

# Selection Criteria of Travel Agency and Packaged Honeymoon Tours by Taiwanese Travelers 臺灣旅客選擇旅行社及夏威夷套裝蜜月旅遊之因素

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## Abstract

The study identifies factors associated with criteria for the selection of travel agency and packaged honeymoon tours. From distributed 5000 questionnaires to 1125 travel agencies, 712 answered returns were deemed valid from 717 returns. The results identified five factors to which travelers choose a travel agency, “distinguishing features”, “professionalism”, “visibility”, “convenience”, and “image”. Identified factors for the selection of a packaged honeymoon tour were “comfort”, “mood”, “quality itinerary”, “attractiveness”, and “word-of-mouth”. By cluster analysis, five groups of travelers were identified in the selection of a travel agency: “convenient purchase”, “image by word-of-mouth”, “emphasis of professionalism”, “emphasis of distinguishing features”, and “emphasis of advertisement”. Likewise, two groups of travelers were identified for packaged honeymoon tours, “easily agreeable” and “quality selective”. Differentiation of honeymoon travelers from the general packaged tour should serve useful information to travel agencies for market segmentation.

**Key Words:** packaged honeymoon tour, selection criteria, travel agency



## 摘 要

本研究旨在瞭解國人從事海外蜜月旅行，其選擇旅行社及夏威夷套裝蜜月行程之考慮因素。郵寄發放 5,000 份問卷至 1125 家旅行社，總計回收 717 份問卷，扣除無效問卷後，共得有效問卷為 712 份。並利用 SPSS 13.0 統計軟體進行分析，研究結果顯示：旅客選擇旅行社有五個因素，分別為「特色、專業、能見度、便利及形象」。而選擇旅遊行程因素為，「舒適性、旅遊氣氛、具質感的行程、景點吸引力、口碑」等。接著分別以此因素，再進行集群分析，發現海外蜜月旅客選擇旅行社可分為五個群組，分別為「方便購買群」、「形象口碑群」、「重視專業群」、「重視特色群」及「重視廣告群」等。而選擇旅遊行程則可分為「隨性群」及「品質群」兩個群組。

**關鍵詞：**蜜月旅行、套裝旅遊、旅遊選擇因素、旅行業



## 1. Introduction

With fierce competition in the tourism industry, the travel market has gradually evolved from a “macro-market” to a “micro-market”. In the macro-market, studies pay attention to the general public’s motivations for travel. Specifically, the tourism industry is particularly interested in the outbound market [1]. From motivation comes the decision-making process, Sirakaya and Woodside [2] evaluated a variety of decision-making models. It appears that the selection of destination in the decision-making has been studied the most [3–5]. The transition from macro-market to micro-market happens when attention is paid to specific segments of the population (or targeting). For example, Geva and Goldman [6] investigated guided tours from Israel to Europe and the United States. Prideauz [7] examined problems Australia faces in developing services and products suitable for Korean tourists. Qu and Li [8] studied the characteristics of mainland Chinese visitors to Hong Kong. Jang et al. [9] segmented Japanese travelers to the USA and Canada. The influence of family members on decision-making for travel had also been studied [10-12]. By the end of the transition phase when attention is shifted solely onto the micro-market, the travel market starts offering various types of group package tours to meet the demand of its potential buyers.

There are a number of reasons why

people seek shelter in group package tours [13]. Motives for joining group travel not only differ from those of free independent travelers but also vary with culture or ethnic groups [14,15]. For example, American travelers are inclined to choose package tours when traveling to an unfamiliar destination [16]. Similarly, in Britain, many long-haul travelers are not confident enough to travel independently due to their lack of travel experience or information about the destination [17]. In many Asian countries, the group package tour is one of the main modes of outbound travel [18,19]. Mok and DeFranco [20] studied the dominant Chinese culture values on travel and tourism marketing. Although the Chinese population has similar trends in outbound group package tours, the outbound travel markets in China and Taiwan are at a different stage of development [21]. Taiwanese guided package tour travelers tend to be female, older, with lower income, and less-educated [22]. Anecdotal evidence suggests economy (cost) and overall convenience are the most important motives for purchasing a package tour. Other factors may also include companionship, safety, and saved time [13]. As competition of package tour gets crowded, the growth of specialized tours becomes the trend of a micro tourist-market. One of the specialized package tours is the packaged honeymoon tour [23].

There are distinctive differences between general group package tours (GPT) and packaged honeymoon tours. In GPT,



travelers vary across all age groups from young children to senior citizen whereas travelers of packaged honeymoon tours are predominantly 25 – 35 years-old [24]. GPT takers may come from single individuals, members of families or groups while honeymoon tour travelers are couples. Since most honeymooners view honeymoon as a once-in-a-lifetime deal, regardless of their income level, they are willing to pay more and have higher expectations [24]. The lengths of honeymoon tours are typically longer than those of a normal GPT.

Packaged outbound honeymoon tours have been gaining its popularity among newlyweds in Taiwan. The needs of honeymooners not only cover the tour experience itself but also the aftermath of the experience. The ultimate value is the satisfaction on the deepest needs of newlyweds psychologically. Unfortunately, studies of contributing factors newlyweds consider in the decision-making of packaged honeymoon trips have been scarce. This paper attempts to identify Taiwanese couples' selection criteria for travel agencies and packaged honeymoon tours to Hawaii through factor analysis. When selection criteria of packaged honeymoon tours are known, travel agencies would be able to accurately command this unique travel group.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Group Package Tour

Group package tours (GPT) are standardized services that travel agencies offer travelers with less hassle, increased sense of security/safety, social benefits of traveling by groups, and convenience of being escorted throughout the trip [14]. However, less flexibility is associated with travel itineraries under limited timeframe. Travel agencies are important facilitators between prospective travelers and travel arrangements because the majority of potential travelers like to seek shelter in the security of all-inclusive package tours. Studies had evaluated travel destination criteria, performance of travel agencies, and package tours [25-28]. From 50 variables, LeBlanc [25] identified nine factors of perceived quality for travel agency: physical evidence, competence, corporate image, timeliness, courtesy, competitiveness, responsiveness, confidentiality, and accessibility. Accessibility or location convenience of a travel agency was found to be an important factor of packaged tours being bought [18]. Wong and Kwong [28] identified 30 selection criteria and derived eight dimensions for the selection of package tours: tour arrangements & service quality, attractions, hotels & airlines, TV promotions & customer care, routing, personal interests, word-of-mouth, and time. Similarly, Lam and Zhang [26] derived five dimensions in which consumers evaluate travel agency services: responsiveness & assurance, reliability, empathy, resources & corporate image, and tangibility. Heung



and Chu [18] identified six important travel agency selection factors in relation to choosing a travel agency for all-inclusive package tours: interactive agent quality, formal communication, convenience, pricing, product features, and image. Lo and Lam [27] found seven factors of selection criteria for all-inclusive package tours: communication, quality of counseling, price, product features, image, competitiveness, and physical evidence.

## 2.2. Honeymoon Tour

Decision-maker of a family may vary across issues, vast majority (70%) of vacation decisions were reached by consensus of couples [29]. Of limited studies in honeymoon tours, Jang et al. [30] presented individual choice-sets model to Korean couples' honeymoon destination selection when conflicts occur. In Taiwan, Lee et al. [31] identified three important attributes of determining the attractiveness of a honeymoon destination: safety, excellent quality of accommodation, and reasonable travel cost. Aside from the selection process of destinations, Chan and Peng [32] used laddering theory to link means-end chain (MEC) of honeymooners' hierarchical value map. By MEC, attributes to honeymoon are location, cost, word-of-mouth, privacy, etc. Consequences of honeymoon are relaxation, place, novelty, once in a lifetime, etc. Values of honeymoon are romantic, lasting memory, satisfaction, etc.

Data repeatedly show the willingness to spend more by newlyweds across all cultures. American honeymooners spend three times per person more than the average U.S. leisure traveler spends on a family trip [33]. The increase of outbound honeymoon trips by Korean couples have been attributed to: increase of disposable income, attractive overseas packages offered by travel agencies, and increased promotions offered by foreign national tourism organizations and airline companies [34]. In China, newlyweds are willing to spend approximately a third of their savings on related expenditure of their marriages and nearly 90% of them choose honeymoon trips as their favorite way of marriage [24]. Key findings of Li and Jin [24] are as follows. (1) Average age of main consumers is young. (2) Prospective honeymoon takers have longer number of days and a stronger ability of expenditure. (3) High level income crowd and non-high level income crowd share the high level tourism product. (4) Newlyweds are inclined to have more independent time and space to enjoy their honeymoon trip. Of which, it was found that nearly 80% informants would like to enjoy their honeymoon trips within 8 – 15 days, and the median is 13 days.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Instrument

The literature review and interviews with five managers of travel agencies provided the basis for developing two



separate questionnaires, one for travel agency selection criteria consisting 25 items, and one for honeymoon tour selection criteria with 23 items. All attributes would be rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important). Since the respondents are Taiwanese, the questionnaires were presented in Chinese while the literature reviews were English, a blind translation-back-translation method was applied [35].

The characteristics of honeymoon tours tend to be long-haul, high cost, and high quality because honeymooners are willing to spent more for a once in a lifetime experience. Consequently, it is considered that honeymoon tours are the safest tour of all packaged tour types. Given that honeymoon tour takers have already presumed their tours to be extremely safe and secure, the study didn't feel the necessity of including items relating to "safety" in the questionnaires, fearing that other selection criteria may be overlooked or skewed by the respondents when deliberating their opinion. Also, "safety" related issues had already been identified as a key selection criterion for outbound travelers in a number of studies [4,27,28,34]. It must be noted that exclusion of items relating to safety was based on the fact that safety is obviously the upmost important consideration for all types of operation, food, lodging, transportation ... etc.

Purposive sampling method was applied to the pilot test of 30 samples to access the reliability of the two questionnaires. The reliability analysis showed that the Cronbach's alpha for the pretest was 0.924 in selection of travel agencies and 0.926 in selection of honeymoon tours. Nevertheless, statements were modified slightly through a combination of convenience sampling method and snowball-sampling method. Then, the finalized version of the questionnaire would be distributed.

### 3.2 Sampling

A convenient sampling approach was used to choose the samples for the study. Questionnaires were mailed to 1,125 registered travel agencies in Taiwan. Prospective honeymooners were asked to fill out questionnaires. Answered questionnaires were then mailed back by the travel agencies. Duration of the survey lasted one and a half years to avoid seasonal effect. A total of 717 questionnaires were return where 712 returns were valid, as shown in Table 1.



Table 1 Demographic profile of the respondents ( $N = 712$ )

Demographics	Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	290	40.7%
Female	422	59.3%
<b>Age</b>		
18-29	109	15.3%
30-39	381	53.5%
40-49	160	22.5%
50 or more	62	8.7%
<b>Education</b>		
High school or less	74	10.4%
2-year college	198	27.8%
4-year college	335	47.1%
Graduate school	105	14.7%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Blue collar	217	30.5%
White collar	356	50.0%
Self-employed / others	139	19.5%
<b>Residency</b>		
North	646	90.7%
Central	34	4.8%
South	15	2.1%
East / territorial islands	17	2.4%
<b>Monthly income</b>		
NT\$20K or less	24	3.4%
NT\$20K – 30K	123	17.3%
NT\$30K – 40K	190	26.7%
NT\$40K – 50K	176	24.7%
NT\$50K – 60K	91	12.8%
NT\$60K or more	108	15.2%

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Statistical software SPSS 13.0 was used for data analysis. Attributes would be factor analyzed using principle component analysis and varimax rotation method to delineate dimensions of factors associated with selection of travel agencies and packaged honeymoon tours. The varimax process would produce a clear factor structure with relatively higher loadings on the appropriate factors. Reliability analysis would be calculated to test the reliability and internal consistency of each factor. The variables with higher loadings would signal

correlation of the variables with factors on which they were loaded. The most common and reliable criterion is the use of Eigenvalues in extracting factors. Any factor with Eigenvalue greater than 1.0 would be considered significant and be retained.

A hierarchical clustering procedure would be used to classify travelers into mutually exclusive groups, on the basis of the Ward method using the *K*-means clustering procedure. The Ward method would be used to maximize within-cluster homogeneity because it is a frequently used cluster algorithm known to produce stable and interpretable results and because it had been found to produce the best cluster solution in this type of study when compared to other solution algorithms.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Result of descriptive statistics is presented in Table 1 where unbalanced gender demographic is due to the predominant willingness of survey by the female side of the party within couples. Because of the social trend that the average age of entering marriage is getting older in Taiwan, 53.5% of the respondents are ages 30-39. Most of the respondents have 4-year college education (47.1%), being white collar worker (50.0%), living in north Taiwan, and earning NT\$30K-50K monthly (51.4%).



## 4.2 Factor Analysis

Reliability analysis showed Cronbach's alpha for all 25 items of selection dimensions for travel agency was 0.924. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha for all 23 items of the selection dimensions for honeymoon tour was 0.926. As shown in Table 2, five

factors for travel agency selection criteria were identified: distinguishing features, professionalism, visibility, convenience, and image. As shown in Table 3, five factors for honeymoon tour selection criteria were identified: comfort, mood, quality itinerary, attractiveness, and word-of-mouth.

Table 2 Travel agency selection criteria ( $N = 712$ )

Selection Factors (Attributes)	Factor loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Factor 1: distinguishing features (<math>M = 4.27</math>)</b>					
Arranges distinguishing meal	.761				
Provides valuable itinerary	.713				
Arranges distinguishing hotel stay	.701				
Arranges honeymoon-featured itinerary	.692				
Arranges distinguishing transportation	.689				
Provides favorable valued price	.577				
Provides special discount to early birds	.538				
<b>Factor 2: Professionalism (<math>M = 4.50</math>)</b>					
Staff understands customer needs		.845			
Staff has professional knowledge		.825			
Staff provides speedy service		.818			
Efficient arrangement of itinerary by staff		.777			
Staff has good attitude		.764			
<b>Factor 3: Visibility (<math>M = 3.65</math>)</b>					
Frequent appearance of ads on newspaper/magazine			.854		
Frequent appearance of ads on internet			.817		
Frequent appearance of ads on TV			.797		
Specialized in honeymoon tours			.642		
Good horizontal alliances			.512		
<b>Factor 4: Convenience (<math>M = 3.72</math>)</b>					
Has multiple branches				.691	
Long business hour				.685	
Location and transportation convenience				.654	
Complimentary gifts are practical				.593	
Provides appropriate departure date				.517	
<b>Factor 5: Image (<math>M = 4.49</math>)</b>					
Good word-of-mouth					.838
Good image					.835
Financially outstanding					.691
Eigenvalues	9.466	3.051	1.797	1.341	1.084
Variance (%)	37.87	12.20	7.19	5.34	4.34
Cumulative variance (%)	37.866	50.070	57.257	62.621	66.957
Cronbach's alpha	.871	.911	.861	.831	.841





As shown in Table 2, the identified five factors accounted for 66.96% of the total variance. The Cronbach's alpha across these factors ranged from 0.831 to 0.911, indicating high reliability of the factor analysis. Criteria such as eigenvalues ranged from 1.084 to 9.466 which well exceeded the minimum of 1.0. The factor loadings ranged from 0.512 to 0.854 across all items which also exceeded the requirement of 0.4 or more. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling

adequacy was found at 0.915, which further suggests appropriateness of the factor analysis.

In Table 3, the identified factors accounted for 63.25% of the total variance. The Cronbach's alpha across these factors ranged from 0.716 to 0.875, which also indicated high reliability. Eigenvalues ranged from 1.153 to 9.127, well exceeding the requirement. The factor loadings ranged from 0.503 to 0.819 across all items. The KMO was found to be 0.922.

Table 3 Honeymoon tour selection criteria ( $N = 712$ )

Selection Factors (Attributes)	Factor loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Factor 1: Comfort (<math>M = 4.34</math>)</b>					
Appropriate length of the itinerary	.819				
Appropriateness of the itinerary season	.816				
Comfort of the itinerary schedule	.678				
Appropriate location of the honeymoon tour	.672				
Comfortable climate of the destination	.520				
Fulfillment of individual's needs	.507				
<b>Factor 2: Mood (<math>M = 3.92</math>)</b>					
Inclusive of wedding ceremony		.773			
Other travelers are honeymooners as well		.752			
Inclusive of romantic spots		.725			
Itinerary recommended by TV travel channels		.551			
Inclusive of benefits in room upgrade		.547			
<b>Factor 3: Quality Itinerary (<math>M = 4.19</math>)</b>					
Airline with good image			.732		
Promotion/recommendation from foreign tourism bureau			.611		
Appealing flight schedule			.583		
Hotel quality			.577		
Per-charge activities are optional			.570		
International brand hotel			.503		
<b>Factor 4: Attractiveness (<math>M = 4.29</math>)</b>					
Inclusive of natural attractions				.808	
Sightseeing points offered by the tour				.770	
Inclusive of distinctive folk custom visits				.682	
<b>Factor 5: Word-of-mouth (<math>M = 3.93</math>)</b>					
Word-of-mouth from family/friends					.766
Opinion of other travelers					.741
Inclusive of famous theme park or amusement park					.591
Eigenvalues	9.127	1.728	1.377	1.164	1.153
Variance (%)	39.68	7.51	5.99	5.06	5.01
Cumulative variance (%)	39.681	47.193	53.178	58.237	63.250
Cronbach's alpha	.875	.833	.796	.806	.716



### 4.3 Cluster Analysis

Segmenting travelers into groups of travel agency selection and groups of honeymoon tour selection can be a useful tool that enables travel agencies to identify effective promotion and business strategies. To this end, the study also conducted a cluster analysis based on the delineated factors. The identified factors were used as composite variables for the identification of segments of respondents.

The results of the cluster analysis indicated that a five-cluster solution

appeared to appropriate for travel agency selection, as shown in Table 4. The three clusters are described as groups of convenient purchase, image by word-of-mouth, emphasis of professionalism, emphasis of distinguishing features, and emphasis of advertisement. Similarly, a two-cluster solution may be appropriate for honeymoon tour selection, as shown in Table 5. The two clusters are described as groups of easily agreeable and quality selective.

Table 4 Clusters for the selection of travel agencies

Cluster Groups	Distinguishing features	Professionalism	Visibility	Convenience	Image
Convenient purchase	4.51	4.87	3.62	3.70	4.80
Image by word-of-mouth	4.14	4.11	3.72	3.85	4.13
Emphasis of professionalism	4.84	4.87	4.57	4.63	4.88
Emphasis of distinguishing features	3.77	4.19	3.03	3.03	4.19
Emphasis of advertisement	2.43	4.40	1.20	1.60	4.33

Table 5 Clusters for the selection of honeymoon tours

Cluster Groups	Comfort	Mood	Quality itinerary	Attractiveness	Word-of-mouth
Easily agreeable	4.73	4.42	4.56	4.68	4.34
Quality selective	4.01	3.50	3.87	3.95	3.58

## 5. Conclusions

The study identified five factors that honeymoon travelers decide on a travel agency, distinguishing features, professionalism, visibility, convenience, and image. Factors influencing selection of honeymoon tour to Hawaii include comfort, mood, quality itinerary, attractiveness, and word-of-mouth. By cluster analysis, five

groups of travelers deciding on travel agencies were identified as convenient purchase, image by word-of-mouth, emphasis of professionalism, emphasis of distinguishing features, and emphasis of advertisement". As for the selection of packaged honeymoon tour to Hawaii, two groups of travelers were identified as easily agreeable and quality selective.



This paper would like to render a strategy for marketing of packaged outbound honeymoon tour. The travel agency industry may benefit greatly with more marketing emphasis on the internet. As for the arrangement of packaged honeymoon tour, it would be better to reduce tour schedule that require additional spending for shopping activities. Because of the nature of honeymoon tours, newlyweds do not put emphasis on shopping activities.

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