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Web Marketing Tourism Destinations

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Abstract - Destinations emerge as umbrella brands that need to be promoted as one entity for each target market they try to attract in the competitively fierce world of travel and tourism. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) plays a crucial role in the promotion and management of a tourism destination, mainly through an effective use of its Destination Marketing System as a marketing tool. Due to the fast growing importance of the Internet as an information and communication medium, these systems have been modified in order to be Web-based. However, it is no longer enough for a DMO to just have a Web site. Successful Web Marketing requires an articulated approach to three critical tasks: web site design, promoting the web site, and assessing the web site marketing effectiveness. This paper aims to provide a set of useful guidelines required for DMOs to achieve successful marketing on the Internet. In order to offer empirical evidence of the Web sites that fit within the guidelines provided, official Web sites of ten European DMOs were analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

A destination - the core tourism product - consists of a number of commercial businesses in addition to public institutions and organizations. Very often, tourists select among destinations on the basis of the total set of destination attributes. Hence, a destination needs to be properly managed. Destination management cares with the support and successful development of tourism interests and industry in destinations. Tourism destinations emerge as umbrella brands that need to be promoted as one entity for each target market they try to attract. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) play an important role in the promotion and management of a tourism destination.

The decision to "purchase" the destination, that is to visit it, is based on information made available to the tourist. Tourists are tapping into the wealth of destination material on the World Wide Web and using this as a primary source of destination information. The Web is the new destination marketing battleground and the ideal global multimedia medium channel for promotion of destinations.

DESTINATION MARKETING

Destination Marketing Organizations

There are three tiers of DMOs, depending on their geographical scope. A country usually has a National Tourist Office (NTO), and a network of regional/state and local tourist offices / convention and visitors bureaus [1]. These agencies are mostly designed as public non-profit organizations funded to market the destination via the development of tourism marketing strategies and marketing campaigns, with the cooperation of the private sector. DMOs are thus considered the best providers of information on destinations' facilities. They are the obvious organizations to secure and maintain high quality destination information and to provide access to the marketplace also for smaller companies.

To accomplish their marketing goal, DMOs perform a variety of functions, namely [2]:

- *Information Provision* to travelers, travel intermediaries and suppliers
- *Marketing and Promotion* activities
- *Market Research* through collection and analysis of tourism statistics

All of these tasks can be improved and made more efficient with the use of information technology [3]. The challenge for DMOs is to employ strategies that exploit the strengths of traditional communication channels (e.g. television, newspapers, and magazine advertisements) to provide travel information while investing in the new electronic channels (e.g. the Internet) that enable the DMOs to reach existing and potential visitors more effectively. In other words, for DMOs the challenge is to identify the segments of the travel market that comprise those who are willing to adopt specific technologies in order to use communication channels to explicitly link a product to a specific target market. It is important to understand both who the people in each segment

are as well as to understand the nature of different media use [4].

Destination Marketing Systems

Destinations launched a process of developing destination focused information and reservation systems, in order to promote tourism enterprises and attractions in the area. A Destination Marketing System (DMS) is essentially a marketing tool promoting tourism products of a particular destination, which might be a nation, region, city or other recognizable geographical entity. Therefore, a DMS is a system underpinning the functions of a DMO in its primary objective – the promotion of tourism business within geographical defined areas, normally including a link to reservations and sales facilities [5]. These systems encompass a desire to use computer and communication technologies to provide what has been called visibility and accessibility [6] – an information and reservations approach.

A DMS should act as the professional link between customers, suppliers, travel intermediaries, and tourist boards. It should provide [7, 8]:

- consolidation, evaluation and organization of accurate detailed information on destinations, services and package tours
- definition of standardized and general selection criteria
- input and maintenance of main data via a service center
- standardization of presentation in various distribution interfaces
- integration of various services in one area
- individual organization of offers in alignment with the requirements of various target groups and markets
- a reservation capability for accommodations and other facilities in the destination

A series of Critical Success Factors may be identified as being important attributes of any DMS [9, 10]:

- a comprehensive product database of attractions, accommodation, and other travel information, with explicit data quality control and cost-effective data maintenance procedures
- statistics gathered to inform the overall tourism impact
- an official destination Web site with full accommodation and tourism supplier data, automated availability update as well as online booking and reservation.
- monitoring and evaluation procedures in place for systems and assessing impact
- a link between the DMS and any Global Distribution System (GDS), uni or bi-directional

Following the logic of economic success in the tourism industry, DMOs must understand the sources of strategic

competitive advantages in the industry. One of the most important factors for success is the availability and quality of information for customers, suppliers and travel intermediaries. Hence, Web-based DMSs (eDMSs) are one of the most important strategic tools for DMOs' success in the growing electronic marketplace.

Changing the backbone of the DMS to Internet technology is proving very effective in many ways [11, 12, 13, 14]. It is allowing information to be presented in powerful, interactive and visual forms, which can be very important to travelers. For example, being able to view a video about the destination can help in making much more informed decisions. In addition, having the DMS running on the Internet is not just cost effective, but it allows information to reach a global audience and can also be more customized at the same time, in order to meet the needs of market segments.

The development of a joint Web site with a destination marketing focus to promote the services of Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs), and the application of the Internet as a means of exchange and marketing has proven to be an attractive one in securing new business and gaining the attention of enterprise agencies [15]. The ease of monitoring information and communication technologies' usage and the development of customer feedback via the Net also provides a rare market research opportunity for SMTEs. This may be extended to the development of a local interactive network focusing on the local area and economy, and targeting visitor information, venues, and retail sectors.

WEB MARKETING

Electronic (E)-Business involves both Internet Marketing and Electronic (E)-Commerce. Internet Marketing deals with promoting and driving traffic to a Web site through Web Marketing (Pull Strategy) and E-mail Marketing (Push Strategy) whereas E-Commerce focus on selling products and services on a Web site.

The backbone principles of Web Marketing are [16]:

- *Giving customers a reason to come to the Web site*, by the means of promoting the web site both online and offline to first time and repeat visitors, providing a compelling content that will make someone want to return, and giving free information, i.e., attract visitors to the site by giving away free information, and then try to sell products and services to those who visit the site. For a DMO this involves giving information such as on useful facts, photos and videos of the destination, how to get to the destination, what internal transportation means are available in the destination, providing a route planner, places to stay and things to do at the destination as well as booking facilities.

- *Building Trust*, by selling well-known brand name products and services, by offering guarantees, by providing a customer-friendly navigation system and intuitive interface, a SSL secure server for credit card transactions, and by repeat contact with the web site visitors. For instance, a DMO should stimulate a visitor to sign a guest book and help him to create his personal brochure to build his own guidebook to the destination. This opens the opportunity to the DMO to collect visitor information like name, area of residence, e-mail address, age and gender, source of information to visit the site, reason to visit the site, intention to visit the destination.

- *Pull and Push Strategy*, i.e., pull customers to the web site by its attractive content, then push quality information to them regularly via e-mail. For example, the information collected by a DMO from its web visitors can be analyzed to come up with customer profiles that may then be used to e-mail visitors with the travel-related information most likely to be valued by them.

DMOs ought to develop their own web sites for destination marketing in order to accomplish a number of purposes:

- *Brand Development*, i.e., present the destination in the best possible light. Seeking to communicate an image about the destination that will register in the minds of the visitors (existing tourists and prospects) in order to achieve repeat business.

- *Revenue Generation*, which considers three sources of income from the destination's online business. First, in the prospect generation model the DMO uses the Web to bring the destination leads and provide information [17, 18] to support the sale, which is closed either by phone or e-mail. A main tool is a carefully designed online response form. Mailto: e-mail links allow visitors to contact the DMO, but the online form allows structuring the information, so the DMO can qualify the prospect and know how to respond [19]. Nowadays, is already possible to automate the delivery of customized information, provide quotes via database queries and then consummate the sale online. The second model consists in completing the actual sales transaction over the Internet, which is often referred to as "e-commerce". The third is the referral generation model. Customer acquisition costs from an affiliate program have been found to be substantially less than paying for banner ads with CPM prices.

- *Cost Savings*, i.e., achieve maximal cost savings on the Internet. The Internet can save costs to a DMO in various ways: (1) Staffing – it is significantly less expensive and more accurate to have a visitor enter an order over the Internet than it is to take it by phone or re-key it into the computer system after the sale; online transactions dramatically cut the cost of processing a purchase order. (2)

Distribution of sales materials – the web is a way to distribute great amounts of information inexpensively, and the updating of data is much simpler, too. A DMO can save a lot of money on printed literature (e.g. brochures) by having these translated and adapted to the web framework and motivating tourists to look for that sort of information on its web site. (3) Advertising costs are low since search engines do much of the work. However, to drive a high number of visitors to the DMO's web site, a combination of paid online and offline advertising should be considered.

- *Customer Support*. Providing excellent online customer support, for instance through the means of a FAQ (Frequent Asked Questions).

From a *managerial perspective*, the World Wide Web (WWW) is a powerful tool for assisting DMOs to perform their three major functions: (1) information provision; (2) marketing and promotion activities; and (3) market research. From a *technical viewpoint*, the development of a Web site for a DMO entails three major tasks, as shown in figure1: (1) Web Design; (2) Web site Promotion; and (3) Web site Performance Measurement.

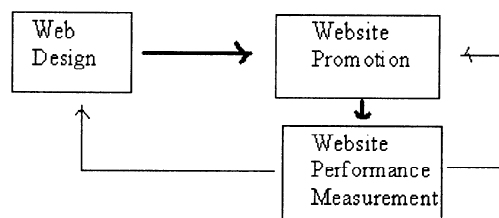


Figure 1. The Three Main Tasks for Developing an eDMS

WEB DESIGN

The design of the Web site is one of the most critical issues to consider for achieving success on E-business. The home page is the destination's "storefront" on the WWW marketplace. It provides an index to the set of pages that describe the DMO and the tourism destination. The web site should have several *main sections*, such as:

- *About the DMO* – this section may include a vision or mission *statement*
- *Tourism Products / Services* – using video-clips, audio, photos and text to describe the benefits to the visitors of the destination's services
- *FAQ* – providing a list of frequently asked questions

- *Guest book or Booking Page* – including a form which e-mails the site visitor’s information to the DMO

- *What’s New* – this section is where the DMO can put updates or new copies of a newsletter.

The home page also needs a *graphic* to look inviting. The best combination is a single sparkling graphic combined with text making the overall look of the DMO’s “storefront” graphically balanced, pleasing, and informative. The *background texture and/or color* used throughout the site should never overwhelm the text, but subtly complement it.

Each web page must include a number of *basic elements*. The page title that is displayed at the top line of the web browser is very important because it often shows up in search engines. The title should be descriptive using keywords that people might use to find the DMO page. A small graphic at the top of each page as well as texture and colored backgrounds help to unify the web pages. The use of last update dates, URL address, jump lines (like “home” or “top of the page” jump), links to other pages, signature, and an e-mail address which when clicked takes the visitor to a “mail to” form which allows him/her to send the DMO an e-mail, all are important elements to be included in the web site’s pages.

The DMO needs to connect with its visitors. Therefore, it should find ways to get information from its visitors via e-mail. This may be accomplished by enticing potential tourists to sign the destination’s *guest book* and perhaps receiving a free gift. Their answers to key questions help the DMO to qualify them as a prospect to pursue by telephone, fax, snail mail or also e-mail. The site must have a place for name, address, phone number, etc. as well as check boxes to *request information* on certain tourism products, and *booking and reservation forms*.

A *shopping cart* program has to be available, so people can put multiple items in their cart from any number of product pages. Upon check out, they have a total of their requested tourism services. The web page needs also to be put on a SSL-secure server which encrypts visitor information for transaction purposes and increases visitor confidence on buying online.

Inadequate navigation design is probably the main failing of business web sites. Getting visitors to information quickly and intuitively is the goal of *navigation systems*. The navigation should be designed from the customer’s perspective, providing as many alternate ways to navigate the site as necessary. Buttons, image maps, hyperlinks, search engines, and drop-down menu systems all can contribute to overall user friendliness when used appropriately. The top-level menu should be kept to seven sections or less to avoid information overload. Every page of the web site must be

reachable, either directly or indirectly, by a hypertext link from the main page (image map). The use of left-side menus allow the destination’s visitors to get deep into the web site without clicking through a series of hierarchical linking pages, and display the structure of the site more clearly. Another way to get the DMO’s visitors deep into the web site quickly is to place a drop-down menu in the main page, with sections classified by indentations or spaces. Last but not least, installing a search engine in the web site, so people can find what they are looking for quickly is another important design feature.

WEB SITE PROMOTION

In order to stimulate traffic to its web site, a DMO must promote the site both online and offline. A DMO’s web site ought to be seen as the destination’s portal or gateway to the region. The most important first step is to perform *search engine positioning*, i.e., to register the site with the Yahoo directory, the big six search engines (Alta Vista, Excite, Hot Bot, Lycos, Infoseek and Web Crawler), and construct a series of gateway pages, each tuned to a particular search phrase and search engine in order to rank high.

A DMO must also:

(Online)

- find industry-wide linking pages and negotiate reciprocal links with other hospitality and tourism organizations. For example, most tourist destinations are heavily linked to other sites. In a previous study research looked at the Convention and Visitors Bureaus' Web sites of the top ten most visited tourist destination cities in the USA [20].

- purchase banner ads on appropriate sites, join a banner exchange program, buy text ads in established e-mail newsletters (ads can both inform and motivate readers to click on the web site address, and tend to bring much more targeted visitors), and rent targeted e-mail lists consisting of people who have agreed to receive commercial e-mail messages. The online market may be segmented into demographic units. A DMO can purchase a banner ad that pops up only when someone searches “travel”, “tourism”, “holiday”, "vacation", "business travel" or other important keyword

- promote the web site in mailing lists and newsgroups made up of people with very specialized interests, such as on travel

- place the web site on online Malls

- ask visitors to bookmark the web site

- capture visitors e-mail addresses, via a web site response form, and request permission to send updates, by including a checkbox where the visitor can give the DMO permission to e-mail updates about products and services

- send visitors an e-mail newsletter that carries the industry news, i.e., quality information, which is one of the best ways to keep in touch with the DMO's prospects, generate trust, develop brand awareness, and build future business

- issue news releases of tourism events to web periodicals (e-zines)

- develop an affiliate program, i.e., build a network of affiliates who have a financial stake in promoting the destination web site (other sites whose links to the destination's result in an actual sale are paid a commission)

(Offline)

- include e-mail and web addresses on all DMO's printed literature (e.g. brochures), cards and stationery

- promote the web site using traditional media, including e-mail and web addresses in any display or classified ads the DMO purchases in trade journals, newspapers, etc., using direct mail and all normal travel-related PR channels

- issue news releases of tourism events to print periodicals

WEB SITE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

One of the best ways to improve a DMO's web site marketing is to analyze the existing traffic to the web site. One way is to *install a counter on the web page*. But this is not very professional and does not say much about the online visitors.

A better approach is to *use the ISP's (Internet Service Provider) statistical package*. The ISP keeps log files that record every single "hit" (request for a web page or graphic) on the web site. While it does not give the visitor's actual e-mail address (the domain name is as close as it gets), the log file tells a great deal about how people are getting to the web site, and what they find when they get there. The ISP can program his computer so it will produce a report daily, weekly, monthly, etc. Statistics on the web site may be posted on a web page or e-mailed to the DMO. The report gives information on the frequency of visitors (e.g. what time? What day of the week?), number of requests ('hits') and kilobytes downloaded and their geographical/market origin, the percentage of visitors that used each web browser (e.g. Microsoft Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator), how many

requests or "hits" were made per web page, CGI program and image file, and so on.

Another option available is to *purchase web traffic analysis software*, such as Market Focus and Web Trends. All sorts of analysis are available with the ability to filter information for any single web page, surfer domain name, referral source (e.g. which search engine draws the most lookers and/or bookers to the web site?).

In short, web site performance measurement allows the DMO's marketers to know which web pages are most popular and which are least used, who is visiting the web site, which web browser to optimize the web pages for, which web search engines are most useful and which are the least useful, which banner ads are bringing the most visitors, where errors or bad links may be occurring in the web pages, and thus making it possible to fine-tune their web marketing and promotion strategy.

APPLICATIONS

In order to offer empirical evidence of the Web sites that fit within the guidelines provided in this paper, official Web sites of ten European DMOs were analyzed, namely those from: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Norway, and Switzerland.

- *About the DMO*- the organizations studied offer information about themselves, their activities as well as contact information.

➔ The Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) links with its Travel Information Center and gives a list of Austrian Certified Travel Agents worldwide.

- *Tourism Products/Services* - this information is usually grouped into the categories of accommodation, activities, attractions, transportation, shopping, dining / restaurants, and general travel information & tips. There is also further information provided by specific DMOs:

➔ The ANTO has a section on Austria's imperial cities and travelogues, and specific winter activity information (outdoor alpine activities, mountain resorts, ski packages)

➔ The Belgian Tourist Office (BTO) provides a very comprehensive list of useful contacts (including those for meetings, incentive & conventions, hotels, events, transportation, attractions and museums, and castles), press information (press releases and selected articles), special interest info (antiques, beer lovers, chocolate lovers, weekend breaks, biking)

➔ The British Tourist Authority (BTA) offers holiday ideas (in the areas of arts & entertainment and outdoor

activities), a list of English language schools, and a collection of images of Britain

→ The Danish Tourist Board (DTB) organizes some information under the headings of nature & environment, and cruise activities, shows a list of the major events of the year, and gives the visitor the possibility of making his/her own list of events (combining type of event, period and region or town)

→ Maison de la France (The French Government Tourist Office) organizes information for Paris and French regions including suggested itineraries, canal cruises, walking tours, culture and history, pilgrims & religious heritage, honeymoons, cooking schools, wine tasting schools, French learning schools, and ski France (winter travel)

→ The German National Tourist Office (GNTO) organizes tourist information for family vacations, spa vacations, business travel, and vacations for the disabled

→ The Netherlands Board of Tourism (NBT) offers information particularly targeted to Dutch emigrants in its section "Back to your roots".

→ The Norwegian Tourist Board (NTB) features information on its country's nature, people, economy and foreign politics.

→ Switzerland Tourism (ST) shows Webcam live images from different places in the country. It has a photo gallery section with photos that can be sent as postcards and/or added to a personalized MySwitzerland folder. This is created via the Planner facility that enables the visitor to reserve a room or plan a full vacation

→ The Irish Tourist Board (ITB) exhibits 360 shots and video clips of Ireland, shows the contacts of the tourism operators located in the visitor's generating market, gives the visitor the possibility of creating his/her personal brochure / own guidebook and to send e-mail postcards to a friend.

• *Frequently Asked Questions* - The ANTO, BTO, and NBT have a FAQ section in their home page.

• *Guest Book* - ST has a guest book. Moreover, the BTO suggests visitors to join its mailing list. The BTA invites visitors to enter their e-mail address to sign up for the Britain Club. In the NBT's Web site visitors can subscribe to a personalized newsletter by giving their list of interests.

• *What's New* - this is a general trend throughout the Web sites studied. The BTO has also a section on "Specials of the Month" on Belgian tour packages, hotel packages and airline specials. The NBT offers best deals available in each of the Holland's generating markets.

• *Languages* - The BTO provides information targeted specifically to Canadian (English and French) and Brazilian (Portuguese) tourists. The NBT has an option in its home page called "language switch" catering for the language and customization needs of the following markets: USA, Canada, UK, Scandinavia, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Czech

Republic, China, and Japan. In the ST's Web site the visitor is first prompted to answer two questions: "What is your language?" (English, German, French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish), and "When are you travelling from?" (country). The information provided thereafter is customized accordingly.

• *Online Ordering* - The visitor can order any of two Austrian information packets online (general info or winter info). One may also order a brochure when at the Web sites of DTB, NTB, and ST

• *Search Engines* - Most of the DMOs have built in search engines (by keyword or subject) in their Web sites. The BTA has a very good interactive mapping system allowing the visitor to search down to street level. In the DTB's web site the visitor may search activities, attractions, transportation, restaurants, events, and accommodation by type and by region. The GNTO has an excellent interactive map of Germany for destination search (by region and city), as well as other search facilities for events (category, period, city) and travel types (e.g. active outdoor travel, short city trips, cultural trips). In the NBT's Web site one can perform a refined search by specific tourism products, specialties, and/or markets. ST offers site search by destination (city), resort type (activities and amenities), hotel, and events (city, resort, dates, category)

• *Site Maps* - The BTO has got a quite detailed site map.

• *Hyperlinks* - Using the Alta Vista search engine, the DMOs' Web sites showing more sites hyper-linked to them are as follows: Britain (3,253); Ireland (2,198); Germany (1,510); Holland (1,113); Austria (689); Belgium (644); France (615); Switzerland (354).

• *Banner Ads* - With the goal of identifying tourism related banner ads in major portal sites, analysis was performed throughout the Yahoo directory and the search engines Alta Vista, Excite, Hot Bot, Lycos, Infoseek and Web Crawler. The keywords used for the search were "travel", "tourism", "holiday", "vacation", "business travel" (tourism related keywords), and the names of each of the ten countries being studied (country names).

→ *Tourism related keywords*: most of the tourism banner ads are placed by online travel services such as previewtravel.com (6) and trip.com (4). Marriott has also banner ads in 4 locations. In Alta Vista the word "tourism" triggered a list of the following related sites: Austria Tourism, Switzerland Tourism, Scotland and London Tourism. In InfoSeek the same keyword search showed links to Travel in the Cities & Regions of France.

→ *Country names*: trip.com has the highest number of banner ad positions (6). Delta Airlines and Icelandair have two each. There is a banner ad of virtualireland.com in Hot Bot when one searches for "Ireland".

- *Positioning* - Due to the clutter of sites available on the WWW, DMOs must position themselves as the tourism portals for their countries. A sample search on the Yahoo directory by typing as keywords the names of the countries resulted in the following number of sites: Ireland (3,101); France (2,053); Germany (1,296); Britain (969); Switzerland (764); Holland (691); Austria (656); Belgium (624); Denmark (577); Norway (557).

Search engine positioning was conducted throughout the Yahoo directory and the big six search engines using the same five tourism related keywords as before, i.e. "travel", "tourism", "holiday", "vacation", and "business travel", totaling 35 searches. The purpose was to identify what destinations were featured in the top ten search results. Although the USA as a whole does not show up in the results a number of its states do, with a total of 16 times. Australia appears five times and New Zealand four. European countries are poorly represented: the only countries are the UK (Wales), Ireland, Denmark and Switzerland with one appearance each.

- *Segmentation* - Using the Lycos search engine it was possible to cross tabulate information on what people who did search for a particular country's name (e.g. Austria) also searched for (in this case, Vienna, Belgium, England, and Switzerland).

- *Austria*: Vienna, Belgium, England, Switzerland (also: Sweden, Hungary, and Portugal)
- *Belgium*: Brussels, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Austria, Denmark (also: Israel, and Portugal)
- *Britain*: England, Great Britain
- *Denmark*: Copenhagen, Holland/Netherlands, Belgium, Norway (also: Sweden, and Italy)
- *France*: Paris, Germany (also: Spain, Italy, Egypt, Australia, and Europe)
- *Germany*: Berlin, France, French (also: Spain, Italy, Australia, Japan, and Mexico)
- *Holland*: Netherlands, Amsterdam, Dutch, Denmark
- *Ireland*: Dublin, Irish, England, Scotland, France, Germany (also: Spain, and China)
- *Norway*: Oslo, Norwegian, Denmark (also: Sweden, Finland, Scandinavia, and Albania)
- *Switzerland*: Zurich, Essen, France (also: India)

The same search was done for the keywords "travel", "tourism", "holiday", and "vacation". The results were as follows:

- *Travel*: Airlines, Airfares, Travelocity, Directions, Hotels
- *Tourism*: Vacation, Tourist, Resorts, Islands, Beaches, Jungle, Minnesota
- *Holiday*: Gourmet, Chocolate, Gifts, Birthday, Florists, Roses
- *Vacation*: Travel, Airlines, Resorts, Entertainment, Careers, Job, Resumes

- *Tourism Destination Ratings* - Using Deja.com the top 5 rated destinations in each of the ten selected European countries were analyzed. Tourists who visit those destinations give their ratings on a five-point scale (from 1=worst to 5=best) on four criteria: attractions, food, friendliness, and cost/benefit. The information presented here shows the overall scores.

- *Austria*: Tirol (4.3), Vienna, Salzburg and Graz (3.9), Innsbruck (3.8)
- *Belgium*: Brugges (4.3), Ghent (4.1), Flanders (4.0), Antwerp (3.9), Brussels (3.8)
- *Great Britain*: Edinburgh and York (3.9), Lake District (3.8), Glasgow (3.7), London (3.6)
- *Denmark*: Odense (3.9), Langeland (3.8), Copenhagen and Skagen (3.7), Arhus (3.6)
- *France*: Paris, Strasbourg and Lille (3.8), Bordeaux and Dijon (3.7)
- *Germany*: Munich (3.7), Berlin, Hamburg and Heidelberg (3.6), Dresden (3.5)
- *Holland*: Amsterdam and Maastricht (3.8), Hoorn (3.7), Rotterdam and Utrecht (3.5)
- *Ireland*: Donegal (4.3), Galway, Athlone and Dingle Peninsula (3.9), Dublin (3.8)
- *Norway*: Arendal (4.5), Kristiansand (4.4), Oslo, Bergen and Grimstad (4.2)
- *Switzerland*: Montreux (4.2), Lausanne and Zurich (3.9), Geneva and Neuchatel (3.8)

CONCLUSION

A Web site is a form of marketing, providing a signboard which points visitors to products and services. To be most effective, a DMO's web site should be promoted both online and offline to attract targeted visitors to the web site. Moreover, the design of the web site should appeal to their multiple motivations, offering the content they need in order to convert lookers into bookers and to stimulate them to return. In addition, the evaluation of the web site marketing effectiveness is a must. Destinations have to gain a strong understanding about their online customers' profiles with the purpose of assuring the correct match between their marketing strategies and target market segments.

It is no longer OK for a DMO to just have a web site. Web sites should be considered sales tools and added to integrate

marketing efforts. With synergies emerging between the Web and their traditional business, DMOs need to ramp up their use of direct marketing practices to turn the web site's visitors into customers. As consumer acceptance of the new medium continues to grow, DMOs' marketers should use the channel for collecting visitor data in order to target customers and prospects with relevant offers.

There is still a strategic window open to Destination Marketing Organizations to control content and officially promote their destinations in the market space. Their strategic perspective should be of positioning themselves as the portal organizations in cyber space. If they do so they would be able to provide targeted information and take promotional actions according to the generating market, the destination of the visitor, the language, the types of attractions.

If Destination Marketing Organizations fail to take this opportunity then the window closes and private organizations take over. And they may or may not promote destinations in the best interest of the countries.

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