

Revisiting the Marketing Practices of Travel Agency in Region I, Philippines

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12030014>

Received: 20 February 2025; Accepted: 27 February 2025; Published: 29 March 2025

ABSTRACT

This study is intended to revisit the marketing practices of Travel Agencies in Region I. The researcher used a descriptive survey questionnaire as the main instrument to gather relevant data from the respondents. The research design used in this study was quantitative, and research data was collected from a total of 30 travel agencies from Pangasinan, La Union, Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur that are accredited of the Department of Tourism. Moreover, descriptive statistics was used to analyse and interpret the data. This study revealed that the Product/Service, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Positioning, Processes, and Performance in the 8 P's of Marketing Mix were Highly Practiced while the Promotion were Practiced. Moreover, the traditional and digital marketing strategies used by the travel agencies were highly effective but there are some were slightly effective.

Keywords: Revisit; Marketing Mix; Marketing Strategies; Travel Agencies; Marketing Plan

INTRODUCTION

Travel agencies sell tourism and travel-related services to the public on behalf of different travel suppliers. In addition to recreational tourist activities, they also provide accommodation and transportation services and handle the logistics of booked trips, among other services. Travel agencies include brick-and-mortar establishments and those based entirely online (Statista, 2023).

Travel Agencies are one of the Sectors of the Tourism Industry that plays a significant role in the economic growth of certain countries. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the global tourism industry, with the number of foreign travelers dropping by 900 million (72 percent) from January to October 2020 and the industry reverting to pre-pandemic levels (OMT, 2020). President Ritchie Tuano of the Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) stated that some travel agencies are now considering closing their businesses in the wake of the enormous losses they incurred due to the pandemic. Also, around 95 percent, or 419 out of the 439 travel agency members, have temporarily closed their businesses, with some considering permanent shutdown. Furthermore, the temporary closure directly hit 4,000 employees in the industry, stating that around 200 workers have already been laid off.

Given the circumstances above, marketing strategies are significant to avoid pitfalls in the competition and threats in the business environment. As Barone (2022) mentioned, A marketing strategy is a business's game plan for reaching prospective consumers and turning them into customers of their products or services (Barone, 2022). More so, Travel agencies use traditional and digital marketing methods.

Markgraf (2018) defines tourism marketing as different because the customer purchases a series of services but needs more concrete value after a trip. Tourism marketing is different because the customer purchases a series of services but needs more concrete value after his trip. As a result, the marketing initiatives have to emphasize the value of the memories, make the collection of services easily accessible, and add value through additional programming and other factors. A key challenge is to convince potential customers that the item they are purchasing provides good value for the price and that the services will be as described and expected.

In a Global setting, there need to be more studies about marketing-related research studies. The majority of the studies are not within ten years. In the Philippine setting, there needs to be more in determining the marketing practices specifically to travel agencies. Most of the study focuses on other hospitality industry sectors, such as the food and beverage, accommodation, and recreation and entertainment sectors. While in the Local Setting, more empirical evidence must be found on how marketing practices work in a travel agency. No existing research study has been conducted in Pangasinan, La Union, Ilocos Sur, and Ilocos Norte travel agencies. Furthermore, Marketing plans in travel agency management and operations should be mentioned in the various study conducted in the Philippines.

With this, the researchers would like to revisit the 8 Marketing Mix Practices and Strategies of the Travel Agencies in the Region 1 in the Philippines as the basis for a proposed Marketing Plan to at least recover from the adverse effects of the COVID 19-Pandemic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The participants of this study were consisted of 30 Travel Agencies in the Region 1, Philippines. The 93.33% were Sole Proprietorship, 6.67% were Corporations, and there was no Partnership. Moreover, 50% existed for ten years and above, 33.33% were existing 6-10 years, and 16.67% were existing 1-5 years. It also reflected that 73.33% belong to both online and brick-mortar establishments and the 26.67% belong to brick-mortar establishments.

Data Collection

Since this study is quantitative research, the researcher used a survey questionnaire. The research instrument is composed of three (3) parts. The first part of the research instrument is the Business Profile in terms of forms of ownership, years of existence, and classification of Travel Agencies that the researcher constructed. The second part is the marketing mix-related practices of the subject travel agencies regarding product or service, price, place, promotion, people, positioning, processes, and performance. The last part is the effectiveness of the marketing strategies used by the travel agencies in Region I. Validity and Reliability Test was also employed to make sure that the research instrument was valid and reliable.

The Analysis of Data

To analyze the Business Profile in terms of forms of ownership, years of existence, and classification of Travel Agencies, the researcher used the frequency and percentage distribution. Moreover, the Travel Agency's related 8 P's marketing mix practices which are product or service, price, place, promotion, people, positioning, process, and performance and the effectiveness of the marketing strategies used by the travel agencies in Region I. The researcher used Average Weighted Mean.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was hand-carried by the researcher to the intended respondents and through email. After receiving phone calls and written replies from the secretary of travel agencies' secretaries, the researcher did not waste time personally administering the survey questionnaires to the intended respondents. The data gathered were further analyzed through statistical treatment. The gathering of data took place from August 2022 to September 2023.

RESULTS

Table 3.1 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of Product and Service

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency...			
assist clients in passport processing.	3.83	HP	4.5

provide tourist visa assistance	3.80	HP	6
issue airline ticket	3.93	HP	1.5
make an airline reservation	3.83	HP	4.5
offer tour packages	3.90	HP	3
create clients customize tour packages	3.93	HP	1.5
provide tourist bus with tour guide	3.43	HP	7
Average Weighted Mean	3.81	HP	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.1 presented that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 regarding Product and Service is 3.81, which was verbally interpreted as "highly practiced."

Table 3.2 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of Price

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency...			
provide affordable rates of services	3.93	HP	1
offer various payments options	3.77	HP	2
take payments in installments	2.77	P	5
offer commission to clients if they have referral	3.13	P	4
give discounts to loyal clients	3.73	HP	3
Average Weighted Mean	3.47	HP	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.2 presented that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 in terms of Price is 3.47, which is verbally interpreted as "highly practiced."

Table 3.3 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of Place

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency...			
is accessible to all types of clients.	3.97	HP	1
maintain proper health and safety protocol	3.93	HP	2
offers comfortable receiving area for clients	3.90	HP	3
creates good ambiance by showing different tourist destinations poster.	3.80	HP	4
Average Weighted Mean	3.90	HP	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.3 demonstrated that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 in terms of Place is 3.90, which is verbally interpreted as "highly practiced."

Table 3.4 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of Promotion

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency...			
use search engine optimization	3.17	P	2
use digital marketing	3.63	P	1

give fliers to the prospect clients	3.17	P	3
offers pay-per-click	2.43	SP	4
Average Weighted Mean	3.10	P	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.4 shows that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 in terms of Promotion is 3.10, verbally interpreted as “practiced.”

Table 3.5 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of People

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency employees...			
have excellent communication skills	4.00	HP	1
knowledgeable with their services	3.97	HP	2.5
attentive to clients need	3.97	HP	2.5
can work under pressure	3.97	HP	2.5
act as a team leader	3.87	HP	4
Average Weighted Mean	3.95	HP	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.5 portrayed that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 in terms of People is 3.95, which is verbally interpreted as "highly practiced."

Table 3.6 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of Positioning

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency...			
possess good customer relationship	3.97	HP	2.5
respond immediately to clients’ concerns	3.90	HP	5
maintains a welcoming environment to the clients	4.00	HP	1
provide remarkable services to the clients	3.93	HP	4
maintain good relationship with loyal clients	3.97	HP	2.5
Average Weighted Mean	3.95	HP	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.6 implicated that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 regarding Positioning is 3.95, which is verbally interpreted as “highly practiced.”

Table 3.7 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of Processes

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency...			
use airlines reservation system for reservation	3.77	HP	2.5
use airlines reservation system for ticketing	3.80	HP	1
use central reservation system for hotel and/or resort reservation	3.23	P	5
use electronic mail for tourist bus reservation	3.13	P	4

provide owned website for clients	2.93	P	6
equip with fax machine, telephone, photocopy machine to achieve smooth operations.	3.77	HP	2.5
Average Weighted Mean	3.44	HP	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.7 portrayed that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 in terms of Processes is 3.44, which is verbally interpreted as “highly practiced.”

Table 3.8 Marketing Mix Practices in terms of Performance

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The travel agency...			
validate client’s information sheets.	3.97	HP	1.5
update client’s reservation.	3.97	HP	1.5
follow-up reservations to tourism establishments.	3.93	HP	3
issue reservation confirmation to the clients.	3.97	HP	1.5
issue tour voucher to the clients.	3.80	HP	4
send email to tourism establishments about the clients’ information.	3.53	HP	5
monitor other travel agencies published rates	3.17	P	6
Average Weighted Mean	3.76	HP	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Practiced (HP) 2.50-3.24 Practiced (P) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Practiced (SP) 1.00-1.74 Not Practiced (NP)

Table 3.8 shows that the average weighted mean of the Marketing Mix Practices of the Travel Agencies in Region 1 in terms of Performance is 3.76, which is verbally interpreted as "highly practiced."

Table 4.1 Effectiveness of Traditional Marketing Strategies of the Travel Agencies

Attributes	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The Travel Agency...			
offer personalize itineraries.	3.73	HE	1
give a free-of-charge room accommodation.	2.80	E	6
offer discount points.	3.00	E	3.5
create a loyalty card program.	2.40	SE	7
give additional amenities not included in the paid reservation.	3.00	E	3.5
offer airlines miles.	2.93	E	5
give free tour guide services for group tourist.	3.40	HE	2
use radio advertisement.	2.20	SE	8
Average Weighted Mean	2.93	E	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Effective (HE) 2.50-3.24 Effective (E) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Effective (SE) 1.00-1.74 Not Effective (NE)

Table 4.1 presents that the average weighted mean of the Effectiveness of Traditional Marketing Strategies of the Travel Agencies is 2.93, verbally interpreted as “effective.”

Table 4.2 Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies of the Travel Agencies

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Ranking
The Travel Agency...			
give a rebate to the clients who paid using credit cards.	2.07	SE	3
use social media marketing such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter.	3.87	HE	1
create content marketing like blog for the services offered.	2.67	E	2
Average Weighted Mean	2.87	E	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 Highly Effective (HE) 2.50-3.24 Effective (E) 1.75-2.49 Slightly Effective (SE) 1.00-1.74 Not Effective (NE)

Table 4.2 shows that the average weighted mean of the Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies of the Travel Agencies is 2.87, verbally interpreted as “effective.”

The Challenges Encountered by in the Implementation of the Marketing Strategies

The Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the Traditional Marketing Strategies

The travel agencies challenges encountered in the implementation of the traditional marketing strategies includes: the clients asking for refund for not showing, concern in availing the airline extra miles based on the validity period, the clients insisted to avail the expired discounts points, the clients insisted to avail other amenities that are not included on the travel package, if the clients avail personalize travel package, travel agency were having a hard time in giving discounts to clients, with this, it will create unsatisfied impression, airlines’ promo fares offered to travel agency’s clients have hidden charges that cause trouble to travel agency, the clients extend their stays that are not included in their package, the clients experience delayed flights and exchange rate concerns.

The Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the Digital Marketing Strategies

The travel agencies challenges encountered in the implementation of the digital marketing strategies includes: the information shared by the social media influencer through social media is lack of credibility and Email traffic, not all queries are answered immediately.

CONCLUSION

1. Most Travel Agencies in the Region 1 belong to sole proprietorships and have existed for ten years and beyond. Few of them are corporation owned. Twenty are classified as online and brick-mortar, while eight are classified as brick-mortar.
2. The eight Marketing mixes used by the researcher were: Product/Service, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Positioning, Processes, and Performance. Except for promotion, the 7 Marketing Mix were rated Highly practiced.
3. Regarding traditional marketing strategies, "Offer personalized itineraries" was highly effective, while "Use radio advertisement" was slightly effective.
4. Regarding traditional marketing strategies, "Offer personalized itineraries" was highly effective, while "Use radio advertisement" was slightly effective.
5. The greatest challenge encountered by Travel Agencies in Traditional Marketing Strategies was "The clients experience delayed flights," while the slightest challenge was "If the clients avail of personalize travel package, the travel agency has a hard time giving discounts to clients; with this, it will create the unsatisfied impression."

6. In implementing Digital Marketing Strategies, the travel agency's most significant challenge was "Email traffic, not all queries are answered immediately," while the slightest challenge was "The information shared by the social media influencer through social media lacks credibility.

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