

# 中小型旅行社也有一拼之力

## SME agents also a force to be reckoned with

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編按：「旅行社資訊科技發展配對基金先導計劃」（見「主題故事」，二零一六年第二期），已於今年七月推出，對象是僱員少於五十人的中小型旅行社。旅行社申請成功的話，就可以獲得最多港幣十萬元的等額配對資助，藉以借助資訊科技去提升競爭力，拓展業務。為求啟發和鼓勵會員申請資助，議會邀請了正在香港理工大學酒店及旅遊管理學院修讀理學碩士課程的三批學生，於六、七月間做了三項專題研究。下文除了概述三份研究報告的重點，還補充了一些新觀點。

*Editor's note: The Pilot Information Technology Development Matching Fund Scheme for Travel Agents (Pilot Scheme; see "Cover Story", No. 2/2016) was launched in July this year, targeting SME travel agents with fewer than 50 employees. Travel agents successful in their applications will be granted a maximum of HK\$100,000 on a matching basis in order for them to make use of IT to boost competitiveness and expand business. To inspire and encourage members to apply for funding from the Pilot Scheme, the TIC invited three groups of students who were taking a Master of Science programme at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) to conduct three consultancy projects in June and July. The following is a summary of the main points of the three project reports, with some new points added.*

中小型旅行社應該把握機會，申請資助，藉以發展業務。

**SME travel agents should grasp the chance, apply for funding and boost their business.**

### 中小型旅行社概況

**議**會於今年六月一日共有一千七百七十八家會員旅行社，其中百分之九十六點二為中小型旅行社，而在中小型旅行社之中，百分之三十六點七設立了公司網站。簡單而言，旅行社在資訊科技的應用上可分為三個階段：第一，推行辦公室自動化；第二，設立公司網站；第三，在網上推銷並售賣旅遊產品與服務。在辦公室自動化方面，絕大多數旅行社都應已進入了這一階段，儘管程度各有不同。可是，六成以上的旅行社都沒有公司網站，可見行業在資訊科技的應用上仍有漫漫長路要走下去。

缺乏資金、缺乏知識、缺乏人才，這些都是中小型旅行社應用資訊科技時可能會碰到的難題。中小型旅行社的僱員不多，架構簡單，由極少數人決策，加上與顧客及供應商的關係通常較為長久而且密切，因此往往覺得無須在資訊科技上投放資金。此外，萬一這些公司的決策者對資訊科技並不熟悉，公司就可能會在這方面落後了。中小型旅行社沒有積極應用資訊科技，還有一個原因，就是旅行社的僱員未必精通此道，而資訊科技專家也未必瞭解業界的運作。

### An overview of SME agents

As at 1 June this year, the TIC had 1,778 member agents, of which 96.2% were SME agents; and 36.7% of these SME agents had set up corporate websites. **The adoption of IT by travel agents, put simply, can be divided into three stages: first, office automation; second, setting up corporate websites; and third, online marketing and sale of travel products and services.** As far as office automation is concerned, almost all travel agents should have already entered this stage, though to varying degrees. Nevertheless, as over 60% of the travel agents did not have corporate websites, the industry still has a long way to go in IT adoption.

**Lack of capital, lack of knowledge and lack of talent – these are hurdles SME agents will likely bump into when they try to adopt IT.** Most of the time, they do not think that there is any need to invest in IT because of their small number of employees, simple structure, extremely small circle involved in decision-making, and long-lasting and personal relations with customers and suppliers. If their decision-makers do not know much about IT, they may be lagging behind in IT adoption. There is one more reason why SME agents lack the enthusiasm for IT: while their staff may not be good at IT, IT experts may not understand the operation of the trade.

### What SME agents have said

The MSc students at PolyU mentioned above interviewed 16 SME agents either face to face or by telephone in order to understand

## 中小型旅行社的意見

上述理工大學的碩士學生，為了瞭解中小型旅行社的狀況，以面對面的方式或以電話訪問了十六家中小型旅行社。這些旅行社多數(百分之七十五)同時從事出入境與本地旅遊業務，通常只專注於一個或兩個市場。雖然顧客並不單一，既有個人客戶，也有公司客戶，但顧客的年齡卻多數在四十歲以上。在銷售渠道方面，受訪的旅行社認為口碑最重要，因為業務主要依賴老主顧及顧客的介紹。由於上網搜尋旅遊資訊和旅遊產品很方便，有些受訪的旅行社擔心顧客會離它們而去。此外，那些中小型旅行社全都認為今天的最大難關是旅遊產品在網上銷售，因為旅客要預訂機票或酒店房間的話，在網上旅行社或航空公司、酒店的網站輕易就做到了。

受訪的旅行社全都有公司網站，但都只有基本的資訊，例如產品資料等，而且都不能在網站上預訂並付款；換言之，顧客無法在網上完成整個購買過程，仍要依靠傳統的方式去完成交易。有百分之六十二點五的受訪旅行社，認為在業務上運用資訊科技很重要，而且願意投放資金。至於其餘的受訪旅行社，雖然也贊成資訊科技很重要，但舉出種種困難，例如資金短缺、人手不足等，來說明裹足不前的原因；此外，顧客年齡多數在四十歲以上也是原因之一。

## 外遊旅客的意見

為了探討香港居民對互聯網的使用與旅行社有甚麼看法，上述碩士學生選取了二十名在香港居住的本地人與非本地人，面對面的訪問了他們。受訪者男女各佔一半，有百分之五十五年齡在三十歲以下(組別A)，百分之四十五在三十歲以上(組別B)；他們的教育程度非常高，百分之九十五接受過專上教育；百分之六十每月的收入超過港幣二萬元。受訪者的職業差異很大，百分之四十在商界與金融業工作，此外也有秘書、學生、教師等。

由於有研究指出，三十歲以下和以上的旅客，在旅遊行為上有很大分別，所以這次研究特別著重比較組別A和組別B的異同。在相同之處方面，兩個組別的旅客都以互聯網為旅遊資訊的首要來源，而且會同時使用多種網上渠道尋找資訊，例如搜尋器、網誌、社

the situation of SME agents. Most (75%) of the agents interviewed had a mixed mode of business nature including inbound, outbound and local travel business, and they usually focused on one or two specific markets. Whereas their customer base was varied, including individuals and corporate accounts, **most of their customers were 40 years of age or above. As for sales channels, the SME agents considered word of mouth to be most important because their business mainly relied on repeat customers and referrals.** As travel information and travel products could be conveniently found on the Internet, some of the agents were concerned about losing their customers. Apart from that, **all of these SME agents found online sale of travel products to be their biggest challenge because travellers could easily book air tickets or hotel rooms on the websites of online travel agents (OTAs), or airlines and hotels.**

All the agents interviewed had corporate websites, but these websites only provided basic information such as product information, and could neither take bookings nor accept payment. In other words, their customers could not complete the purchase process on their websites and still had to rely on the traditional ways to complete the deals. **As far as the application of IT to business was concerned, 62.5% of them considered it important and were willing to invest in IT. As for the rest, they put up various reasons such as a shortage of capital and insufficient manpower to explain why they balked at IT investment even though they also agreed with the importance of IT. That most of their customers were aged 40 or above was also given as one of the reasons for their reluctance.**

## What outbound travellers have said

To explore the views of Hong Kong residents about Internet use and travel agents, the MSc students selected 20 local and non-local people who lived in Hong Kong, and conducted face-to-face interviews with them. Half of the interviewees were male and half female, with 55% of them younger than 30 years of age (Group A) and 45% older (Group B). They were very well educated: 95% had received tertiary education, and 60% earned a monthly income more than HK\$20,000. Their occupations differed greatly: 40% of them were in business or the financial industry, and some were secretaries, students, teachers, etc.

**Since there were previous research findings suggesting that travellers aged below or above 30 had huge differences in their travel behaviour, this project particularly focused on the similarities and dissimilarities between Group A and Group B.** As far as similarities were concerned, the dominant source of travel information for both groups was the Internet, and they sought information from multiple online channels at the same

交媒體、網上旅行社等，這點和性別、收入、旅遊次數都沒有關係。最受歡迎的旅遊資訊來源是網誌，因為載有真實的個人旅遊經驗，而且不僅有讚許，也有批評。此外，兩組受訪者都認為中小型旅行社對一些特定旅遊產品有專門知識，而他們為求更有彈性，都喜歡把機票和酒店房間分開預訂，有時更會直接向航空公司和酒店訂票訂房，以保證沒有閃失。

至於組別A和組別B的相異之處，有幾點值得中小型旅行社注意。首先，組別A的年輕旅客通常計劃旅程所花的時間不會超過兩星期，因此服務供應商必須易於接觸、服務效率高，也因此他們對網上旅行社並沒有不好的看法；另一方面，組別B的旅客年紀在三十歲以上，他們不想旅程有任何差池，尤其是與家人一起旅行的時候，因此特別看重安全、私隱等事情。其次，有點令人意外的是，組別A的受訪者喜歡人與人的接觸，覺得中小型旅行社瞭解他們的需要和期望，而且有好東西時會主動告訴他們。最後，組別A認為價錢不是他們做旅遊決定時會考慮的重大因素；反而組別B那些較年長的受訪者，他們對價格更加在意。

### 給中小型旅行社的建議

對於那些有意藉著資訊科技去拓展業務的中小型旅行社，先導計劃雖然資助金額只有港幣十萬元，但按規定加上旅行社本身投入的等額資金後，已足以使旅行社在上文提到應用資訊科技的三個階段都有所作為了。

譬如以第一階段而言，顧客關係管理系統是不錯的選擇，因為中小型旅行社不僅可以更瞭解顧客的旅遊習慣、喜好、重要日子等等，而且可以免除因員工離職而失去顧客資料的風險。至於第二、第三階段，中小型旅行社如果還沒有自己的公司網站，應該建立一個了；網站必須便於在智能手機屏幕上瀏覽，而且要能夠預訂各種旅遊產品與服務，兼且直接付款。此外，參考上文提到的旅客特點，在臉書等社交媒體上推銷產品與服務，開發手機應用程式以接觸新顧客等等，這些都是值得一試的方案。☑

time such as search engines, blogs, social media, OTAs, etc, which was unrelated to their gender, income and frequency of travel. **The most popular source of travel information was blogs because they contained genuine personal experiences with criticism as well as praise.** Besides, **the interviewees in both groups regarded SME agents as having special expertise in specific travel products**, and tended to book air tickets and hotel rooms separately to have greater flexibility, sometimes even booking tickets and rooms directly from airlines and hotels to ensure reliability.

As to dissimilarities between the two groups, there are several points worth the attention of SME agents. First, **Group A travellers, who were younger, usually spent less than two weeks in planning their trips, which means their service providers must be conveniently accessible and efficient in operation, and therefore they did not think poorly of OTAs.** On the other hand, Group B travellers, who were over 30 years old, did not want anything to go wrong during their trips, especially when travelling with their family members, and therefore they attached greater importance to such matters as safety and privacy. Second, **the interviewees in Group A preferred a human touch, and considered that SME agents knew their needs and expectations and would proactively tell them if there were good deals, which is somewhat surprising.** Finally, whereas Group A did not take price as a major factor in making travel decisions, the older interviewees in Group B were much more price-sensitive.

### Recommendations for SME agents

For those SME agents which are prepared to extend their business through IT, the HK\$100,000 subsidy from the Pilot Scheme, though not a large amount, should be enough to allow them to achieve quite a lot in the three stages of IT adoption mentioned above, as that amount is required to be doubled by their own capital.

Take the first stage as an example. **Customer Relationship Management systems are a rather good choice because through them, SME agents can know the travel habits, preferences, important dates, etc of their customers much better, and avoid the risk of losing customer information if their employees resign.** As for the second and third stages, **if any SME agents do not have their own corporate websites, it is time to set up one. The websites must be compatible with the smartphone screen, and enable the customers to book various travel products and services and to pay directly.** In addition, it is also worth a try if SME agents market products and services on social media such as Facebook or develop mobile apps to build up new customer base after making reference to the features of the travellers mentioned above. ☑