel agent set up its own website as early as 1997.

Ms Wong, who is in charge of the travel agent and has more than 30 years of experience in the local industry, recounted the ups and downs of local travel agents: "In the 1980s and 1990s, SME travel agents were able to make a decent living simply by booking air tickets and hotel rooms for their customers. Unfortunately, this source of income has kept dwindling since 1997 because the Internet and ICTs have enabled airlines and hotel groups to sell directly to the travelers, and with cash-rich online travel platforms such as Priceline,

易，再加上Priceline、Travelocity、攜程等財力雄厚的網上旅遊中介平台加入競爭，旅行社能賺取的佣金及加成已越來越少。」

她憶述公司在電子化上所走過的路說：「當年傳統旅行社要『電子化』相當困難，一來技術還未成熟，二來啟動成本高昂，我們也是在風險基金的支持下，才能建立自己的旅遊網站。話雖如此，切合我們需要的技術和設備卻不易找到。我們曾經斥資差不多一百萬元，委託了某大學開發一套複雜的網上系統，試圖整合眾多業務流程及職能，但最後仍無功而還。」

對於資訊通訊科技的應用，她概括說出自己的期望道：「資訊通訊科技只要應用得宜，對旅行社的策略發展、營運管理和市場推廣都極有助益，但問題是如何取得既具經濟效益而又配合實際需要的技術及設備。假如技術供應商能夠對旅遊業的運作有多點瞭解，又或者旅遊業界能夠充份掌握相關科技，那麼旅行社就能結合本身專長與電子化旅遊的營運方式，並利用先進科技，有效推廣產品和服務，從而獲益於日漸開放的內地龐大旅遊市場。」

只有服務專業化才是出路

旅行社乙以組織潛水團、保健團等特色旅行團而聞名，吸引了一群追求更佳品質、更高享受的顧客。

旅行社乙的負責人彭先生認為，應用互聯網及資訊通訊科技，對促進他公司與供應商及顧客的互動關係大有幫助，而進一步電子化，譬如採用全面整合的客戶關係管理系統，更可以加強公司的策略發展。

彭先生指出，旅行社在現今的環境下只有兩種生存方式，一是利用規模優勢以減低成本，然後憑廉宜價格及豐富選擇取勝，一是以個性化的優良專業服務殺出重圍。他解釋說：「我們是中小型旅行社，從一開始已決定專注於自己的所長，走專業旅遊服務路線，為顧客提供難以自己獲取的專業旅遊服務。」他認為，既然航空公司和酒店集團現在都爭相發展網上直銷業務，中小型旅行社要在中介業務上掙扎求存並不輕易，因此只有產品及服務專業

Travelocity and Ctrip joining the fray, travel agents are left with fewer and fewer commissions and markups.”

She recalled the path trod by her company in adopting ICTs: “It was rather difficult for traditional travel agents to adopt ICTs in those days because of immature technologies and high set-up costs. We were able to set up our own website thanks to the support of venture capitalists. Having said that, skills and equipment that met our needs were difficult to come by. We once commissioned a university to develop a sophisticated online system to integrate our various business processes and functions. In the end, close to one million dollars were spent and we were nowhere near success.”

Summarising what she expected of the application of ICTs, she remarked, “ICTs, if correctly applied by travel agents, will be a great help in strategic development, operational management and marketing promotion. But the problem is how to get technologies and equipment which are economically beneficial and which match practical needs. **If the service providers could know more about the operation of the travel and tourism industry, or if the industry could master the technologies, then travel agents would be able to tap China’s enormous travel market, which is gradually opening up, by combining their own specialities and operations based on e-tourism and by making good use of advanced technologies to promote their products and services effectively.**”

Professional services the only way out

Travel Agent B has gained its reputation for organising such themed tours as scuba-diving tours and health tours, which have attracted a following of customers in pursuit of higher quality and better enjoyment.

Mr Pang, the person who takes the helm of Travel Agent B, believed that the Internet and ICTs were of vital importance in fostering an interactive relationship between his company and its suppliers and customers, and that adoption of ICTs at a deeper level, such as implementing fully integrated Customer Relation Management (CRM) systems, could enhance its strategic development.

He pointed out that **travel agents only had two ways of survival in today’s environment: they could either win through by cutting costs through economies of scale and then offering a wide variety of choices at low prices, or battle it out by focusing on personalised services of a professional nature and sterling quality.** “As we are an SME travel agent,” he explained, “we have decided from the very beginning to focus on our strengths and provide professional travel services that our customers can hardly obtain themselves.” Since airlines and hotel groups were now scrambling for the online direct sale market, SME travel agents were having a hard time struggling for survival as intermediaries. In his view, the only way out for travel agents was to offer professional products and services.

Talking about his company’s website, which was launched as soon as the travel agent opened its doors, he gave his rationale for do-

化才是出路。

旅行社乙一開門營業就已建立網站，他談及這樣做的原因時說：「專業化的旅遊產品和服務難免會內容複雜，需要一個更佳的資訊平台來解說、展示，自設網站可以使顧客和供應商更加瞭解我們。」他表示，Web 2.0的技術不斷發展，他公司的網站也會增添更多與目標市場互動、分享和協作的安排，例如由顧客參與內容創作，又或者利用網誌、臉書、推特、微博等社交網絡去推廣業務。

彭先生認為，香港中小型旅行社在電子化旅遊上發展緩慢，主因之一是東主及管理層往往著眼於短期得失，結果就難免錯過了推動業務發展的大好良機。

已有合用的資訊通訊科技方案

香港資訊科技商會副會長黃岳永先生，過去幾年曾多次與議會合作，向旅行社推廣資訊通訊科技的方案，因而對資訊通訊科技和香港旅遊業都有豐富經驗及獨到見解。

黃先生斷言：「香港中小型旅行社要是不與時並進，創新改革，在旅遊市場去除中介人的大勢下，注定窮途末路。」他深信中小型旅行社要走出天生，為本身的產品與服務增值是必經之路。

黃先生繼續說：「在歐美地區，在網上購買旅遊產品和服務已成為最成功的電子商務模式之一，眾多旅遊公司已通過重大的業務流程改革而晉身電子化旅遊的行列。這些旅遊公司受惠於互聯網和資訊通訊科技的先進技術及設備，在旅遊產品的生產、分銷和配送上，以及在不同部門的種種職能管理上，如資訊處理、內部控制、財務規劃、客戶關係等，都大大提升了效益和效率，從而擴大了業務的範圍和地域，以更強大的競爭力開通了龐大而遙遠的全球市場。」

黃先生認為，本地中小型旅行社發展電子化旅遊的表現滯後，有以下幾個原因：資金不足，難以購置所需的硬件和軟件；在過去，相關技術及工具在品質、安全和可靠方面缺乏業內的通用標準，以致旅行社固有的應用程式和資料庫難以整合；技術人員對旅遊業的運作認識不足。結果，許多電子化

ing so: "Since the contents of professional travel products and services are complicated, it is necessary to have a better information platform to explain and showcase them. With our own website, our customers and suppliers can learn more about us." As Web 2.0 technologies kept evolving, he remarked, his company's website would have more interaction, sharing and collaboration with its target markets, for example, by allowing its customers to create the content, or by promoting business through social media networking such as blogging, Facebook, Twitter and Weibo (China's version of Twitter).

The low ICT penetration rate among local SME travel agents, according to Mr Pang, had stemmed mainly from short-termism often seen in owners and managers of these travel agents, with the result that they might fail to capitalise on the enormous opportunities to bring their business to new heights.

Viable ICT solutions already available

Mr Erwin Huang, a Vice President of the Hong Kong Information Technology Federation, has worked with the TIC several times during the past few years to promote ICT solutions to travel agents, and thus has extensive experience and unique insight in both ICTs and Hong Kong's travel and tourism industry.

"Given the big trend of disintermediation in travel markets, SME travel agents in Hong Kong are doomed," Mr Huang asserted, "if they fail to keep up with the times, innovate and reform." He strongly believed that the inevitable path to survival for SME travel agents was to create more value for their own products and services.

He continued, "In Europe and the United States, online shopping for travel products and services has become one of the most successful e-business models. A lot of travel companies have managed to join the e-tourism club by reforming their business processes in significant ways. Thanks to advanced technologies and equipment that come with the Internet and ICTs, these travel companies have greatly raised the effectiveness and efficiency of the production, distribution and delivery of travel products, as well as the management of various functions of different departments such as information management, internal control, financial planning and customer relations. In such a way, they are able to expand the scope and reach of their business and gain access to the enormous and faraway global markets with an increased competitive edge."

According to Mr Huang, the lacklustre performance of local SME travel agents in e-tourism was attributable to several factors: insufficient capital for necessary hardware and software; a lack of industry-wide standards in the past in relation to the quality, safety and reliability of techniques and tools, thus making it difficult for travel agents to integrate their existing applications and databases; and a lack of knowledge on the part of technical people about the operation of the travel and tourism industry. As a result, many attempts at adoption of ICTs ended in failure, with all the investments wasted.

的嘗試都廢時失事，白花金錢。

儘管有上述問題，他卻補充道：「市場今天其實已有許多價格合宜而且組合富彈性的技術及設置，例如最先進的雲端技術(cloud computing)已經解決了許多數據儲存的問題；軟件即服務(software as a service)的概念在市場上已變得非常普及；許多應用服務供應商也已提供各式各樣的應用軟件服務。中小型旅行社可以根據本身的特定需要，挑選並租用有關服務，利用互聯網和資訊通訊科技的工具和機制，逐步或全盤開發配合本身管理營運需要的系統。」

硬件、軟件與人件

黃先生相信，中小型旅行社現在要走向電子化旅遊，在資金和硬件及軟件上都應該不成問題，反而集商業觸覺和技術知識於一身的「人件」(humanware)才最難求，因為電子化旅遊需要三個不同學科的知識，即企業管理、資訊系統管理、旅遊業。譬如說，旅行社如果能夠運用客戶關係管理系統收集到的顧客資料，按他們的需要提供高附加值的產品和服務，就可以由旅遊中介晉升至旅遊顧問。旅行社也可以有效利用Web 2.0技術，通過由消費者參與創造、傳播、推廣與旅遊有關的產品及資訊，以創新的溝通傳播方式，產生更大的滲透作用與更強的說服力，藉以保持甚至提高競爭力。

他以廣為工商界應用的企業資源規劃(Enterprise Resource Planning)為例，解釋電子化旅遊對中小型旅行社的價值所在。企業資源規劃所推動的營運決策，其價值更多在於促進管理紀律，應用重要的技術及設備還在其次。與此相似的是，電子化旅遊的關鍵，在於促使中小型旅行社改變它們的抱負及目標、發展策略、營運管理、職能架構、業務流程。他強調說：「只有管理層抱著遠大眼光，堅持創新，以理性做決策，並付諸行動，那樣先進技術和設備才會有助於商業成功。」

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Despite the above shortcomings, he added, "Nowadays, there are actually a lot of reasonably priced and highly flexible techniques and equipment on the market. For instance, the state-of-the-art cloud computing technology has resolved many problems relating to data storage; the concept of software as a service is rapidly growing in popularity; and many application providers have offered various kinds of software solutions. SME travel agents may pick and rent those solutions that meet their specific needs and make use of Internet and ICT tools and mechanisms to develop systems, either step by step or in one go, that suit their operational and management needs."

Hardware, software and humanware

Mr Huang believed that capital funding, and hardware and software now posed no problems to SME travel agents which wanted to migrate to e-tourism. What was really in short supply was humanware, people who possessed business sense and technical skills at the same time because e-tourism required knowledge from three different disciplines, namely business administration, IT system management, and travel and tourism. For example, travel agents might be able to upgrade themselves from travel intermediaries to travel consultants by utilising the data of their customers stored in CRM systems in order to provide them with tailor-made, value-added products and services. Travel agents might also be able to maintain or even increase their competitiveness by effectively using Web 2.0 techniques, which provided creative ways of communication with bigger penetration and greater convincing power, and which allowed the consumers to take part in the creation, dissemination and promotion of travel-related products and information.

He cited Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), widely adopted in industry and business, to explain the value of e-tourism to SME travel agents. The value of ERP-driven decision-making lay more in the enhancement of managerial discipline than in the employment of essential skills and equipment. Similarly, **the pivot of e-tourism is to make SME travel agents transform their vision and missions, strategic development, operational management, functions and structure as well as business process. He stressed, "Advanced skills and equipment will be a boost to commercial success only if the management has foresight, insists in innovation, makes rational decisions and puts them into action."**

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