A STUDY OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
INFLUENCING EVENT PLANNER'S PERCEPTION ON INFORMATION CONTENT AND
CHANNEL CHOICE

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by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The meetings and convention industry is one of the fastest growing sectors of

the tourism and hospitality industry with expenditures in the billions and accounts for

more than 13% of total revenue gained in 2008 (TIA, 2009; Braley, 2008). The meetings

and convention industry is the organization of attendees who go to a specific location

for a common purpose or goal; organization of attendees includes such aspects as

accommodations, transportation, guest speakers, food service, and equipment needs

(Astroff & Abbey, 2006; Davidson & Rogers, 2006; Department of Labor, 2008).   The

purpose (i.e.: educate, to make a profit, developing new strategies) of an event dictates

the structure and success of an event. An event planner is responsible for organizing

the convention personnel to complete tasks as mentioned above for the organization of

meetings and conventions attendees.

Compared with consumer purchases, an organizational purchase such as

convention and meetings usually involves more decision makers (i.e., the buying center)

and a more professional purchasing effort, because it often involves a large budget,

complex technical features, economic considerations, and interactions among many

people at all levels of the organization (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2006). For these

reasons, it is generally known that the organizational buying process tends to be more

formalized and professional than that of the consumers. As a critical player in the

purchasing and decision-making process, event planners have the power to not only search possible meeting and event venues but also prevent sellers or information from reaching members of the decision making group.

The purpose of information search is to reduce the risk and anxiety experienced by consumers when making a decision, prepurchase and postpurchase (Lewis & Chambers, 2000). Information search consists of both internal and external search behavior. An information seeker either searches for information internally (i.e., previous experience, perceptions, and attitudes) or externally (i.e. personal – friends and family, marketing – advertisements, and public information) (Reid & Bojanic, 2006). Typically an internal search is completed prior to the external search and only when an inadequate amount of information is available through the internal search process (Bettman, 1979). The internal search process can also be referred to as familiarity, which is a continuous variable that reflects the direct and indirect knowledge of a product and the alternative choices (Shoemaker, Lewis, & Yesawich 2007).

An individual gives attention to an information source if the information that is being provided is significant for making a decision (Fodness & Murray, 1998). An information source comes in many forms and can be combined to increase the worth of information; an information source can be previous experience, friends and family, magazines, radio, TV, direct mail (Reid & Bojanic, 2006), or information found online (Bei, Chen, & Widdows 2004). Information channel choice for information search is the second step in the consumer decision-making model; the process begins with: 1) need recognition, 2) information search, 3) evaluation of alternatives, 4) purchase decision,

and 5) post purchase evaluation (Kotler et al. 2006; Lewis & Chambers, 2000). This process occurs with everyday activities as deciding where to eat to more complex decisions as where to travel to for a vacation (experience products). The process of information search and being exposed to advertisements, interactions with sales personnel, beliefs about product attributes (and how an individual acts on those beliefs) can be referred to as consumer expertise (Shoemaker et al. 2007).

With the recognition of the role of event planners in the organizational decision making process and information search behavior, this study aims to discover where event planners search for their information (channel choice), and what information they are searching for (information content). Previous research has focused on other aspects of the meetings and conventions industry, such as site satisfaction and technology adaptation. This study is unique in its attempt to discover the factors that influence event planners channel choice along with the perception of importance and influence of information contents.

1.2 Problem Statement

What factors (i.e., individual and organizational) influence event planners' perception of information contents and channel choice?

1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives

1.3.1 Purpose of Study

Given the rapid growth of the meetings and convention industry and economic contributions of the industry, the current study intends to:

1) Explore factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planners perception of information contents;

2) Explore factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planners channel choice;

3) To examine the relationships that exist between factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planner's perception of information contents and channel choice

1.3.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include the following:

1. To describe the socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, previous knowledge, job experience, average duration, budget, and profession) of event professionals.

2. To describe channel choice preferences of event planners.

3. To describe event planner's perception of importance and influence on information content.

4. To identify the individual factors that influence event planner's channel choice.

5. To identify the individual factors that influence event planner's perception of information content.

6. To identify the organizational factors that influence event planner's channel choice.

7. To identify the organizational factors that influence event planner's perception of information contents.

8. To exam the relationships between factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planner's perception of information content and channel choice.

1.4 Hypotheses

The hypotheses were developed as a result of the review of Media Richness Theory, Rational Choice Theory and other studies that focused on individual and organizational differences. Channel choice and information content are utilized as the dependent variable in the research. The following hypotheses were evaluated:

H1. Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on individual differences.

H1.1 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on age.

H1.2 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on gender.

H1.3 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on job experience.

H1.4 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on previous knowledge.

H2. Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on individual differences.

H2.1 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on age.

H2.2 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on gender.

H2.3 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on job experience.

H2.4 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on previous knowledge..

H3. Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on organizational differences.

H3.1 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on budget.

H3.2 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on duration.

H3.3 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on profession.

H4. Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on organizational differences.

H4.1 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on budget.

H4.2 Event planner's perception of information content will vary

depending on duration.

H4.3 Event planner's perception of information content will vary

depending on profession.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The implications of the study will be beneficial to the tourism and hospitality

industry, more specifically the Conventions and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs). As a layer of

destination marketing organizations (DMOs), CVBs are important information brokers

and disseminators in the meetings and convention industry (Kim, 2009). With local

community financial support, one of critical missions of CVBs is to promote and brand

their destination for soliciting and serving meetings and conventions and other related

group business through event planners (Gartell, 1994).

Interestingly, while convention and meetings has been the focus of considerable

research, there has been little study of the event planners' channel usages and

preferences. Considering the relationship between the CVBs and event planners, it is

important for CVBs to understand how meeting planners search information in the

decision making process, and more specifically, what factors influence their

counterpart's channel usage and preference. It is anticipated that the better

understanding of event planner's channel behavior enables managers of CVBs to decide

on appropriate policies and levels of investment in communication channel strategy. In

addition, knowledge of the perception of information content and channel choice of

event planners will be advantageous for the CVB, and other businesses that target the

meetings and convention industry (i.e.: large hotels with exhibit space) in development

of successful advertising in knowing what (information content) event planners are

looking for, and where (channel choice) they are looking for the information.

The results of this study will also be valuable for academia since the study will

make distinctive contributions to the convention and meetings literature by providing

an insight to event planner's perception of information content and channel choice.

This study adds to the limited body of knowledge in regards to event planner's

information search behavior (Getz, 2008). This study is unique in the sense that it

combines event planner's channel choice preferences with the information content that

they seek to acquire through their information search process.

1.6 Outline of Subsequent Chapters

The following chapters include the Literature Review, Methodology, Results, and

Discussion. In the Literature Review, Chapter 2, previous studies and literature on event

planners and the factors that influence channel choice and perception of information

content are reviewed. The methodology utilized to complete the study is discussed in

detail in Chapter 3. The results and data analysis of the study are presented and

explained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes a brief summary of the study and results,

along with implications and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on the meetings and convention industry and the role of event planners, along with a brief discussion of relevant theories in the research framework. The influential factors in regards to perception of information content and channel choice are also discussed.

This chapter is divided into seven main sections:

1) meetings and convention industry

2) classification and characteristics of event planners

3) characteristics of information search in the meetings and convention industry

4) characteristics of information channels

5) media richness theory

6) rational choice theory

7) influential factors on perception of information content and channel choice

The proposed research framework is then presented in the following section. The hypotheses and research framework were developed as a result of the review of literature. More specifically the hypotheses were developed based upon the salient factors influencing perception of information content and channel choice. The

influential factors are classified as either individual characteristics or organizational resources and characteristics.

2.2 Meetings and Convention Industry

The meetings and convention industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the hospitality and tourism industry. According to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA, 2009), the travel and hospitality industry accounted for $772.9 billion spent within the United States by international and domestic travelers. The meetings and convention industry is a key player in the tourism industry and accounts for $103 billion, which is 13.3% of the total amount spent in the tourism industry (Braley, 2008; TIA 2009). The Meetings Market Report (2008) states that the number of meetings held nationally has increased; corporate meetings by 6%, association meetings by 8%, and conventions by 8%.

Event planners play a key role in the success of meetings and conventions, some of the roles that they assume are, site selection, contract negotiation, registration, event promotion and marketing, invitations, program and floor management, exhibition management, local tours, transportation, speaker selection, and gift selection (Toh, DeKay, & Yates, 2005; Beaulieu & Love, 2004). Event planners are essentially responsible for every aspect of meetings and conventions, the three types of event planners will be discussed in the following section.

There has been a substantial amount of research completed related to the meetings and convention industry. Many of the previous studies have focused on

convention site selection, (Crouch & Louviere, 2004a; 2004b; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998;

Lee & Back, 2005; Hu & Hiemstra, 1996), satisfaction with convention and site selection

(Oh, Kim, & Hong, 2009; Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993; Shaw, Lewis, & Khorey, 1991),

comparison and characteristics of event planners (Hye-Rin, McKercher, & Kim, 2009;

Weber, 2001; Jago & Deery, 2005; Toh, Peterson, & Foster, 2007) , and the industry's

adaption of technology (Kim, 2009; Kim & Park, 2009; Wang, Hwang, & Fessenmaier,

2006; Davidson, Alford, & Seaton, 2002). Despite a number of studies related to the

meetings and convention industry, there has a paucity of research endeavors in regard

to event planner's information search behavior (Getz, 2008).

2.3 Classifications and Characteristics of Event Planners

According to the United States Department of Labor there were approximately

47,960 individuals with the title, meetings and convention planner in 2008 (Department

of Labor, 2008). The US Department of Labor's classification for an event planner is

someone who coordinates activities of staff and convention personnel to make

arrangements for group meetings and conventions. Three types of event planners have

been identified; association, corporate, and independent (Toh et al., 2005b). According

the 2008 Meetings Market Report, there were 1.1 million corporate events ($30.2 billion

in expenditures), 227,000 association events ($38.1 billion in expenditures), and 13,700

conventions ($34.6 billion in expenditures (Braley, 2008).   The typical event planner has

an educational background in both business and hospitality courses and posses one of

the following top five skills of an event planner as an attribute: organization, detail-oriented, communication, negotiation, and flexibility (Ligos, 1997).

Independent event planners are those that are engaged by a corporation or association event planner to represent them (typically a corporate event planner) to the hotels or convention site (Toh et al., 2005b). These individuals are not an employee of the clients that they represent, but rather act as a contractor. Toh, DeKay, and Yates (2005b) identified that 12 percent of corporate and association planners have professional credentials, and approximately one third-to-one fourth of these planners belong to professional associations, compared to the more than half of independent meeting planners that belong to a professional association. Event planners that are actively involved in professional membership organizations, gain access to benefits, such as credit towards professional designations or certificates (Beaulieu & Love, 2004). Other benefits from these organizations include study groups, networking opportunities, and learning of implantation of industry trends and fads (Beaulieu & Love, 2004; Ligos, 1997). Many independent planners take advantage of the benefits that professional associations offer for increasing credibility and reputation (Hye-Rin, McKercher, & Kim, 2009).

In comparing the three types of event planners, the largest differences arise between corporate and association meeting planners in regards to goals, constraints, concerns and behaviors, but in regards to demographic characteristics they are very similar (Toh, et al., 2007).   Corporate event planners attempt to accomplish the objectives, whether it is goal setting or dissemination of information, at minimum cost

in easily accessible business like settings, as where association event planners are

attempting to meet objectives such as continuing education while serving their

members in desirable family oriented locations (Toh et al., 2007).   The tasks of event

planners are similar, but the natures in which they are accomplished and achieved are

different; an example of this is a business like setting versus a family orientated location

mentioned previously. Table 1 compares some of the differences between corporate

and association events and planners.

Table 1

Comparison of Association and Corporate Meetings

	Association Meetings	Corporate Meetings	Source
Objective	Serve interest of members	Achieve goals at minimum cost	Astroff & Abbey (2006)
Type of meetings (largest %)	Board meetings (78%) Family-oriented sites	Sales/Marketing (61%) Easily accessible, business-like site	Braley (2008); Toh et al., (2007)
Attrition	More concerned - cannot absorb extra cost	Less concerned - corporate absorbs cost	Toh et al., (2005a)
Average duration (lead time through event)	39.1 months	12 months	Braley (2008)
Source of funds (who pays)	Members pay to attend	Company covers most cost	Davidson & Rogers (2006)
Meeting Planner Demographics (average)			
Age	49.7 years	48.4 years	Braley (2008)
Female %	75%	72%	
Years Experience	13.1 years	13 years	

The attribution clause has been implemented within the tourism industry and has affected event planners in their search and selection of sites. The attribution clause is in the contract and guarantees that the organization is responsible for a minimum number of rooms and a minimum for food and beverage (Breiter, Vannucci, Kline, & Gregory, 2004). Therefore if the event planner does not obtain enough participants, either the planner or organization is still financially responsible for the difference; liquidated damages are enforced. Due to the financial responsibility, event planners have begun to look for contracts that do not include this clause, or have negotiation abilities.   (Breiter et al., 2004; Toh, Dekay, & Lasprogata 2005a). Corporate meeting planners tend to be less concerned with the clause when compared to association meeting planners because the corporation will absorb the cost. (Toh et al., 2007). While attrition clauses has changed the way that business is conducted, typically the full liquidated damage charge is not collected in full, rather a reduced amount is collected (Toh et al., 2005a).

2.4 Characteristics of Information Search in the Meetings and Convention Industry

Information search in the tourism industry differs from the search process of other products but still involves the process of searching (information) and how they search (channel choice). The tourism product cannot be physically presented to individuals for evaluation or at point of sale; rather the tourism product must be sold by graphic and verbal representations (Cai, Feng, & Breiter, 2004). The tourism product is an experience product in which the attributes cannot be known until after the purchase

of the product (Bei et al., 2004), also considered to be a nondurable (Moore & Lehman,

1980).   A channel must be able to convey desirable information about a particular

destination or convention site that is appealing to event planners that gains sufficient

curiosity that leads to further investigation and promotion of the site to key decision

makers.

Organizational purchases tend to be more complex than that of consumers, even

more so when the product is an experience product. Organizational buying typically

involves individuals of varying levels of influence in final decisions, but an event planner

acts as a gatekeeper of information that is needed by the decision makers (Lewis &

Chambers, 2000). The uniqueness of experience products causes event planners to

approach information search differently and an information source may vary in

reliability depending on differing organizational views and priorities. Therefore, due to

the complexity of the tourism product and the limitations that exist in obtaining

information about an experience product, the information that is available must

overcome barriers to be influential to the event planner and make it the key decision

makers.

2.5 Characteristics of Information Channels

In regards to channel choice, "the perceived effectiveness of any information

source (its utility in an economic sense) varies across consumer segments and depends

on situational, marketplace, and individual characteristics" (Fodness & Murray, 1998,

pp. 110). Information sources for travel can either be formal/impersonal (i.e.:

magazines, maps, brochures, travel agents) or informal/interpersonal (i.e.: friends and

family, personal interactions) (Mansfield, 1992).   An information source may be decisive

in the sense that it influences choice, or it may be contributory (information that

stimulates awareness or interest, but does not impact decision making), or an

information source can be ineffective (has no bearing on decision outcomes) (Fodness &

Murray, 1999). An information source can take three forms in regards to the individual

searching for the information, so there is a need to understand the difference between

importance of information and information that influences a choice. Information

content that is determined to be both important and influential should be portrayed

effectively within a channel.

2.6 Media Richness Theory

　　　Media richness theory is defined as the ability of information to change

understanding within a time interval; medium matches content of a message (Daft &

Lengel, 1986; Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987; Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). The channel

choices that can provide the most immediate feedback when uncertainty arises are

classified as being richer. In other words, those advertising channels that are richer will

have the least amount of information gaps. Personal interactions (face-to-face), have

been considered to have the highest media richness, followed by telephone contact,

communication by new mediums, such as email, and then written documents (Daft et

al., 1987). Face-to-face interactions would be impossible to replace through technology-

mediated orientations due some of the limitations that attribute new media (Rockman

& Northcraft, 2005). Media richness can be affected by an individual's user characteristics and when the individual is a member of a group, the mode of communication will affect the overall cohesion and performance of the group (Knight, Pearson, & Hunsinger, 2008).

The theory provides for a focus on task equivocally and the capacity of the medium to convey information; information channels differ in their ability to convey information (Dehkordi, Zarei, & Dehkordi, 2008).   The richness of a medium can be assessed on the following criteria: 1) feedback (allows for questions and corrections to be made), 2) multiple cues (physical presence, voice inflection, body gestures, words, numbers, and graphic symbols), 3) language variety (range of meaning that can be conveyed, numbers imply greater precision), and 4) personal focus (feelings and emotions that can be tailored to situations) (Daft et al., 1987; Webster & Trevino, 1995).

The choice of an individual's preferred advertising channel may not be fully understood by only utilizing the media richness theory. An experimental study investigating the relationships between information richness and communication outcomes determined that media richness may not be as complex as needed to determine a preference (Otondo, Scotter, Allen, & Palvia, 2008). Rather a combination of theories is needed to supplement the media richness theory to fully understand the consumer. Media richness is considered an objective variable of the media richness theory, is viewed as rather a perception that can vary and can be influenced by social factors (Webster & Trevino, 1995).

2.7 Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory is utilized to complement media richness theory, not as a competing theory, theories that complement are more valuable in making contributions to media choice research (Webster & Trevino, 1995). Rational choice theory proposes that individuals will choose a communication media by matching the medium's objective characteristics and objective requirements of the communication task (Fulk, Schmitz, Steinfield, & Powers, 1987). Rational choice theory can also be explained as individual's evaluation of perceived risk and benefits; the consumer will choose the option that minimizes risk and maximizes benefits (Zarick & Stonebraker, 2009). In terms of channel choice, a consumer will choose a channel based upon its characteristics and ability to fulfill their individual needs.

The social influence theory argues that channel choice is determined by individual perception influenced by social context of the medium and the communication task, rather than objective characteristics and requirements (Webster & Trevino, 1995). This theory complements the media richness theory and the rational choice theory, through the combination of these three theories the researchers will be able to better understand why individuals make various channel choices. The social influence theory incorporates the idea that how an individual achieves a communication task can be influenced by social norms within an organization of individuals. Social influence and social norms will be furthered explained in the discussion of organizational characteristics and influences. A study conducted by Minsky and Marin (1999) confirmed results of Webster and Trevino (1995), the results indicated that

"rational choice and social influence theories provide complementary explanations for media choice" (pp. 204). Minsky and Marin (1999) specifically found that both theories play a role in determining email use, if the leader is an email leader it makes sense (rational) that the followers would use email as well.

2.8 Influential Factors on Perception of Information Content and Channel Choice

2.8.1 Individual Differences

Individual factors are influential on perception of information content and channel choice. Previous studies have shown that individuals tend to make decisions in regarding channel choice in accordance with the media richness theory; an individual's difference will determine a media's capability of reducing uncertainty (Daft et al., 1987). Individual differences encompass many different variables, but this research will focus primarily on differences pertaining to age, gender, experience, and knowledge. Individual differences will always be present and only those that understand the differences in a competitive market will be more successful (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 1998).   There has been substantial research preformed on individual differences and their effects on cognitive ability, skill acquisition, knowledge, and interest to name a few (Rolfhus & Ackerman, 1999; Ackerman, 1988; Ackerman, Bowen, Beier, & Kanfer, 2001). Assuming a normal circumstance individuals are typically more influenced by face and body language than by vocal cues; due to the ability to focus on behavior cues in detail (Dehkordi et al., 2008).

Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1. Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on individual differences.

H2. Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on individual differences.

Age is not an exact predictor of behavior in regards to their channel choice and perceived importance of information, but there have been some studies that have been able to generalize differences between younger and older generations.   Differences in group characteristics, such as young and old affect their understanding of how they perceive themselves and interact with others of the same group or a different group (Ridlen & Dane, 1992). The older market tends to rely more heavily on word-of-mouth information such as from friends and family for making tourism decisions and least likely to be influenced by mass media information (Patterson, 2007).

The following hypotheses were proposed:

H1.1 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on age.

H2.1 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on age.

There are obvious physical differences between genders, but this study will focus on gender as a determinant for channel choice and perception of information content. The human brain is divided into two hemispheres, the right hemisphere is responsible for spatial perception and the left hemisphere is responsible for verbal abilities; the

female brain is symmetrically organized (causing a need to talk for processing

information while communicating), and the male brain is more specialized (Dehkordi et

al., 2008). Previous assumptions that males are more likely to use the internet than

females has been reversed, the research indicated that females are more likely to use

internet anywhere (i.e.: work, laptop, mobile) and at home (Ono & Zavodny, 2003). In

knowing that genders are equally utilizing the internet, website content and

presentation should be gender sensitive; female sensitive websites would have affective

themes for selected attributes, and male sensitive websites would be presented in a

distinctive manner for selected attributes (Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2006). Gender

differences are observable in regards to technology adoption usage, even when other

variables such as income, education, and computer self-efficacy are considered

(Venkatesh, Morris, & Ackerman, 2000).

The following hypotheses were developed:

> H1.2 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on gender.

> H2.2 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on
>
> gender.

Moore and Lehman (1980) identified five determinants of the extent of

information search; market environment (i.e.: marketing mix of alternatives), situational

variables (i.e.: time, social, and financial pressure), potential payoff/product importance

(i.e.; perceived risk and visibility), knowledge and experience (i.e.: stored knowledge and

satisfaction), and individual differences (i.e.: ability, training, and demographics). In

regards to knowledge and experience, the attributes of the determinant are stored

knowledge, usage rate of product, previous information, previous choices (number and

identity), and satisfaction. For example, if an event planner holds an annual convention

and has been more satisfied with the level or service obtained from the site the extent

of information search for other alternatives is going to low; in contrast to that if the

event planner has been satisfied the extent of information search is going to greater in

order to find a more suitable alternative. Interactions that seem to influence the

perception of an experience include, but are not limited to communication skills,

organization of facility, execution and initiative by staff, and how crisis are handled are

efforts that build an event planner's confidence in the sale's staff knowledge and

professional experience (Rutherford & Umbreit, 1993).

Thus the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1.3 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on job experience.

H1.4 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on previous knowledge.

H2.3 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on

job experience.

H2.4 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on

previous knowledge.

An individual's level of involvement is important to consider when determining

information content and presentation in various mediums (Cai et al., 2004). An

individual at a high level of involvement has already made their decision. A person at a

medium level of involvement is still searching for information. An individual at a low

level involvement may not be ready to make a decision, but providing the right

information may allow this individual to recall the information at a later time. In

regards to information content and presentation, marketers must also take into

consideration the expertise of an individual in new technologies. Schmitz and Fulk

(1991) state that "lack of media-related skills inhibits use; "rich" objective features may

be perceived as irrelevant if the user does not have the skill to access and use them". It

is important that marketers consider the format of information content to ensure that

those users, especially at the medium level of involvement, are able to maximize the

abilities of the medium, rather than the possibility of information content becoming

extraneous due to lack of knowledge of skill of the individual.

2.8.2 Organizational Resources and Characteristics

Organizational resources and characteristics are influential on perception of

information content and channel choice. The organizational resources and

characteristics that is utilized for this study includes budget, duration (from preplanning

to completion of event), and profession. Profession is referring to whether an event

planner is classified as either association, corporate, or independent. How an

organization transfers and disseminates information to their employees can reveal the

organization's shared norms and expectations that is expected by an organization to

provide efficiency (Dewett & Jones, 2001). Organizational buying typically involves

more than the decision by one individual, but rather a combination of information

content input (site selection, destination, etc.) that originates at the event planner level

and is then utilized to make a decision that best fits that organization in regards to time

constraints, budget availability, and meeting specific criteria (exhibit space, sleeping

room availability, attractive location, etc.).

Thus, the following hypotheses are reviewed:

H3. Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on organizational

differences.

H4. Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on

organizational differences.

Budget can directly affect the channel choices that are available; an organization

with a superior money supply will have the capability to adapt new technologies

(Atuahene-Gima, 1993). Information technology has allowed organizations to be able to

communicate more efficiently, less costly, and more rapidly over larger geographic

locations (Dewett & Jones, 2001). An organization will be influenced by the current and

expected economic environment; in a recession companies tend to cut their budget, but

in contrast, companies will increase their travel budget in times of success and

profitability (Kotler et al., 2006).   In combining an organization's culture and budget

towards the accepted mode of obtaining information, time constraints will play a vital

role in channel choice; the stricter the time constraint the more important it will be for a

medium to be able to communicate rapidly. Duration also relates to the Media Richness

Theory in a channel's ability to provide immediate feedback and clarify uncertainty.

The following hypotheses were developed:

H3.1 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on budget.

H3.2 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on duration.

H4.1 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on budget.

H4.2 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on duration.

As mentioned previously with rational choice theory, social influences that originated in a work setting have been proven to inhibit or facilitate media choice (Webster & Trevino, 1995). The original context of social influences are described by Bandura (1986) in his observation that many behaviors that individuals exhibit are learned from others (Ormrod, 2004). Colleagues that works closely together tend to have the same medium usage patterns; for example, a colleague is more likely to use the internet if all other colleagues are high users of the medium (Schmitz & Fulk, 1991; Minsky & Marin, 1999). The ability to describe the social norms in regards to channel choice for a desired group, such as event planner's classification (association, corporate, or independent), can be advantageous for marketers in advertisement placement decisions.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are adopted;

H3.3 Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on profession.

H4.3 Event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on profession.

2.9 Research Framework

The following proposed research framework (Figure 1) has been designed as a result of the review of literature and that adaption of the media richness theory combined with rational choice theory.   The individual factors that have been identified as a possible determinant are age, job experience, gender, and previous knowledge. The determinants for organizational resources and characteristics are budget, duration, and profession.   These factors will be used to evaluate the perception of importance and influence of information content and channel choice of event planners.   The research framework will answer the question of what (information content) and how (channel choice) event planners are searching.

Figure 1

Proposed Research Framework: Determinants of Information Channel Choice and Perception of Informational Factors
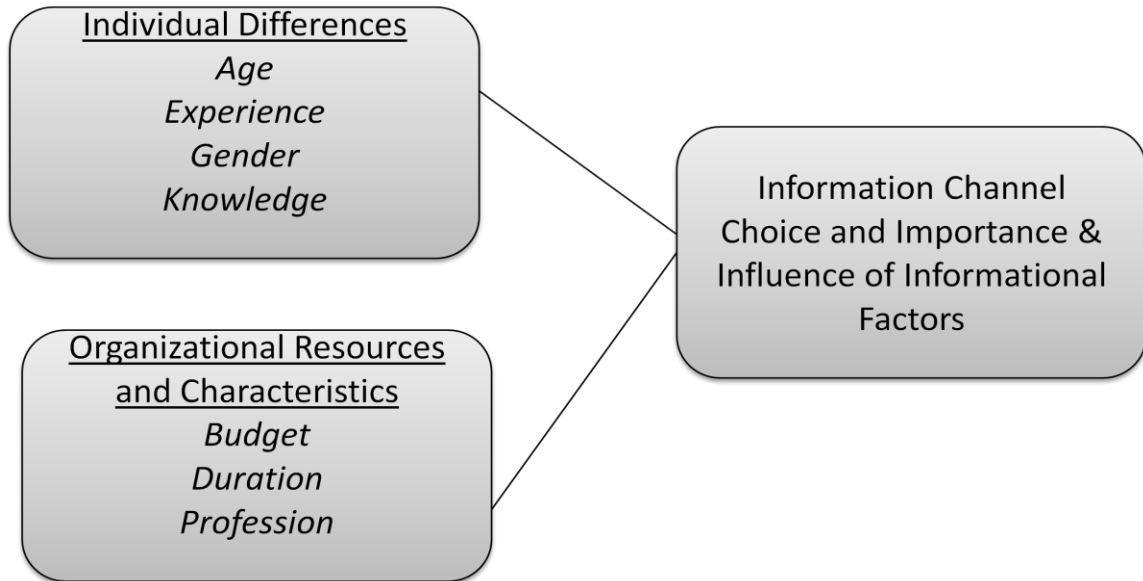
2.10 Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature on the meetings and convention industry and the role that event planners assume, along with a brief discussion of theories that may explain how channel choice decisions are made. The influential factors in regards to perception of information content and channel choice were also discussed.

This chapter was divided into seven main sections:

1) meetings and convention industry

2) classification and characteristics of event planners

3) characteristics of information search in the meetings and convention industry

4) characteristics of information channels

27

5) media richness theory

6) rational choice theory

7) influential factors on perception of information content and channel choice

The proposed research framework was then presented in the following section. The hypotheses and research framework were developed as a result of the review of literature, more specifically the hypotheses was developed as a result of the influential factors influencing perception of information content and channel choice. The influential factors are classified as either individual characteristics or organizational resources and characteristics.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology that was utilized to conduct this study. The second section of the chapter reviews the purpose of the study. The third section presents the research design. Section four discusses the population and sampling procedures, followed by the review process required by the Campus Institutional Review Board in section five. Instrumentation is explained in section six, along with a discussion of measurement and validity. Data collection procedures are presented in section seven. Section eight presents the data collection procedures. Lastly, section nine discusses statistical procedures adopted for data analysis.

3.2 Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are as follows:

1) Explore factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planners perception of information contents;

2) Explore factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planners channel choice;

3) To examine the relationships that exist between factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planner's perception of information contents and channel choice

3.3 Research Design

This study utilized an exploratory research design to examine the factors that influence event planners perception of information content and channel choice. This is an appropriate design since this method will allow the research to summarize characteristics of different groups (event planners) and measure attitudes and opinions toward a particular issue of interest (channel choice and information content) (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen, 2006).

This study also implemented a relational research design in an effort to explore the relationships that exist between factors (individual and organizational) that influence perception of information content and channel choice. Relational research is used to measure variables and utilizes statistical analysis to evaluate if relationships exist among variables.

3.4 Population and Sampling

3.4.1 Population

The target population of this study was event planners that have varying individual and organizational characteristics. Due to financial and time constraints the population that was included in this study was event planners that belong to the International Special Events Society (ISES). ISES is comprised of over 5,500 professionals in over 35 countries, examples of careers include: special event producers, destination management companies, party and convention coordinators, educators, journalists,

hotel sales managers, and convention center managers (ISES 2007-2008 Fact Sheet, 2008).

3.4.2 Sample Frame

An online questionnaire was used to collect the data for this study. The sample frame consisted of members of ISES within the United States. Sampling techniques were utilized to select ISES members that would be contacted to complete the survey; the selected members constitute the sample frame.

3.4.3 Sample

A combination of probabilistic sampling techniques were used, a cluster sampling method was used first to divide members geographically. There are 38 chapters within the United States of America. The chapters were divided into the following geographic clusters: Pacific, Mountain, West North Central, West South Central, East North Central, East South Central, New England, Middle Atlantic, and South Atlantic. The East South Central region only has one chapter within the cluster, so neither of the sampling techniques can be utilized. Then within each cluster, a simple random sample was completed, each chapter within a cluster had an equal opportunity of being selected. The randomly selected chapter is selected through the usage of randomizer.org, Research Randomizer is part of the Social Psychology Network and through a JavaScript random number generator is able to produce numbers that are utilized in research and experiments (Urbaniak & Plous, 2009). This resulted in the

following nine chapters (834 members); Orange County, Las Vegas, St. Louis, San Antonio, Cincinnati, Memphis, Rhode Island, Philadelphia, and Charlotte.

Then a non-probabilistic method was then utilized to select the remaining 8 chapters.   The largest chapter in each cluster was utilized in order to increase sample size. The chapters that comprised of 1,989 members are: Northern California, Denver, Minneapolis St. Paul, Dallas, Chicago, New England, New York, and Washington D.C. When the two sampling techniques were combined the sample size was 2,823 ISES members.

3.4.4 Sampling Error

To reduce sampling error a simple random sample was completed for each of the geographical regions. The simple random sample gives each chapter within the determined geographical region an equal chance to be selected. This only represents half of the selected participants for the study, but the other half of the participants was selected by a criterion as explained previously.

3.4.5 Selection Error and Frame Error

Selection error and frame error are reduced for this research by obtaining the most current, up-to-date ISES membership directory online. Membership directories from selected chapters were purged in order to ensure that there were no duplicate names, or email addresses utilized. In the case that an individual had more than one email address, the first email address listed was utilized. Duplication of submissions was

eliminated through utilizing an individual link for each email sent out; the link could only be accessed once.

3.5 Institutional Review Board

The University of Missouri and federal regulations require that an application is submitted and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for any research that involves human subjects. The approval must be obtained before research begins to protect participants from any potential risk associated with the study. The application was reviewed and accepted by The University of Missouri IRB to complete the research project.

3.6 Instrumentation

3.6.1 Description

A self-administered online questionnaire was developed and consisted of three sections. The first section assessed the importance and influence of information content, followed by the second section which assessed event planner's channel choice preferences. The last section identified event planners socio-demographic data, such as gender, age, education, knowledge, and experience. Table 2 indentifies the channels and information content that was utilized for this research, along with the explanation that was provided within the questionnaire.

Table 2

Channel Choice and Information Content Explanations

Term	Explanation Provided
Channel Choice	
Print Advertising	trade magazines, directories
Technology Usage	internet, e-mail advertising
Collateral Material	brochures, CD's, premiums
Direct Mail	mass produced advertising
Personal Interactions	sales person, site inspection
Information Factor	
Meeting Rooms	quality, services provided, size, equipment
Sleeping Rooms	quality, size of room, quantity
Cost of Facility/Hotel	ability to negotiate
Attractive Location	proximity to downtown, entertainment, restaurants
Technology Support	WI-FI accessible, projector, microphone, outlets
Exhibit Space	size, proximity to accommodations
Food Service	quality, cost, options
Previous Experience	staff services, facility

3.6.2 Measurement

Information content and channel choice questions were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, "1 = not important to 7 = extremely important". Information content was measured on importance and influence. A sample question for information content is, "Please rate from 1 to 7, with 1 being the least amount of influence and 7 being the most amount of influence, in regards to factors that would influence you to complete a request for proposal". Channel choice was measured in regards to utilization frequency, usefulness, quantity of information, and lacking the least amount of information. A sample questions for channel choice is "Please rate from 1 to 7, with 1 being the least frequent and 7 being the most frequent, in regards to which advertising channel you utilize most often for making site selection decisions".

3.6.3 Validity

To establish validity, a panel of experts consisting of three scholars, was utilized to evaluate the questionnaire. Face validity and content validity were achieved through the expert's knowledge in the event profession industry, information search channels, and a statistical background. The experts reviewed and evaluated the questionnaire and made recommendations to improve clarity, understanding and to ensure that questions actually measured what was being asked. After the corrections were made, the questionnaire was then distributed to nine graduate students in the Food Science Department to provide further feedback and recommendations, then final revisions were completed.

3.7 Data Collection

The participant's name and email addresses were obtained from the membership directory and utilized for email distribution. An online questionnaire database (Survey Monkey) was used to contact participants. Online questionnaires are becoming a new trend, especially for the marketing sector due to its lower cost and quicker response rates (Ilieva, Baron, & Healey, 2002). Each email address submitted to the online questionnaire database was assigned a unique web link; this ensured that the email was not sent out as bulk mail and decreased the likelihood that the email was disregarded in a junk-mail inbox. A disadvantage with an online questionnaire is the inability to provide an absolute university affiliation, which increases response rates (Sheehan, 2006); an email with an .edu suffix was provided for contact information.

The email that participants received extended a personal invitation to be included in the study. The letter included a brief description of the study, an explanation of anonymity, contact information for additional questions or concerns, and an incentive for participating individuals.   All responses were kept anonymous in order to decrease any risk (professionally and personally) that could be associated with the study. Names, emails, IP addresses, nor tracking numbers was used to identify responses. An incentive was offered to those individuals that chose to participate, if an individual did not complete the survey, but did begin the survey (i.e.: stopped mid-way in the questionnaire), they were still eligible to win the incentive.

When a respondent accepted the invitation, the unique web link provided redirected the screen to the questionnaire where instructions are provided. Once the

questionnaire was completed the participant is again redirected to another website

where they have the option to put in their personal information to be entered into the

drawing. The second website was not linked to the first one in order to eliminate any

possibility of identification; this was explained on the new screen to ensure anonymity.

The incentive was offered in attempt to increase and encourage responses to the

questionnaire. Response rates for online questionnaires when an incentive is offered

are between 17%-25%, with higher response rates corresponding to shorter

questionnaires (Duetskens, Ruyter, Wetzels, & Oosterveld, 2004).

The total number of individuals that were contacted was 2,736; this was 97 less

than the sample frame of 2,823 members. Previous to this research, 65 of the selected

individuals had opted out of completing questionnaires from Survey Monkey, the other

22 individuals had provided invalid email addresses in the directory or the email was no

longer valid. The questionnaire was available from April 13, 2009 through May 27,

2009.   On May 20, 2009 the same email was resent by Survey Monkey to individuals

that had not responded. On May, 27, 2009 participants were no longer able to access

the questionnaire through the link included in the email.   There were 443

questionnaires that were completed, but only 189 of the responses could be utilized;

252 of the questionnaires were eliminated based upon incompleteness and extraneous

responses; the remaining 3 responses were eliminated due to the limited response of

CVB professionals. This equivocates to a 16.2% overall response rate, with a 6.9%

usable response rate.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data analysis of the study followed the following four statistical procedures; SPSS 15.0 was utilized to complete the tasks. Questionnaires were eliminated based upon incompleteness (largest % of responses eliminated due to an incomplete budget category), responses that seemed extraneous (i.e.: respondent answered 7 for everything), or limited responses from a specified profession area (CVB). The remaining responses (n = 198), are then analyzed first by descriptive statistics to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Descriptive statistics are then computed to describe event planners channel choice preferences and the perception of importance and influence on information content. The analysis included mean values and standard deviations, mean values resulted in a ranking of the channel choice and information content. A series of t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests was utilized to determine the significant factors (individual and organizational) in regards to channel choice and information content. A Duncan's Post hoc test is completed to be able to describe where (groups) and what kind (channel choice or information content) of differences occurred between the groups; Duncan's is considered to be the least conservative of the Post hoc test (Vogt, 2005).

3.9 Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology that was utilized to conduct this study. The second section of the chapter reviewed the purpose of the study. The third section

presented the research design. Section four discussed the population and sampling

procedures, followed by the review process required by the Campus Institutional

Review Board in section five. Instrumentation was explained in section six, along with a

discussion of measurement and validity. Data collection procedures were presented in

section seven. Section eight presented the data collection procedures. Lastly, section

nine discussed statistical procedures adopted for data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the statistical analysis of the data. The socio-demographic characteristics are presented in the second section of this chapter. The descriptive summary of variables, including mean and standard deviations comprise the third section. The fourth section tests the hypotheses and includes results from t-test, a one-way analysis of variance, and Duncan's Post hoc.

4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

Research objective one was proposed to describe the socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, previous knowledge, job experience, average duration, budget, and profession) of event planners.

As Table 3 shows, of the respondents 75.7% (n = 143) were female, 19.6% (n =37) were male, and 3.7% (n = 7) were transgender. Of them, 47.6% (n= 90) were between the age of eighteen and thirty-five, 41.8% (n = 79) were between the ages of thirty-six and fifty-five, while only 8.5% (n =16) were fifty-six and older. In regards to education, 68.8% (n = 130) have a Bachelors degree, 13.8% (n = 26) have completed a Masters program, followed by 7.4% (n = 14) with an Associates degree, 6.9% (n = 13) of

respondents completed high school, and lastly 2.1% (n = 4) have completed a Doctoral

program.

In regards to profession, 33.9% (n = 64) reported being a corporate event

planner, 28.6% (n = 54) stated that they were independent event planners, while 10.1%

(n = 19) are an association event planner, and 27.5% (n = 52) responded with "other".

Other includes individuals that could be on the sellers side (hotel sales, florists, caterers,

etc.) instead of the buyers side (event planner). The majority of respondents, 42.9% (n =

81) reported being an expert in regards to previous knowledge, 40.7% (n = 77) of

respondents consider themselves to have an average amount of previous knowledge,

while only 16.4% (n = 31) consider themselves to be a novice. In terms of job

experience, 56.1% (n = 106) reported having ten years or less of experience, 23.3% (n =

44) of respondent have sixteen or more years of experiences, and 20.6 (n =39) have

between eleven and fifteen years of experience. The average duration (from

information search to completion of event) majority was 5 or more months at 46% (n =

87), while 22.8% (n = 43) reported having an average duration of three to four months,

19.6% (n = 37) average duration was one to two months, and only 6.9% (n = 13)

reported having four weeks or less in regards to duration. In regards to budget, 25.4%

(n = 48) reported having an average budget of $10,000-24,999, while 20.1% reported a

budget of $0-9,999, 19% (n = 36)of the respondent's budget was $50,000-99,999, along

with another 19% (n = 36) of the respondents having a budget over $100,000, and

16.4% (n = 31) of respondents reporting a budget of $25,000-49,999.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Information Content and Channel Choice

Objective 2 sought to describe event planner's channel choice preferences, while objective 3 sought to describe event planner's perception of importance and influence in regards to information content. Figure 2 illustrates an overview of respondents indication of whether the information content variable is found within a specified channel. Personal interactions resulted in the most respondents on five of the information content variables, technology usage resulted in the most respondents on three of the information content variables, and personal interactions and technology usage had the same number of respondents reporting finding information content for one variable. Personal interactions had the most respondents in regards to cost of facility/hotel (n = 156), technology support (n = 148), exhibit space (n =140), food service (n =157), and previous experience (n = 163). Technology usage had the most respondents in regards to meeting rooms (n = 156) and attractive location (n = 162). Sleeping room information was found equally in technology usage (n = 142) and personal interactions (n = 142). Direct mail had the least amount of reporting respondents in regards to finding information content within a specified channel.

Table 3

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	n	%	Mode
Gender			Female
Male	37	19.6	
Female	143	75.7	
Transgender	7	3.7	
Age			18 – 35 years
18 - 35 years	90	47.6	
36 – 55 years	79	41.8	
56+ years	16	8.5	
Highest Education			Bachelors
High School Diploma or Equivalent	13	6.9	
Associates	14	7.4	
Bachelors	130	68.8	
Masters	26	13.8	
Doctorate	4	2.1	
Profession			Corporate
Independent	54	28.6	
Corporate	64	33.9	
Association	19	10.1	
Other	52	27.5	
Previous Knowledge			Expert
Novice	31	16.4	
Average	77	40.7	
Expert	81	42.9	
Job Experience			10 years or less
10 years or less	106	56.1	
11-15 years	39	20.6	
16 or more years	44	23.3	
Average Duration			5 or more months
Up to 4 weeks	13	6.9	
1-2 months	37	19.6	
3-4 months	43	22.8	
5 or more months	87	46.0	
Budget			$10,000-24,999
$0-9,999	38	20.1	
$10,000-24,999	48	25.4	
$25,000-49,999	31	16.4	
$50,000-99,999	36	19.0	
Over $100,000	36	19.0	

Figure 2

Information Content Found in Advertising Channel by Respondents
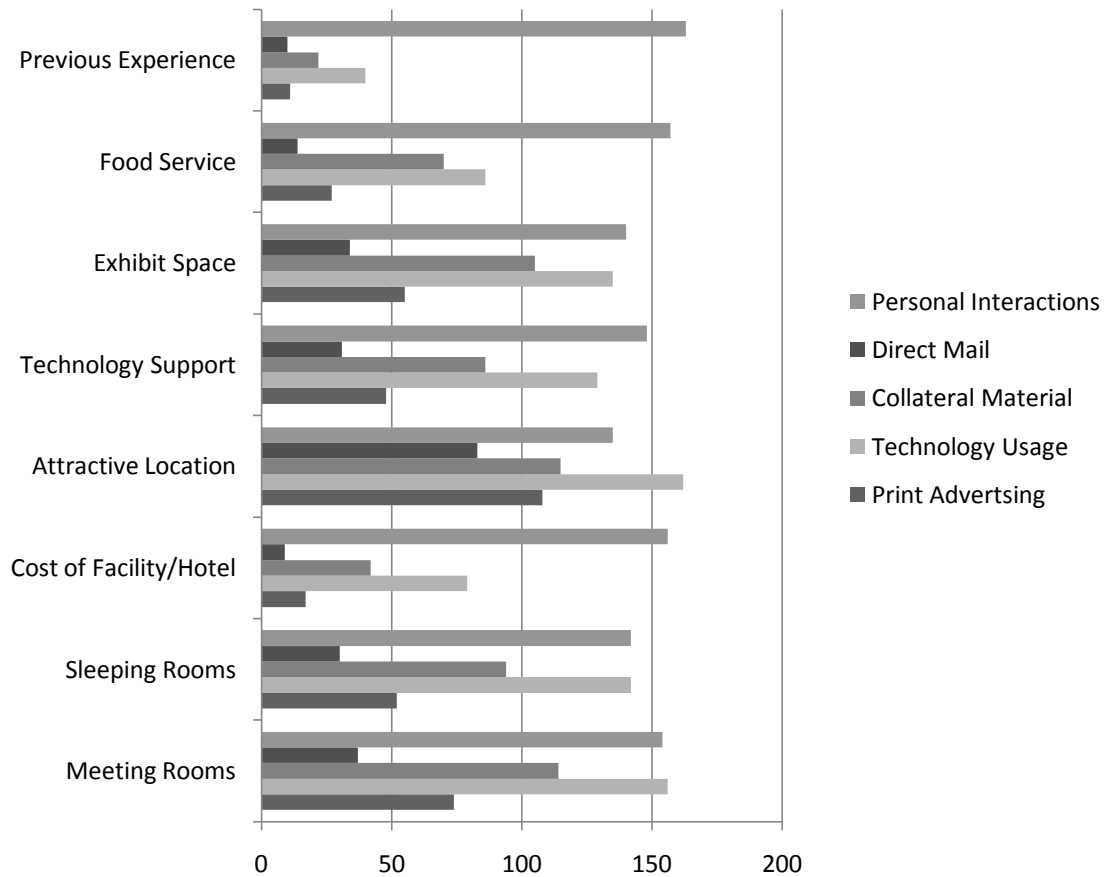
Table 4 represents the mean value of information contents found within an advertising channel. The range was from a minimum of zero, to a max of 8; each information content variable had a value of 1. Personal interactions had the highest mean value at 6.32, meaning that the most amount of information content is found from personal interactions. Technology usage had a mean value of 4.92; followed by

collateral material with a mean value of 3.43; printed advertisements had an average

value of 2.07; lastly, direct mail had the least mean value of 1.31.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Channel Choice

Advertising Channel	n	M[*]	S.D.	Rank
Print Advertising	198	2.07	1.94	4
Technology Usage	198	4.92	2.18	2
Collateral Material	198	3.43	2.56	3
Direct Mail	198	1.31	1.82	5
Personal Interaction	198	6.32	2.47	1

[*]Min = 0, Max = 8,

As shown in Table 5, personal interactions had the highest mean value regarding

the quantity of information provided (6.37) and for usefulness of information provided

(6.41). The table illustrates that respondents reported similar responses in regards to

quantity and usefulness of information on a 7 point Likert scale. Technology usage has a

mean value of 5.91 for quantity and 5.90 for usefulness. In regards to collateral material,

the mean value for quantity was 4.79 and 4.71 for usefulness of information. The mean

value for quantity of information was 4.21 for print advertising and usefulness had a

mean value of 4.46. Direct mail received the lowest mean values; quantity was 3.48,

while usefulness was 3.60.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Channel Choice (Part II)

Advertising Channel	Quantity of Information[**]			Usefulness of Information[**]		
	Mean[*]	SD	Rank	Mean[*]	SD	Rank
Print Advertising	4.21	1.45	4	4.46	1.46	4
Technology Usage	5.91	1.23	2	5.90	1.30	2
Collateral Material	4.79	1.41	3	4.71	1.45	3
Direct Mail	3.48	1.52	5	3.60	1.61	5
Personal Interactions	6.37	1.03	1	6.41	1.08	1

[*]Based on 7 point Likert scale, where 1= least and 7 =most
[**]n= 189

Table 6 shows the importance and influence of information content responses based on a 7 point Likert scale. Meeting rooms is reported as the highest importance mean value of 6.33 and the highest influential mean value of 6.02. Sleeping rooms had the lowest mean value at 1.57 for importance and 1.77 for influence.   Cost of facility/hotel had a mean value of 6.14 for importance, and 5.89 for influence; food service has a mean value of 6.01 for importance, and 5.71 for influence; attractive location has an importance mean value of 5.95 and influence at 5.61; previous experience has a mean value of 5.90 for importance, and 5.67 for influence; technology support has an importance mean value of 5.74 and influence at 5.40; exhibit space has a mean value of 5.28 for importance and 5.05 for influence.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Information Content

Information	Importance[**]			Influence[**]		
Content	Mean[*]	SD	Rank	Mean*	SD	Rank
Meeting Rooms	6.33	1.29	1	6.02	1.45	1
Sleeping Rooms	5.16	1.57	8	4.82	1.77	8
Cost of facility/hotel	6.14	1.09	2	5.89	1.41	2
Attractive Location	5.95	1.10	4	5.61	1.39	5
Technology Support	5.74	1.33	6	5.40	1.51	6
Exhibit Space	5.28	1.66	7	5.05	1.70	7
Food Service	6.01	1.01	3	5.71	1.38	3
Previous Experience	5.90	1.13	5	5.67	1.43	4

[*]Based on 7 point Likert scale, where 1= least and 7 =most
[**]n = 189

4.4 Testing the Hypotheses

Chapter 1 presented research objective 4 which sought to identify the individual factors that influence event planner's channel choice (Hypothesis 1); research objective 5 sought to identify the individual factors that influence event planner's perception of information content (Hypothesis 2); research objective 6 sought to identify the organizational factors that influence event planner's channel choice (Hypothesis 3); research objective 7 sought to identify the organizational factors that influence event planner's perception of information content (Hypothesis 4). Objective 8 sought to exam the relationships between factors (individual and organizational) that influence event planners perception of information content and channel choice and will further discussed in the following chapter. In this section, a t-test, a one-way analysis of variance, and Duncan's Post hoc was used to address the research objectives and test the hypotheses.

Age, as an individual difference, will be addressed first, as shown followed by channel choice and information content (importance and influence) are presented (Table 7). Channel choice had no significant differences. In terms of information content, there was a significant difference in age for importance on cost of facility/hotel (F-value = 3.51), technology support (F-value = 3.39), exhibit space (F-value = 4.93), and previous experience (F-value = 2.16).   According to Duncan's Post hoc analysis the differences for importance on cost of facility occur between group 2 (36-55 years) and group 3 (over 56 years); importance of technology support resulted in no differences between groups, for exhibit space, the differences occurred between group 1 (18 – 35 years) and group 3 (over 56 years), previous experience differences occurred between group 1 (18 -35 years) and group 3 (over 56 years).   There were significant differences in the influence of information content on exhibit space (F-value = 5.45), technology support (F-value = 2.41), and previous experience (F-value = 2.96). The difference between groups on influence of information content occurred between group 1 (18 – 35 years) and group 3 (over 56 years) for technology support, exhibit space, and previous experience.

Table 7

Age as a Determining Factor of Channel Choice and Perception of Information Content

Variables[a]	Age			F
	1	2	3	
	(n=90)	(n=79)	(n=16)	
Channel Choice				
Print Advertising	2.21	1.92	2.00	0.47
Technology Usage	5.17	4.77	4.44	1.14
Collateral Material	3.67	3.16	3.69	0.88
Direct Mail	1.37	1.29	1.25	0.05
Personal Interaction	6.47	6.14	6.25	0.37
Information Content				
Importance				
Meeting Rooms	6.21	6.52	6.00	1.73
Sleeping Rooms	4.88	5.43	5.13	2.65
Cost of Facility	6.06(-)	6.34(H)	5.63(L)	3.51**
Attractive Location	5.89	6.09	5.63	1.52
Technology Support	5.47	5.99	5.88	3.39**
Exhibit Space	4.92(L)	5.65(-)	5.75(H)	4.93**
Food Service	5.98	6.06	5.88	0.29
Previous Experience	5.74(L)	5.99(-)	6.31(H)	2.16*
Influence				
Meeting Rooms	5.98	6.01	6.25	0.24
Sleeping Rooms	4.61	4.91	5.19	1.05
Cost of Facility	5.73	6.04	6.13	1.22
Attractive Location	5.52	5.75	5.44	0.69
Technology Support	5.17(L)	5.53(-)	5.94(H)	2.41*
Exhibit Space	4.70(L)	5.33(-)	5.94(H)	5.45**
Food Service	5.62	5.73	6.13	0.90
Previous Experience	5.48(L)	5.76(-)	6.38(H)	2.96*

[a]Duncan Post hoc test High (H) > Medium (M) > Low (L)
*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$
Age: 1) 18-35, 2) 36-55, 3) 56 and over

Gender as an individual difference will be addressed next, in regards to channel choice and information content (importance and influence) (Table 8). An independent samples t-test was utilized to determine where significant differences occur between male and female, ANOVA and Post hoc was not appropriate with only two groups. Channel choice resulted with no significant differences between preferences for males and females. Significant

differences did occur in with importance of information for exhibit space (t-value = 2.03) and

food service (t-value = -1.97). Attractive location was found to be significant in both importance

(t –value = -2.27) and influence of information content (t-value = -2.38).

Table 8

Gender as a Determining Factor of Channel Choice and Perception of Information Content

Variables[a]	Male (n = 37) M^b	Female (n = 143) M^b	*t*
Channel Choice			
Print Advertising	1.86	1.99	-0.37
Technology Usage	4.84	4.87	-0.09
Collateral Material	3.62	3.31	0.65
Direct Mail	1.43	1.26	0.54
Personal Interaction	6.03	6.32	-0.64
Information Content			
Importance			
Meeting Rooms	6.30	6.36	-0.29
Sleeping Rooms	5.08	5.21	-0.46
Cost of Facility	5.89	6.24	-1.83
Attractive Location	5.62	6.06	-2.27[*]
Technology Support	5.76	5.76	0.01
Exhibit Space	5.78	5.17	2.03[*]
Food Service	5.78	6.12	-1.97[*]
Previous Experience	5.95	5.94	0.05
Influence			
Meeting Rooms	6.08	6.03	0.20
Sleeping Rooms	4.57	4.92	-1.10
Cost of Facility	5.70	5.97	-1.10
Attractive Location	5.19	5.77	-2.38[*]
Technology Support	5.46	5.40	0.22
Exhibit Space	5.51	4.97	1.77
Food Service	5.68	5.76	-0.35
Previous Experience	5.78	5.70	0.33

[a]T-test, two-tailed independent sample test
[b]7 point Likert-scale (1 = least, 7 = most)
[*]$p < 0.05$

Table 9 displays the data acquired from respondents in their previous knowledge (individual factor) for channel choice and information content (importance and influence). Channel choice had no significant differences. In terms of importance of information content, significant differences were found for meeting rooms (F-value = 4.07) and previous experience (F-value = 2.00). The differences occur between group 1 (novice), group 2 (average), and group 3 (expert) for meeting rooms and between group 1 (novice) and group 3 (expert) in terms of previous experience. No significant differences were found on influence of information content.

Table 9

Previous Knowledge as a Determining Factor of Channel Choice and Perception of Information Content

Variables[a]	Knowledge			F
	1	2	3	
	(n=31)	(n=77)	(n=81)	
Channel Choice				
Print Advertising	2.45	1.96	2.04	0.73
Technology Usage	5.00	4.95	4.85	0.07
Collateral Material	3.52	3.68	3.16	0.82
Direct Mail	1.68	1.32	1.16	0.91
Personal Interaction	6.00	6.05	6.70	1.70
Information Content				
Importance				
Meeting Rooms	5.77(L)	6.55(H)	6.33(M)	4.07[**]
Sleeping Rooms	5.00	5.06	5.31	0.66
Cost of Facility	5.94	6.21	6.15	0.70
Attractive Location	5.68	5.97	6.04	1.23
Technology Support	5.65	5.81	5.70	0.20
Exhibit Space	5.42	5.22	5.27	0.16
Food Service	5.94	6.03	6.02	0.10
Previous Experience	5.58(L)	5.87(-)	6.06(H)	2.00[*]
Influence				
Meeting Rooms	5.87	6.14	5.95	0.53
Sleeping Rooms	4.71	4.86	4.83	0.08
Cost of Facility	5.94	6.01	5.77	0.63
Attractive Location	5.55	5.69	5.57	0.19
Technology Support	5.42	5.44	5.36	0.06
Exhibit Space	5.06	5.13	4.98	0.16
Food Service	5.84	5.70	5.68	0.15
Previous Experience	5.68	5.52	5.81	0.84

[a]Duncan Post hoc test High (H) > Medium (M) > Low (L)
[*]$p<0.05$, [**]$p<0.01$
Knowledge: 1) Novice, 2) Average, 3) Expert

Job experience as an individual factor is then presented in Table 10 on channel choice and information content (importance and influence). No significant differences were found in regards to channel choice, importance of information content, or influence of information content.

Table 10

Job Experience as a Determining Factor of Channel Choice and Perception of Information Content

Variables[a]	Experience			F
	1	2	3	
	(n=106)	(n=39)	(n=44)	
Channel Choice				
Print Advertising	2.36	1.64	1.77	2.68
Technology Usage	5.06	4.85	4.64	0.60
Collateral Material	3.49	3.18	3.50	0.23
Direct Mail	1.42	1.28	1.09	0.50
Personal Interaction	6.49	5.77	6.41	1.25
Information Content				
Importance				
Meeting Rooms	6.28	6.31	6.45	0.28
Sleeping Rooms	5.05	5.13	5.45	1.05
Cost of Facility	6.16	6.15	6.07	0.12
Attractive Location	5.94	6.03	5.91	0.12
Technology Support	5.65	5.85	5.84	0.48
Exhibit Space	5.19	5.33	5.43	0.36
Food Service	5.95	6.08	6.09	0.39
Previous Experience	5.89	5.77	6.05	0.63
Influence				
Meeting Rooms	6.01	5.90	6.14	0.28
Sleeping Rooms	4.76	4.67	5.09	0.71
Cost of Facility	5.92	5.82	5.89	0.08
Attractive Location	5.64	5.49	5.66	0.21
Technology Support	5.28	5.56	5.55	0.75
Exhibit Space	4.90	4.97	5.50	2.04
Food Service	5.63	5.82	5.82	0.42
Previous Experience	5.58	5.62	5.95	1.14

[a]Duncan Post hoc test High (H) > Medium (M) > Low (L)
[*]p<0.05, [**]p<0.01
Experience: 1) 10 or less years, 2) 11-15 years, 3) 16 or more years

Table 11 shows respondent's average budget (organizational factor) as it relates to channel choice and information content (importance and influence). Significant differences were reported for collateral material (F-value = 3.83) and personal interaction (F-value = 3.12). Differences for collateral material were found between group 1 ($0-9,999), group 2 ($10,000-24,999) and group 5 (over $100,000); for personal

interaction differences occurred between group 1 ($0-9,999) and group 2 ($10,000-24,999). For importance on information content, differences were found for cost of facility/hotel (F-value = 2.25) and technology support (F-value = 2.06). The differences occurred between group 2 ($10,000-24,999), group 3 ($25,000-49,999), and group 4 ($50,000-99,999) for cost of facility/hotel; for technology support differences were found between group 1 ($0-9,999) and group 5 (over $100,000). Technology support (F-value = 1.90) was the only significant influence on information content and the differences occurred between group 1 ($0-9,999), group 4 ($50,000-99,999), and group 5 (over $100,000).

Table 11

Budget as a Determining Factor of Channel Choice and Perception of Information Content

Variables[a]	Budget					
	1	2	3	4	5	F
	(n=38)	(n=48)	(n=31)	(n=36)	(n=36)	
Channel Choice						
Print Advertising	1.84	2.63	2.16	1.75	1.83	1.52
Technology Usage	5.16	5.10	4.97	4.72	4.56	0 .52
Collateral Material	2.66(L)	4.54(H)	3.39(-)	3.39(-)	2.84(M)	3.83**
Direct Mail	1.34	1.73	1.48	1.00	0.89	1.47
Personal Interaction	5.45(L)	7.00(H)	6.81(-)	6.53(-)	5.72(-)	3.12**
Information Content						
Importance						
Meeting Rooms	6.26	6.50	6.16	6.50	6.14	0.71
Sleeping Rooms	4.92	5.17	5.00	5.31	5.39	0.56
Cost of Facility	6.05(-)	5.92(L)	5.94(M)	6.53(H)	6.31(-)	2.25*
Attractive Location	5.84	5.77	5.87	6.28	6.06	1.35
Technology Support	6.13(H)	5.73(-)	5.87(-)	5.67(-)	5.28(L)	2.06*
Exhibit Space	5.29	5.27	5.32	5.31	5.19	0.03
Food Service	6.08	5.92	6.06	6.03	6.00	0.17
Previous Experience	6.00	5.85	6.03	5.81	5.83	0.29
Influence						
Meeting Rooms	6.13	6.06	5.77	5.94	6.11	0.34
Sleeping Rooms	4.68	4.98	4.45	4.94	4.94	0.57
Cost of Facility	6.13	5.73	5.84	5.97	5.83	0.49
Attractive Location	5.61	5.63	5.71	5.61	5.53	0.07
Technology Support	5.89(H)	5.42(-)	5.52(-)	5.06(L)	5.11(M)	1.90*
Exhibit Space	5.16	5.23	5.03	4.94	4.83	0.35
Food Service	5.92	5.77	5.81	5.44	5.61	0.65
Previous Experience	5.84	5.71	5.84	5.53	5.44	0.56

[a]Duncan Post hoc test High (H) > Medium (M) > Low (L)
*p<0.05, **p<0.01
Budget: 1) $0-9,999, 2) $ 10,000-24,999, 3) $25,000-49,999, 4) $50,000-99,999, 5)Over $100,000

Table 12 displays the data acquired from respondents in their average duration

of information search to production of event (organizational factor) for channel choice

and information content (importance and influence). Technology usage (F-value = 3.47)

and collateral material (F-value = 2.29) were the only significant results for channel

choice. The differences for technology usage occurred between group 1

(up to 4 weeks), group 2 (1-2 months), group 3 (3-4 months), and group 4 (5 or more

months) and for collateral material between group 1 (up to 4 weeks) and group 3 (3-4

months). In regards to importance on information content significant results were

obtained for sleeping rooms (F-value = 2.52), cost of facility/hotel (F-value = 2.63), and

exhibit space (F-value = 1.37). In terms of influence of information content meeting

rooms (F-value = 2.29) and food service (F-value = 2.71) resulted with significant

differences. The differences between the groups are indicated in Table 12.

Table 12

Duration as a Determining Factor of Channel Choice and Perception of Information Content

Variables[a]	Duration				F
	1	2	3	4	
	(n=13)	(n=37)	(n=43)	(n=89)	
Channel Choice					
Print Advertising	2.23	2.03	2.02	2.11	0.06
Technology Usage	6.38(H)	5.16(M)	5.07(M)	4.49(L)	3.47[**]
Collateral Material	2.46(L)	3.70(-)	4.16(H)	3.18(-)	2.29[*]
Direct Mail	1.31	1.19	1.37	1.30	0.71
Personal Interaction	5.85	7.05	6.19	6.17	1.43
Information Content					
Importance					
Meeting Rooms	6.77	6.68	6.42	6.20	1.95
Sleeping Rooms	4.31(L)	5.59(H)	5.35(M)	5.12(M)	2.52[*]
Cost of Facility	5.69(L)	6.29(M)	6.47(H)	6.13(-)	2.63[*]
Attractive Location	5.85	5.81	6.14	6.01	0.85
Technology Support	6.08	6.08	5.74	5.60	1.64
Exhibit Space	4.46(L)	5.24(-)	5.37(M)	5.42(H)	1.37[*]
Food Service	6.08	6.11	6.09	6.01	0.15
Previous Experience	6.23	5.89	5.95	5.91	0.41
Influence					
Meeting Rooms	6.85(H)	6.11(M)	6.21(-)	5.87(L)	2.29[*]
Sleeping Rooms	4.15	5.08	5.02	4.82	1.03
Cost of Facility	6.08	5.81	6.35	5.85	1.63
Attractive Location	5.69	5.46	6.00	5.58	1.37
Technology Support	5.54	5.65	5.63	5.26	0.98
Exhibit Space	4.69	5.22	5.26	5.00	0.54
Food Service	6.15	5.78	6.14	5.52	2.71[**]
Previous Experience	6.23	5.59	6.00	5.54	1.91

[a]Duncan Post hoc test High (H) > Medium (M) > Low (L)
[*]p<0.05, [**]p<0.01
Duration: 1) up to 4 weeks, 2) 1-2 months, 3) 3-4 months, 4) 5 months or more

Table 13 shows the data obtained in regards to respondents profession

(organizational factor) on channel choice and information content (importance and

influence). There are no significant differences for channel choice. The two information

factors on importance that resulted in significant differences are cost of facility/hotel (F-

value = 3.22) and attractive location (F-value = 2.00). The differences in cost of facility

occurred between group 2 (corporate event planner) and group 4 (other). The

differences between groups in terms of attractive location occurred in group 1

(independent event planner) and group 3 (association event planner). There were no

significant differences on the influence of information content.

Table 13

Profession as a Determining Factor of Channel Choice and Perception of Information Content

Variables[a]	Profession				F
	1 (n=54)	2 (n=64)	3 (n=19)	4 (n=52)	
Channel Choice					
Print Advertising	1.89	2.05	1.63	2.46	1.19
Technology Usage	4.85	4.86	5.00	5.02	0.08
Collateral Material	3.43	3.22	3.42	3.69	0.32
Direct Mail	1.43	1.16	0.95	1.52	0.71
Personal Interaction	6.63	5.98	6.32	6.42	0.70
Information Content					
Importance					
Meeting Rooms	6.54	6.31	6.47	6.08	1.21
Sleeping Rooms	5.43	5.11	5.16	4.94	0.87
Cost of Facility	6.25(-)	6.33(H)	6.21(-)	5.75(L)	3.22[**]
Attractive Location	5.69(L)	5.98(-)	6.37(H)	5.69(-)	2.00[*]
Technology Support	5.57	5.83	5.68	5.81	0.43
Exhibit Space	5.28	5.34	4.84	5.35	0.50
Food Service	6.13	5.94	2.16	5.92	0.62
Previous Experience	1.84	2.63	2.16	1.75	0.79
Influence					
Meeting Rooms	6.19	6.05	5.84	5.87	0.53
Sleeping Rooms	5.04	4.83	4.63	4.65	0.49
Cost of Facility	5.85	6.05	5.89	5.75	0.45
Attractive Location	5.52	5.75	5.63	5.54	0.34
Technology Support	5.09	5.61	5.42	5.46	1.19
Exhibit Space	4.94	5.09	5.21	5.06	0.14
Food Service	5.70	5.72	5.63	5.75	0.04
Previous Experience	5.76	5.63	5.16	5.83	1.12

[a]Duncan Post hoc test High (H) > Medium (M) > Low (L)
[*]$p < 0.05$, [**]$p < 0.01$
Profession: 1) Independent Event Planner, 2) Corporate Event Planner, 3) Association Event Planner 4) Other

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the statistical analysis of the data. The socio-demographic characteristics are presented in the second section of this chapter. The descriptive summary of variables, including mean and standard deviations comprised of the third section. The fourth section tests the hypotheses and included results from a t-test, a one-way analysis of variance, and Duncan's Post hoc.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the discussion, implications, and limitations of the study. The findings of the study are divided into two main sections; channel choice and perception of information content; individual and organizational factors are addressed as they relate. Industry and academic implications are developed from the discussion of the results. Finally, the limitations of the study are revealed in the last section.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 Socio-Demographic profile of Event Planners

The findings of the research provided a glimpse of the socio-demographic profile of event planners that were working in the industry. As the results indicate, the typical event planner is female, between eighteen and thirty-five years old, completed a Bachelors degree, has the title of corporate event planner, considers themselves an expert in regards to previous knowledge, has 10 years or less in the industry, an average event from the information search stage to the completion of event has a duration of five or more months, and has an average budget of $10,000-24,999 for events. The results are consistent with the findings of the 2008 Meetings Market Report in regards to gender, but are contradictory in the years of job experience, and age (Braley, 2008).

5.2.2 Channel Choice Preferences

Personal interactions was reported as being the channel choice that provides the most amount of information overall and for the eight information content variables identified, it was also ranked the highest for the information provided being useful. Advertising channels were ranked in the same order for the three questions pertaining to overall quantity of information provided within the channel (7 point Likert scale), usefulness of information in channel (7 point Likert scale), and for the question that asked respondents to report whether or not a specific information content is readily found in the channel (min = 0, max = 8). The channels are arranged in descending order; personal interactions, technology usage, collateral material, print advertising, and direct mail. Personal interactions (face-to-face), have been considered to have the highest media richness, followed by telephone contact, communication by new mediums, such as email, and then written documents (Daft et al., 1987). The results of the study coincide with the Media Richness Theory; face-to-face interactions (personal interactions) the channel choice that can provide the most immediate feedback when uncertainty arises are classified as being richer (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Trevino et al., 1987).

Individual differences did not prove to be significant in determining event planner's channel choice preferences. Organizational factors did result with significant results, budget and duration. Therefore, rather than focusing on individual differences

that may influence channel choice, efforts would be more successful in focusing on

organizational characteristics and resources.

5.2.3 Perception of Information Content

The importance of information content and influence of information content was

used to compare event planner's perception of a variable being important, but whether

or not it made a difference in a request for proposal (RFP). Meeting rooms was regarded

as the information content that is most important and most influential (7 point Likert

scale). The order of importance and influence were similar, the only difference in

ranking is between previous experience (importance = 5, influence = 4) and attractive

location (importance = 4, influence = 5).The descending order of information content is

as follows; meeting rooms, cost of facility/hotel, food service, attractive location,

previous experience, technology support, exhibit space, and lastly sleeping rooms.

The individual factors that are significant on perception of information content

are age, gender, and knowledge. All three of the organizational factors, budget,

duration, and profession were found to be significant on perception of information

content.   This confirms the idea that organizational buying typically involves more than

the decision by one individual, but rather a combination of information content input

(site selection, destination, etc.) that originates at the event planner level and is then

utilized to make a decision that best fits that organization in regards to time constraints,

budget availability, and meeting specific criteria (exhibit space, sleeping room

availability, attractive location, etc.).

Table 14 is a summary of the hypotheses on whether or not it was supported. Overall, the three of the four main hypotheses on channel choice and information content and how it relates to individual and organizational results were supported. Hypothesis 1, which stated that Event planner's channel choice will vary depending on individual differences, was not supported.   Hypothesis 2, which stated that event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on individual differences, was supported. Hypothesis 3, which stated that event planner's channel choice will vary depending on organizational differences, was supported. Hypothesis 4, which stated that event planner's perception of information content will vary depending on organizational differences, was supported. The individual and organizational factors (ie; age, gender, budget, etc.) are present in Table 14 as whether or not they were supported.

Table 14

Summary of Hypotheses Test

Hypothesis	Supported
H1 Event planner's channel choice will vary on individual differences.	NO
H1.1 Event planner's channel choice will vary on age.	NO
H1.2 Event planner's channel choice will vary on gender.	NO
H1.3 Event planner's channel choice will vary on job experience.	NO
H1.4 Event planner's channel choice will vary on previous knowledge.	NO
H2 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on individual differences.	YES
H2.1 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on age.	YES
H2.2 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on gender.	YES
H2.3 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on job experience.	NO
H2.4 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on previous knowledge.	YES
H3 Event planner's channel choice will vary on organizational differences.	YES
H3.1 Event planner's channel choice will vary on budget.	YES
H3.2 Event planner's channel choice will vary on duration.	YES
H3.3 Event planner's channel choice will vary on profession.	NO
H4 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on organizational differences.	YES
H4.1 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on budget.	YES
H4.2 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on duration.	YES
H4.3 Event planner's perception of information content will vary on profession.	YES

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Channel Choice Preferences

In accordance with the Media Richness Theory, personal interactions has been

reported as the channel choice that provides the most amount of information; as a

result of this the sellers (CVBs) need to prioritize the importance of making face-to-face

contact with event planners and implement relationship marketing strategies. The

results also coincide with Rational Choice Theory; personal interactions are able to fulfill the individual needs of an event planner to obtain information.   A personal interaction can provide the stimulus that is necessary for an event planner to relay information about a particular destination or venue to key decision makers. Such activities as familiarization tours (fam tours) may be deemed as providing valuable exposure that is needed to attract events to a particular destination; a familiarization tour is creating a first-hand experience. Fam tours are an example of relationship marketing and has been argued to be one of the most cost effective modes of gaining exposure (Angelo & Vladimir, 2007).

Channel choice preferences were only influenced by organizational factors; budget and duration. These results did not confirm the theory of social influence in that there were significant differences between professions for channel choice, unless it is assumed that event planners (independent, association, and corporate) acquire similar social norms. Therefore, these results act as a lead way for further studies to either decipher the social norm differences or to confirm that social norms are similar.   These results are also not in accordance with previous studies that have found individual differences (gender) to be a significant predictor of channel choice. In conclusion of channel choice, according to this study, advertising decisions in regards to channel placement should be focused on organizational characteristics, more specifically average budget and duration of events.

5.3.2 Perception of Information Content

The results provided a valuable insight into for CVBs which have been previously identified as an important information broker and disseminator in the meetings and convention industry (Kim, 2009). CVBs should develop marketing and advertising strategies that are focused on organizational factors, such as average budget of events, profession of the buyer (event planner), and the duration. Marketing tactics should also be age and gender sensitive. Although no significant results were obtained in regards to gender and channel choice, from the socio-demographic descriptive analysis, the majority of event planners are women, and this should be taken into account. Efforts should be made to appeal to the female market; female sensitive websites would have affective themes for selected attributes (Kim et al., 2006). Information that would pertinent to include within channels would be meeting room availability and space (detailed information) and the cost of facility and hotel rooms. CVBs have the ability to increase an area's revenue; in some instances the money spent by meetings and conventions is more than that of leisure travelers (Braun & Rungeling, 1992).

5.4 Recommendations for Future Study

Future studies may seek to acquire a more localized sample frame in an attempt to increase the response rate. In the case of a local ISES chapter, data could be collected at monthly chapter meetings rather than an online questionnaire. Individuals may be more willing to participate with a researcher distributing the questionnaires, therefore

increasing response rate. A future study may also seek to acquire responses from local

CVBs as a means of comparing results from the buyers (event planners) and sellers

(CVB). A study that makes this comparison would provide valuable insight to marketing

strategies for CVBs; the results would indicate whether channel choice preferences align

and information content that is required by event planners to make decisions.

An attempt to acquire equal responses in regards to event planner's profession

(independent, corporate, and association) could be beneficial in providing a more

accurate comparison of the independent and organizational factors. This study did not

have an equal accepting sample between event planners professionals, respondents

were asked to report their profession. A combination of using a localized chapter, a

local CVB, and acquiring equal sample sizes would allow for the research to generalize

the study to a broader population, and would provide data that is more representative

of each segment.

Further research in this topic area can help increase the limited body of

knowledge and to further success in the industry. The inability to make contact and to

portray influential information with a desired target population (buyers) is a lost

opportunity. Not only are the findings beneficial for the meetings and convention

industry, but also for the hospitality and tourism industry; allowing for the billion dollar

industry to prosper.

5.5 Limitations

This study made contributions to meetings and convention industry; more specifically findings were found in regards to event planners, but suffered from a few limitations.   The questionnaire was distributed electronically to 2,736 with only 443 completing the questionnaire. Of the 443 questionnaires submitted, only 189 of the responses could be utilized; 252 of the questionnaires were eliminated based upon incompleteness and extraneous responses; the remaining 3 responses were eliminated due to the limited response of CVB professionals. A sample size of 3 is not large enough to compare data and make generalizations about a population. Therefore, the study was focused on the differences between event planners in regards to individual and organizational factors on channel choice and perception of information content; a small response rate is one of the major limitations of the study.

Another limitation of the study was the question that asked respondents to report their average budget for an event. The question was an open-ended question in an attempt to not limit the average budget of event planners and to be able to describe a more accurate average budget, rather than a range. Since many of the respondents opted to not respond to the question and questionnaires were eliminated, this is an element of the previously mentioned limitation in regards to response rate. Therefore due to the lack of responses, the results that were obtained could be skewed or not a true representation of event planners.

APPENDIX A

Dear   ,

I am a graduate student at the University of Missouri in the Food Science – Hotel Restaurant Management Program. The focus of my thesis research pertains to the events industry. I am a student member of ISES in the St. Louis chapter. I am contacting you in hopes of your voluntary participation for my questionnaire. The goal of this questionnaire is to evaluate the advertising channels and informational factors of event professionals.   The questionnaire should only take approximately 5-10 minutes. All responses will be kept anonymous. The responses will not be tracked in accordance to your email, name, or any assigned code. Participation in the research is voluntary. At any time during the questionnaire you may choose to stop participating. The results of this study will be available upon completion of study and request of participant. If you would like to request a copy of the results, please contact me at acc963@mizzou.edu.

All participants will be entered into a drawing to win

one of several $50 gift cards.

Thank you in advance for you participation in the questionnaire, the link provided below will direct you to the questionnaire.

Dr. Dae-Young Kim   Amanda Alexander

Advisor   *Graduate Student*
Assistant Professor   *University of Missouri*
University of Missouri   *Department of Hotel & Restaurant*
Management
Department of Hotel & Restaurant Management

Questionnaire for Event Professionals

The University of Missouri-Columbia, Hotel and Restaurant Management Master's Program is conducting a survey on the usage of advertising channels and the importance of informational factors. The goal of this questionnaire is to evaluate the advertising channels and informational factors of event professionals. The questionnaire should only take approximately 5-10 minutes. All responses will be kept anonymous. The responses will not be tracked in accordance to your email, name, or any assigned code. Participation in the research is voluntary. At any time during the questionnaire you may choose to stop participating. The results of this study will be available upon completion of the study and request of participant. If you would like to request a copy of the results, please contact me at acc963@mizzou.edu Please answer questions to the best of your ability.

The following section asks you to consider factors for selecting a site for an event.
Please rate from 1 to 7, with 1 not being important and 7 being extremely important, each of the following factors in their importance in choosing the site for an event.

	1 Not Important	2	3	4 Neutral	5	6	7 Extremely Important
Meeting rooms (quality, services provided, size, equipment, etc.)							
Sleeping rooms (quality, size, number, etc.)							
Cost of facility/hotel (ability to negotiate)							
Attractive location (proximity to downtown, entertainment, restaurants, airport, etc.)							
Technology Support (WI-FI accessible, projector, mircrophone, outlets, etc.)							
Exhibit Space (size, proximity to accommodations, etc.)							
Food Service (quality, cost, options, etc.)							
Previous Experience (staff, services, etc.)							

Please rate from 1 to 7, with 1 being least amount of influence and 7 being the most amount of influence, in regards to factors that would influence you to complete a request for proposal.

	1 Not Influential	2	3	4 Neutral	5	6	7 Extremely Influential
Meeting rooms (quality, services provided, size, equipment, etc.)							
Sleeping rooms (quality, size, number, etc.)							
Cost of facility/hotel (ability to negotiate)							
Attractive location (proximity to downtown, entertainment, restaurants, airport, etc.)							
Technology Support (WI-FI accessible, projector, mircrophone, outlets, etc.)							
Exhibit Space (size, proximity to accommodations, etc.)							
Food Service (quality, cost, options, etc.)							
Previous Experience (staff, services, etc.)							

The following sections asks you to consider your previous experience with different types of advertising channels.

Please rate from 1 to 7, with 1 being the least frequent and 7 being the most frequent, in regards to which advertising channel you utilize most often for making site selection decisions.

	1 Never	2	3	4 Sometimes	5	6	7 Always
Print Advertising (trade magazines, directories)							
Technology Usage (internet, e-mail advertising)							
Collateral Material (brochures, CD's, premiums)							
Direct Mail Advertising							
Personal Interaction (sales person, site inspection)							

Rate from 1 to 7, with 1 being the least useful and 7 being the most useful, do you find the advertising channel to be useful in the information that is provided.

	1 Extremely Useless	2	3	4 Sometimes Useful	5	6	7 Extremely Useful
Print Advertising (trade magazines, directories)							
Technology Usage (internet, e-mail advertising)							
Collateral Material (brochures, CD's, premiums)							
Direct Mail Advertising							
Personal Interaction (sales person, site inspection)							

Rate from 1 to 7, with 1 being the least amount of information and 7 being the most information, in regards to the amount of information obtained from each of the advertising channels.

	1 Not Informational	2	3	4 Partially Informational	5	6	7 Extremely Informational
Print Advertising (trade magazines, directories)							
Technology Usage (internet, e-mail advertising)							
Collateral Material (brochures, CD's, premiums)							
Direct Mail Advertising							
Personal Interaction (sales person, site inspection)							

Rate from 1 to 7, with 1 lacking the most amount of information and 7 lacking the least amount of information, in regards to the amount of information that is lacking from each of the advertising channels.

	1 Extremely Lacking	2	3	4 Sometimes Lacking	5	6	7 Never Lacking
Print Advertising (trade magazines, directories)							
Technology Usage (internet, e-mail advertising)							
Collateral Material (brochures, CD's, premiums)							
Direct Mail Advertising							
Personal Interaction (sales person, site inspection)							

The following section asks you to consider the factors that would influence site selection and the availability of such information through the advertising channels.

Please check all the informational factors that you find readily available through each of the advertising channels:

	Print Advertising (trade magazines, directories)	Technology Usage (internet, e-mail advertising)	Collateral Material (brochures, CD's, premiums)	Direct Mail Advertising	Personal Interaction (sales person, site inspection)
Meeting rooms (quality, services provided, size, equipment, etc.)					
Sleeping rooms (quality, size, number, etc.)					
Cost of facility/hotel (ability to negotiate)					
Attractive location (proximity to downtown, entertainment, restaurants, airport, etc.)					
Technology Support (WI-FI accessible, projector, mircrophone, outlets, etc.)					
Exhibit Space (size, proximity to accommodations, etc.)					
Food Service (quality, cost, options, etc.)					
Previous Experience (staff, services, etc.)					

If there are any advertising channels that you would never use to obtain information about a particular site please select that advertising channel.

       ___ **Print Advertising** (trade magazines, directories)
       ___ **Technology Usage** (internet, e-mail advertising)
       ___ **Collateral Material** (brochures, CD's, premiums)
       ___ **Direct Mail Advertising**
       ___ **Personal Interaction** (sales person, site inspection)

What advertising channels do you, or your company utilize to advertise?

       ___ **Print Advertising** (trade magazines, directories)
       ___ **Technology Usage** (internet, e-mail advertising)
       ___ **Collateral Material** (brochures, CD's, premiums)
       ___ **Direct Mail Advertising**
       ___ **Personal Interaction** (sales person, site inspection)

What is your average duration for planning an event (from information search to final decision making?

       ____Less than 2 weeks
       ____3-4 weeks
       ____1-2 months
       ____3-4 months
       ____5-6 months
       ____More than 6 months
       ____NA

What best describes your knowledge/skill in advertising channels?

    Novice   Expert

     1   2   3   4   5

How many request for proposals do you typically make before you make your final decision?

1-3   4-6   7-9   10+   NA

What best describes your method for placing a request for proposal?

E-mail   Fax   Face-to-Face   Telephone   Mail

Website   None

Years of experience in event profession:

Less than 5 years   6-10   11-15   16-20   Over 20 years

What best describes your event profession:

___Event Planner:
     ___ Independent
     ___ Corporate
     ___ Association

___ CVB
___ Sales/Marketing of a hotel
___ Other: _____

What best describes your purposes for an event?

Please circle all that apply.

Business   Personal   Conventions
Other:_____

What is your average budget for planning an event?

$_____

What is your average number of attendees for an event?

50 or less   51-100   101-200   201-500   501-1,000   1,001+

Sex:

Male   Female   Transgender   Other

Age:

18-25   26-35   36-45   46-55   56+

Highest Education Received:

____High School Diploma or Equivalent
____Associates Degree
____Bachelors Degree
____Masters
____Doctorate

Thank you for your participation in this study!

Incentive Questionnaire

This portion of the questionnaire will not be linked to the previous responses. The information provided here will only used for the drawing. By providing your information below you will entered into a drawing for a $50 gift card! Thank you for your participation.

1. Please provide your full name.

    _____

2. Please provide your e-mail address.

    _____

3. Please provide your address (street apt#, city, state, zip)

    _____

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