

7.0 Role of Intermediaries

To identify issues related to distributing the materials, the research included focus groups with travel agents as well as interviews with representatives of Canada's two major airlines.

7.1 Travel Agents

Travel agents expressed a willingness to distribute the information to travelers by taking the following measures:

- including the booklet in ticket packages mailed to clients;
- placing the booklet "in a display on the counter";
- displaying the videos on monitors in their offices; and/or
- lending the videos to clients.

Some agents were concerned about the additional cost of mailing the booklets to clients and felt that they should be kept to a minimum size and weight for this reason.

Travel agents went on to say that the Department must first improve access to the booklet if they are to make it available to their clients. Some suggested using travel wholesale distributors to market the materials to agents.

The agents also pointed out that the booklet is designed to generate questions by travelers (i.e. to get them to seek information). As the first point of contact, agents must be equipped with the information to answer questions and influence traveler behaviour. Most agencies subscribe to on-line travel information services (e.g. TIM), and felt that these services would be a good vehicle through which government information could be made available. They were particularly interested in receiving up-to-date information on the political stability of regions and countries, natural disasters and country-specific visa requirements. They went on to say that, because the information is time sensitive, it would lend itself to either an electronic distribution system or a 1-800 number. *"We need someone to call...someone who will always be available."*³ The value of such a system would be that the information required by travel agents "to meet legal obligations" would be accessible through a single, objective source. *"Right now, we have to go to three or four sources to get the*

³ Relatively few agents were aware of the existing 1-800 service.