

# Research on Evaluation Indicator System for Distribution Channel of Tourism Destination

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## Abstract

With competition of tourism destination becoming fiercer, improving distribution channel is an important way to improve competitiveness of tourism destination. The Paper, by using Delphi, AHP and Yaahp, constructs evaluation indicator system on distribution channel of tourism destination, and takes Shenzhen OCT tourist resort as case study to make comparative analysis on indicator importance and actual performance score of OCT tourist resort. The research finds that internal controllable factors of distribution channel play the most important role in its evaluation, of which economic performance and product factor are far from expectation of tourism enterprise managers, and the Paper will provide advice for improving distribution channel of tourism destination from three aspects, including economic performance of distribution channel, product factor and external uncontrollable factors.

## Keywords

Tourism Distribution Channel, Evaluation Indicator System, Tourism Destination, OCT Tourist Resort

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## 1. Introduction

The State Council issued Some Suggestions to Promote Reform and Development of Tourism in 2015, putting forward “the Belt and Road” and travel “515” strategy and making action plan of “travel + Internet”, thus providing a good macro-environment for tourism development. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that Chinese tourism industry contributes more than 10% to GDP. With rapid development of tourism and fierce competition of tourism destination, tourism enterprises are gradually aware that perfecting and broaden distribution channel is an important method to improve competitiveness

of tourism destination. Tourism distribution channel in China is diversified, including online trading website, tourism network media website, third-party trading platform and etc. With the maturity of consumer psychology and convenient transportation, tourism vacation has gradually changed from sightseeing to leisure, and tourists change from “package tour” to “DIY tour”. China Internet Information Center data show that as of December 2016, 299 million Chinese made traveling reservation online, of which the proportion of booking vacation products accounted for 7.4%. The percentage of online travel bookings for mobile Internet users in China has increased from 33.9% to 37.7% [1]. More and more tourists tend to buy tourism destination products through online tourism distribution channels.

The industry and academia gradually realize that development of tourism destination distribution channels directly affects its actual income. Therefore, combining influencing factors of distribution channels, constructing evaluation indicator system on distribution channel of tourism destination, and accurately analyzing and evaluating the distribution channels of tourism destinations are of great significance to regional tourism development.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Tourism Destination**

Tourism destination is a place providing attraction for travelers and equipped with related tourism facilities, which is corresponding to tourist source and tourism transit. Different from general tourist sites or scenic spots, it possesses unique image and perfect regional management and coordination organization, and can motivate potential tourists to travel and achieve tourism purpose [2].

### **2.2. Status of Research on Tourism Distribution Channel**

Distribution channel is various structures with independent organization existing in process of providing products or services to customers and commercial clients; in marketing, distribution channel is generally used to transfer commodities (tangible products) from producers to customers; in hospitality industry, it often transfers customers to products: hotels, restaurants, pleasure-boats or planes [3]. In Buhalis’s opinion, distribution channel is a way to promote purchase decision by providing enough market information to consumers at proper time and place [4].

In the early 1980s, Bitner & Boom defined tourism distribution channel as a way for tourism organizations to communicate and sell their products or services [5]. Smith & Xiao suggested that tourism distribution channels could be regarded as different presentation of tourism supply chain for invisibility and complexity of tourism products [6]. Pearce, from view of tourists, adopted field research method to study distribution channels met by tourists in Rotorua and Wellington of New Zealand, which provided a new perspective for improvement of tourism distribution channels [7]. Reid & Pearce studied distribution channels of New Zealand outbound tourism from the perspective of national market,

pointing out development trend and challenges of distribution channels [8]. In recent years, Internet has been greatly affecting tourism industry, thus traditional distribution channel suffering great attack. Therefore, Kazak made a study on transformation of tourism distribution channels, pointing out the development of Internet and rise of E-commerce, and redefining how tourists found and bought products [9]. Kang & Brewer et al pointed out in the study that traditional and online distribution channels can expand market share, but the coexistence of both will inevitably lead to conflicts [10]. When taking global distribution system (GDS) as a study object, Granados et al. put forward that, tourism distribution channel undergoing re-intermediation shall still meet challenge of disintermediation [11].

### **2.3. Status of Research on Tourism Destination Distribution Channel**

Kracht & Wan studied historical dynamic changes of tourism distribution channels as well as interaction process of Internet and distribution channels with tourism destination as the object of study [12]. Considering “disintermediation” development of existing distribution channels, Law, through interviews, visited traditional travel agencies and hotel managers of Hongkong tourism destination, and studied disintermediation problem of tourism destination distribution channel from view of tourism products and service suppliers and traditional intermediaries [13]. With popularization of Internet technology in China, Chinese scholars have gradually shifted focus of tourism distribution channels to the impact of Internet on tourism distribution channels. In the case of Mount Huangshan, Zhang Chaozhi and You Wang made dynamic analysis on the influence of Internet on distribution channels of Mount Huangshan tourist destination from diachronic view [14].

In summary, the current research of tourism distribution channels mainly from the perspective of different channel members, Which focus on the development status and the trends of tourism distribution channels, the impact of the Internet, channel integration, and the evaluation index items of distribution channels. Distribution channels affect profits of all members in tourism value chain, the current research on tourism distribution channels lacks overall research on distribution channel and evaluation indicator system on overall distribution channel of tourism destination is much less. Therefore, the research, by using Delphi and AHP, constructs evaluation indicator system on distribution channel of tourism destination so as to enrich domestic whole research on distribution channel of tourism destination.

## **3. Research Design**

### **3.1. Evaluation Hierarchy Design for Distribution Channel of Tourism Destination**

Internal controllable factors greatly affecting development of distribution channel of tourism destination include enterprises and products; external uncontrollable

factors refer to distribution environment, including economy, social culture, technology, competition and political and legal environment [15]. Good distribution channel of tourism products shall have characteristics with evident continuity, prominent radiativity, comprehensive matching and ideal economic benefits [16]. When choosing evaluation indicators of tourism distribution channel, make comprehensive evaluation by referring to internal and external factors and channel's characteristics.

Then, evaluation hierarchy can be divided into three parts: I. Target hierarchy is a comprehensive evaluation on distribution channels of tourism destination; II. Criterion hierarchy includes internal controllable factor and external uncontrollable factor, and the two also contain several other factors; III. Scheme hierarchy is actual situation of distribution channel of a specific tourist destination.

### 3.2. Selection of Evaluation Indicator

Han Lijiao and Fan Guoyong constructed the two level evaluation index system of marketing channel, involving 25 indexes in 4 aspects [17]. Zhang Shixin and Chen Guiquan put forward 8 specific evaluation indexes of distribution channel efficiency [18]. After consulting previous literatures, evaluation indicator system on distribution channels of tourism destination has been preliminarily established. The indicator system is divided into three levels, and the first level is internal controllable factors and external uncontrollable factors; the second level includes economic performance, tourism products, tourism enterprises, market level, customer perspective and distribution environment; the third level divides the second level into 25 specific indicators [15] [16] [17] [18]. In order to make scientific and representative indicators, the writer interviewed professors of Shenzhen Tourism College of Jinan University and senior director and account manager of Shenzhen CYTS for further screening and sorting of these 25 indicators. The five-grade marking system is adopted, and each score represents different meaning as follows: 1 = minimal influence, 2 = little influence, 3 = certain influence, 4 = greater influence, 5 = remarkable influence. Weighted average of collected experts' scores is as **Table 1**.

Eliminate  $D_{12}$  and  $D_{22}$  below 3 points, namely indicators with little and minimal influence; Although  $D_{19}$  customer satisfaction has a greater influence, it is difficult to balance, and customer satisfaction research on distribution channels can be carried out separately and the research will not have a further study on it, thus, eliminating the indicator; presentation of  $D_{18}$ ,  $D_{21}$  and  $D_{23}$  can be respectively changed into effective communication, economical situation and technical level, and at the same time, change No. of  $D_{21}$ ,  $D_{23}$  and  $D_{25}$ , thus finally getting 22 indicators.

### 3.3. Establishment of Evaluation Indicator System

After determining detailed indicators, make upward induction of indicators, forming three level indicators, and evaluation indicators of each level are developed

from the evaluation indicators of the previous level, while evaluation indicators of the previous level can reflect its overall evaluation through lower indicators' evaluation. The evaluation indicator system is shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 1.** Primary indicator scoring table.

Primary indicator	Score	Primary indicator	Score	Primary indicator	Score
D1 Distribution profit	5	D10 Corporate management capacity of tourism destination	3.67	D19 Customer satisfaction	4.3
D2 Marketing capacity	3.67	D11 Channel coverage	4	D20 Satisfaction of customized requirements	3.67
D3 Return on investment	4.5	D12 Distance from the tourist market	2.83	D21 Economic environment	3.33
D4 Product type	3.5	D13 The degree of controllability of middlemen	3.67	D22 Social cultural environment	2.83
D5 Product value	4	D14 Channel continuity/efficiency	3.67	D23 Technical environment	3.33
D6 Product market range	3.83	D15 Channel conflict degree	3.33	D24 Competitive environment of tourism destination	3.33
D7 Product service level	3.67	D16 Physical distribution quality of service	3.83	D25 Policies and regulations on tourism	3.16
D8 Corporate scale of tourism destination	3.67	D17 Purchasing habit	3.5		
D9 Corporate targeting strategies of tourism destination	3.33	D18 Efficient information system	4		

**Table 2.** Evaluation indicator system on distribution channel of tourism destination.

Destination layer	One-level indicator	Two-level indicator	Three-level indicator
Comprehensive evaluation of tourism distribution channels A	Internal controllable factor B1	Economic performance C1	Distribution profit D1
			Marketing capacity D2
		Return on investment D3	
		Product type D4	
		Product value D5	
	External uncontrollable factor B2	Product factor C2	Product market range D6
			Product service level D7
		Corporate influence C3	Corporate scale of tourism destination D8
			Corporate targeting strategies of tourism destination D9
			Corporate management capacity of tourism destination D10
Market factor C4	Channel coverage D11		
	The degree of controllability of middlemen D12		
	Channel efficiency D13		
	Channel conflict degree D14		
	Purchasing habit D15		
	Physical distribution quality of service D16		
Customer perspective C5	Distribution environment C6	Effective communication D17	
		Satisfaction of customized requirements D18	
		Economical situation D19	
	Distribution environment C6	Policies and regulations of tourism D20	
		Technological level D21	
		Competitive environment of tourism destination D22	

The indicator integration sources: see references [15] [16] [17] [18].

### 3.4. Scoring of Index Weights

The research used Delphi and AHP, designed index questionnaire, and collected the influence degree of index on tourism distribution channel. Thus, 5 scholars of Shenzhen Tourism College of Jinan University and Shenzhen University and 4 directors and senior account managers of Shenzhen CYTS MICE Service Co. Ltd have been invited to compare and score indicator questionnaire, getting the relative importance score of each indicator. This questionnaire adopts the 1-9 scale method, by comparing each other to determine the weight of each item on the previous layer.

### 3.5. Evaluation Index Weight Determination

After consistency test, calculate the constructed judgment matrix, input experts' score by Yaahp, getting judgment matrix of each expert's score, and by the group decision making in software, make weighted geometric average for each expert ranking vector, getting combination weights of each indicator (as shown in **Table 3**).

**Table 3.** Indicator combination weight.

Destination layer	One-level indicator	Weight	Two-level indicator	Weight	Three-level indicator	Weight
Comprehensive evaluation of tourism distribution channels A	Internal controllable factor B1	0.7612	Economic performance C1	0.3519	Distribution profit D1	0.1752
					Marketing capacity D2	0.0996
					Return on investment D3	0.0771
			Product factor C2	0.2718	Product type D4	0.0355
					Product value D5	0.0773
					Product market range D6	0.0337
					Product service level D7	0.1253
					Corporate scale of tourism destination D8	0.0892
					Corporate targeting strategies of tourism destination D9	0.0163
					Corporate management capacity of tourism destination D10	0.0320
	Market factor C4	0.0853	Channel coverage D11	0.0235		
			The degree of controllability of middlemen D12	0.0242		
	External uncontrollable factor B2	0.2388	Customer perspective C5	0.0824	Channel continuity/efficiency D13	0.0291
					Channel conflict degree D14	0.0085
					Purchasing habit D15	0.0260
					Physical distribution quality of service D16	0.0213
					Effective communication D17	0.0272
			Distribution environment C6	0.0711	Satisfaction of customized requirements D18	0.0079
					Economical situation D19	0.0102
					Policies and regulations of tourism D20	0.0087
					Technological level D21	0.0170
					Competitive environment of tourism destination D22	0.0351

### 3.6. Indicator Weight Analysis

From the point of view of the combination weight of one-level indicator, the influence of B1 on distribution channel is greater, up to 75.12% while B2 only accounts for 23.88% when the tourism destination distribution channel is evaluated. Internal controllable factors refer to what can be adjusted internally by tourism enterprises to adapt distribution channel with current situation, and considering it as evaluation focus, together with external uncontrollable factors, enterprises constantly improve the distribution channels.

From the combination weight distribution of two-level indicators, C1 weight of internal controllable factors is the largest, reaching 35.19%, followed by C2 weight of 27.18%, which is in line with economy in evaluation criteria of distribution channels. Economic standard is the basic starting point of tourism destination enterprise marketing. Therefore, when choosing distribution channels, enterprises should pay more attention to economic performance. The benefits of tourism products are complex, and product factors can influence channel revenue, and its impact on channel evaluation cannot be ignored. From the external uncontrollable factors, weight of C4, compared to C5 and C6, is slightly larger, reaching 8.53%. Obviously, market factor and choice of channel type are closely related, and the channel evaluation and improvement also must be considered from market factor.

From the combination weight of three-level indicator, in detailed indicators, D1 and D7 weights rank top one and top two, reaching 17.52% and 12.53%, and D7 indirectly influences D1. Economic efficiency is the most important factor for enterprises to evaluate distribution channels; in improving distribution channels, product service levels and product value shall also be improved so as to increase distribution profits. The weight of C3 is less than C1 and C2, but compared to weight of other three-level indicators, the weight of D8 in C3 is relatively large, indicating that corporate scale of tourism destination is the basis of distribution channel selection and design, and corporate actual situation shall be considered to choose proper channel when improving distribution channels.

## 4. Empirical Research

### 4.1. Generalization on Object of Research

Shenzhen OCT tourist resort, with coverage of 4.8 square kilometers, has four large cultural theme parks, Splendid China, China Folk Culture Village, Windows of the World and Happy Valley, visited by more than 6 million people every year. There are also more than 20 cultural entertainment, tourism and leisure facilities and various hotel facilities, including art gallery, art center, School of Tourism, public recreational parks, sports clubs, large shopping plaza and etc. For having the most concentrated cultural theme park group, cultural theme hotel groups and cultural facility group in China, it becomes the first batch of Chinese 5A grade scenic spot, the first batch of national civilized scenic area and national cultural industry demonstration zone.

OCT tourist resort, following the pace of Internet development, chooses distribution channel conforming to its own development and the times, which becomes the important work of its profit channel diversification. As a representative tourism destination, development of distribution channel of Shenzhen OCT tourist resort has a certain reference function for the development of other tourism destinations.

## **4.2. Empirical Data Collection**

Evaluation indicator system on distribution channel of tourism destination is constructed above, and 12 managers, business dealers and salesmen of Shenzhen OCT tourist resort were invited to score for importance of evaluation indicator and its actual performance in OCT tourist resort. The score is divided into nine points, corresponding to scoring system adopted in determining indicator weight.

## **4.3. Comprehensive Score**

By weighted average, calculate indicator importance score and actual performance score of OCT tourist resort, seeing **Table 4**.

## **5. Analysis and Results**

### **5.1. Scoring Comparison of One-Level Indicator**

The one-level indicator includes internal controllable factors and external uncontrollable factors, with weights of 76.12% and 23.88% respectively. It is shown in **Figure 1** that the internal controllable factors of OCT tourist resort have greater influence on distribution channel evaluation and score differences, with indicator importance score of internal controllable factors of 1.2391 and actual performance score of OCT tourist resort of 0.9016. It shows that OCT tourism resort should pay attention to improving internal controllable factors when perfecting distribution channel.

### **5.2. Scoring Comparison of Two-Level Indicator**

By analyzing scores of one-level indicator and two-level indicator, general direction and detailing direction of improvement of tourism distribution channels can be respectively gotten. As can be seen from **Figure 2**, distribution channels of OCT tourism resort are deficient in C1 and C2 indicators. The weights of the two two-level indicators are 35.19% and 27.18% respectively. The C1 indicator importance score is 0.9066, and the actual performance is 0.8156; the C2 indicator importance score is 0.5727 and the actual performance is 0.2348. C1 and C2 are internal factors, indicating that distribution channels of OCT tourist resort need to be further improved in terms of internal controllable factors, economic performance haven't reached the expected goal of management of scenic spot and product added value and level also need to be improved. Although various indicators importance score and actual performance scores of OCT tourist resort

**Table 4.** Indicator importance and actual performance score of OCT tourist resort.

Destination layer	One-level indicator	Two-level indicator	Three-level indicator	Weight	Indicator importance score	Actual performance score of OCT tourist resort			
Comprehensive evaluation of tourism distribution channels A	Economic performance C1		Distribution profit D1	0.1752	7.25	6.67			
			Marketing capacity D2	0.0996	7.50	6.25			
			Return on investment D3	0.0771	7.25	6.83			
	Internal controllable factor B1	Product factor C2		Product type D4	0.0355	6.50	6.25		
				Product value D5	0.0773	7.50	5.58		
				Product market range D6	0.0337	7.5	6.25		
				Product service level D7	0.1253	8.33	7.58		
				Corporate scale of tourism destination D8	0.0892	7.92	7.33		
			Corporate influence C3		Corporate targeting strategies of tourism destination D9	0.0163	7.92	6.50	
					Corporate management capacity of tourism destination D10	0.0320	7.67	6.75	
	Market factor C4			Channel coverage D11	0.0235	7.83	6.33		
				The degree of controllability of middlemen D12	0.0242	7.17	6.42		
				Channel continuity/efficiency D13	0.0291	7.75	5.92		
				Channel conflict degree D14	0.0085	6.33	5.42		
				Purchasing habit D15	0.0260	8.17	7.08		
			External uncontrollable factor B2	Customer perspective C5		Physical distribution quality of service D16	0.0213	8.00	6.92
						Effective communication D17	0.0272	7.92	7.25
						Satisfaction of customized requirements D18	0.0079	7.67	5.83
			Distribution environment C6			Economical situation D19	0.0102	7.75	6.67
						Policies and regulations of tourism D20	0.0087	7.67	7.33
		Technological level D21			0.0170	7.58	6.92		
		Competitive environment of tourism destination D22			0.0351	8.08	8.00		

are different, its impact on the comprehensive evaluation results is relatively small for the indicator weight is small.

### 5.3. Scoring Comparison of Three-Level Indicator

The three-level indicator is the refinement of two-level indicator, and by analyzing three-level indicator score, deficiencies and improvement of distribution channels of OCT tourism resort can be further understood. As can be seen from **Figure 3**, the performance in each indicator of distribution channels of OCT tourist resort has not reached the expectations of managers, especially in D5, D2, D1 and D7 indicators. In the four indicators, there are main reasons causing actual performance score of OCT tourist resort lower than indicator importance

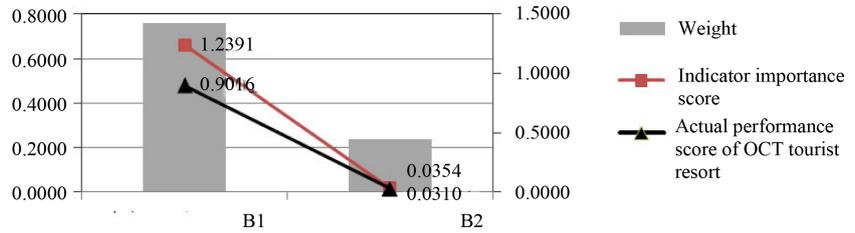


Figure 1. Scoring comparison of one-level indicator.

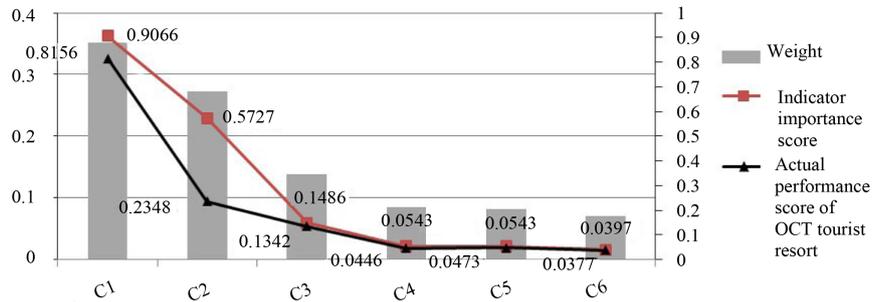


Figure 2. Scoring comparison of two-level indicator.

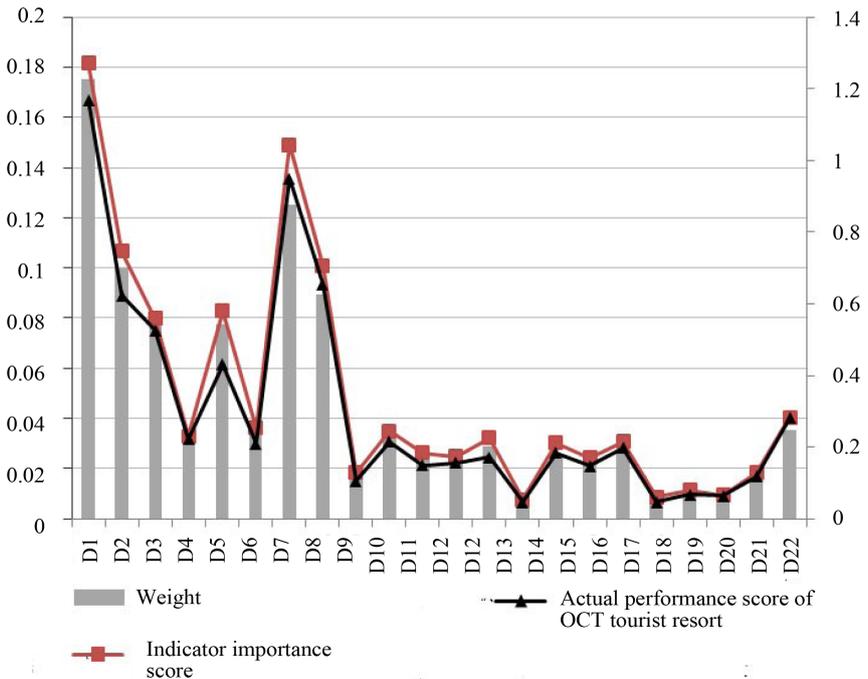


Figure 3. Scoring comparison of three-level indicator.

score: ① Distribution channels of OCT tourist resort is not up to the management goals in these four aspects, namely the distribution channels in these four areas need to be improved first. Therefore, the staff of this scenic spot scored performance of OCT tourist resort lower than the indicator importance; ② The four indicators are internal controllable factors, with high weight in evaluation system, further widening the gap between the score, causing more obvious difference

between importance score and performance score.

#### 5.4. Comprehensive Evaluation

The destination layer of the empirical study is the comprehensive evaluation of Shenzhen OCT tourist resort distribution channels. The comprehensive evaluation score of indicator or of OCT tourist resort distribution channel = importance score or actual performance score. The results are as follows: comprehensive evaluation score of indicator importance in OCT tourist resort distribution channels is 7.6181 while the actual performance is 6.7345, whose difference shows that the evaluation indicator system of this research can make comprehensive evaluation on tourism destination distribution channels based on detailing three-level indicators; differences between actual performance and the expected goals of tourism destination can be gotten according to managers' score, and then tourism destination distribution channels can be adjusted according to these differences.

Through the analysis of indicators in various levels and comprehensive evaluation, the following three problems are verified: ① The existing distribution channels of OCT tourist resort is insufficient, having not reached the expected target of scenic managers and operators; ② Internal controllable factors of tourism distribution channel greatly influence the distribution channel development, so the internal controllable factors adjustment is the focus aspect to improve distribution channel; ③ Analysis of field survey data demonstrates reasonability and scientificity of evaluation indicator system on distribution channels of tourism destination, having certain reference significance to the research on the evaluation of distribution channels.

#### 6. Conclusions

The research constructs the evaluation indicator system on distribution channel of tourism destination, in which indicator weight shows that the influence of internal controllable factors on the distribution channel is greater than external uncontrollable factors, especially for its economic performance and product factor. These two indicators greatly affect the evaluation of tourism destination distribution channels, which is the focus of enterprises in choosing or improving distribution channels.

Through empirical research on OCT tourist resort, it is found that its distribution channels are quite far from expectation of managers in internal controllable factors, especially in the aspects of product value, marketing capacity, distribution profit and product service level, to which attention needs to be paid for improvement. According to the results of empirical research and tourism environment, the research puts forward the following advice for improving distribution channels of OCT tourist resort: ① Improve product value to weaken consumer price sensitivity; ② Make full use of the Internet to improve product sales and reduce channel costs; ③ Share benefits with channel intermediaries to

achieve win-win business; ④ Use big data skillfully from customer perspective.

The research has some defects such as small number of experts interviewed, selection of evaluation incomprehensive selection of evaluation indicators, inadequate evaluation system and etc. The research just took OCT tourist resort as investigation object. In the future, two similar tourist destinations can be chosen for the study on distribution channel evaluation. Using comparative analysis of both scores of distribution channels, analysis results and suggestions will be more meaningful. Therefore, the evaluation indicator system on distribution channel of tourism destination needs to be further amended and verified in subsequent research.

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