

Degree Program Tourism

**Bachelor Thesis 2013**

**Best strategy through Marketing Alliances for  
Switzerland Tourism North America**

Student: Charlotte Bourquin

Professor: Dr. James Holleran

Submitted on : December 16th, 2013



## **Abstract**

Having partnerships with Marketing Alliances has been proved to be an effective way for Switzerland Tourism North America to push the Destination promotion and sales as well as increase the awareness of Switzerland with the network. The two existing partnerships are with Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network, both luxury/leisure focused companies. Particularly successful results have been observed with Virtuoso. The process of choosing the right partnership has to be carefully defined regarding the needs of the Company. Switzerland Tourism North America wants to reallocate one part of the Virtuoso's budget and invests either more in Signature Travel Network or a new company. Switzerland Tourism's needs for the partnership are: potential for European Destinations, a fair amount of opportunities to educate and train the Travel Agents on Switzerland throughout the year and a good mix of Travel Agents and Consumer marketing activities. After scaling down a first list of 19 potential candidates by waiving the non-relevant cases for the study, five remain and their offers are analyzed regarding the performance criteria defined by internal stakeholders' interviews and the observation of Virtuoso's successful results. They are benchmarked and ranked from the better to the least adapted Marketing Alliance for Switzerland Tourism. The first position is occupied by Travel Leaders, a franchise network of 1,100 agency members with a broad target audience. After comparison, the results show that Signature Travel Network would be a better deal for Switzerland Tourism mainly because of their Education/Training strategy announced at their 2013 Annual Conference in addition to Switzerland Tourism's acquaintance with the network and past qualitative activities.

**Key words :** Marketing Alliances, Switzerland Tourism, collaboration, benchmarking, North America

## Foreword and acknowledgements

At the end of my studies at the HES-SO Valais/Wallis (degree program Tourism), I had the great opportunity to do a one-year internship in New York, at Switzerland Tourism North America. The mission of the Swiss National Tourism Board is to promote Switzerland as a vacation, travel and congresses Destination throughout the United States and Canada. During the entire year I was part of the Trade team who is in charge of relations and marketing with the Tour Operators and Travel Agents. This includes the Marketing Alliances business, topic of my thesis. I had the chance to participate at the Signature Travel Network Annual Conference as well, one of Switzerland Tourism's affiliations.

In agreement with Alexandra Imhof, District Manager Western USA based in Los Angeles and Alex Herrmann, Director of Americas based in New York, I decided to take an interest in the world of the Marketing Alliances and research the best future affiliation for the Company as well as suggest a reusable assessment tool to help in the process of choosing. Switzerland Tourism North America already has two partnerships with Marketing Alliances: Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network. After investing considerable time and money in Virtuoso's agreement, Switzerland Tourism would like to dedicate part of it to a new Alliance or, if interesting services available, to Signature Travel Network. I decided to benchmark the different companies regarding criteria identified internally at Switzerland Tourism, compare the best with Signature Travel Network and then see where the money would be worth investing. The whole process is presented as a reusable tool for the future.

It is important to note that this study analyses the first version of offers received from the Marketing Alliances. One call with the Representative of each company to precise what the needs and goals of Switzerland Tourism are and a few email exchanges afterwards were the only direct contacts. No negotiations were undertaken and therefore this study can be viewed as the first round prior more discussions and changes. The main challenge of this thesis was to use all the different facets of the performance criteria. When a money-related criteria was analyzed, for example the mix Mmarketing-Education/Training, it was essential to take into account the percentage of money invested obviously, but also the number of activities included in this amount and the type of activity. Another challenge was the unexpected news Signature Travel Network communicated at their annual conference in Las

Vegas: the intention of pushing the educational activities for Travel Agents within the network. The results presented take this fact into account but if I was not aware of it, the recommendations would have been slightly different. Obviously Switzerland Tourism does not have the obligation to follow my recommendations and can use some of the results as a starting point for further negotiations.

I would like to thank Switzerland Tourism North America and more particularly Alexandra Imhof, District Manager Western USA, who highly supported me in understanding the whole Marketing Alliance Industry, helped me to reach the right contacts and provided me with precious information. Also, thank you to Dr. James Holleran, professor in Sustainable Tourism at HES-SO Valais/Wallis and my mentor, who followed me during the realization of this thesis and gave me valuable advice.

Finally I would like to thank the following persons who supported me and were involved in one way or another in the creation of this thesis:

- Alex Herrmann
- Suzanne Hall
- John Werner
- Debbie Press
- Anne-Marie Moebes
- Brian Hegarty
- Joël Tettoni
- Andrea Steffen

**Table of content**

Abstract..... ii

Foreword and acknowledgements..... iii

Table of content ..... v

List of tables ..... vi

List of figures ..... vii

List of abbreviations ..... viii

Introduction ..... 1

1. Literature reviews..... 3

    1.1 Definitions ..... 3

    1.2 Former studies and current knowledge ..... 4

2. Research topic ..... 5

    2.1 Company profile and problem definition ..... 5

    2.2 Travel agency Industry overview in the U.S..... 8

    2.3 Virtuoso as a best-in-class example for Switzerland Tourism ..... 14

    2.4 Importance of collaborations in tourism ..... 15

    2.5 The Research Question ..... 17

    2.6 Research objectives ..... 18

3. Methodology ..... 19

    3.1 Research methods and justification ..... 19

    3.2 Justification of the benchmarking approach ..... 24

    3.3 Research of the population under study ..... 26

    3.4 Data collection ..... 27

4. Synthesis of the results ..... 28

    4.1 Waiving process ..... 28

    4.2 Performance criteria..... 32

    4.3 Presentation of the data ..... 35

5. Interpretation of the results and recommendations ..... 38

Conclusion ..... 54

References ..... 55

Appendix I: Offers of the five new potential Marketing Alliance ..... 60

Author’s declaration ..... 74

**List of tables**

Table 1 - Tourist demand changes .....10

Table 2 - Agent Usage by Generation .....12

Table 3 - Switzerland Hotel Production Virtuoso 2011-2012 .....15

Table 4 - The formal 10-step benchmarking process .....22

Table 5 - The five phases of the benchmarking process .....23

Table 6 - Performance criteria .....32

Table 7- General information on the new five potential companies compared .....35

Table 8 - Fact-criteria of the Marketing Alliances .....39

Table 9 – Allocation of the money in Marketing Alliances offers .....32

Table 10: E-communication to Consumers.....37

Table 11 -Ideal situation and Virtuoso as a best-in-class example .....39

Table 12 - Summary of the criteria for MAST Travel Network .....41

Table 13 - Summary of the criteria for Travelsavers/NEST .....42

Table 14 - Summary of the criteria for The Affluent Traveler Collection .....43

Table 15 - Summary of the criteria for Ensemble Travel Group .....44

Table 16 - Summary of criteria for Travel Leaders/Results!Travel .....45

Table 17 - Summary of the 2013 agreement with Signature Travel Network.....46

Table 18: Travel Leaders/Results!Travel SWOT analysis .....47

Table 19: Signature Travel Network SWOT analysis .....48

Table 20 - Waiving process .....50

Table 21- Performance criteria to choose a Marketing Alliance for Switzerland Tourism .....51

Table 22 - Table to fill with YES or NO .....52

**List of figures**

Figure 1 - Who work with Marketing Alliances at Switzerland Tourism North America .....7

Figure 2 - International arrivals from 1950 to 2020 .....9

Figure 3 - First part of the Research Question .....18

Figure 4: Tool usage and satisfaction .....21

Figure 5 - Traditional benchmarking method .....25

Figure 6 - Consortia's benchmarking for Switzerland Tourism North America .....25

Figure 7 - MAST Travel Network logo .....36

Figure 8 - The Affluent Traveler Collection logo .....36

Figure 9 - American Marketing Group logo .....36

Figure 10 - Ensemble Travel Group logo .....37

Figure 11- Travel Leaders logo .....37

Figure 12 - Results!Travel logo .....37

Figure 13 - Travelsavers logo .....37

Figure 14 - NEST logo .....38

Figure 15 - Signature Travel Network logo .....38

Figure 16 - Virtuoso logo .....38

Figure 17 - Percentage of money invested into travel agent and Consumer marketing .....33

Figure 18 - Mix Marketing - Education/Training .....35

Figure 19 - Cost per email address and contacts reached for e-communications .....36

## List of abbreviations

<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>Co-op</b>	Cooperative
<b>FAM trip:</b>	Familiarization trip
<b>SWOT analysis:</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats analysis



## Introduction

Since the birth of the modern Travel Industry in the 1950s, the sector has undergone many fluctuations throughout the years. New technologies, Consumer's continuous behavior changes and the general dynamic nature of the Industry are the most significant reasons. Therefore the different tourism stakeholders such as Destinations, Travel Agents and Travel Suppliers imperatively have to follow the trends and adapt or find new strategies in order to remain competitive in the global market. Today in the North America, one of the marketing strategies is to become a member of a Marketing Alliance, also called Travel Agent Consortium. These companies coordinate big networks of Travel Agents, Suppliers and Tourism Boards that can interact with each other to hopefully increase their sales, reach the right target audience and improve the quality of the final travel product. The number and types of Marketing Alliances available in North America are high and making the right choice is not always obvious due to this variety of alternatives and diverse characteristics. The performance criteria to become affiliated to a Marketing Alliance are unique to every business and need to be revised carefully before investing money.

Switzerland Tourism North America promotes the country abroad through channels that reach different target groups such as the Travel Agents, the Tour Operators, the Medias and the final Consumers. With the aim of boosting Swiss sales, the Trade Department has signed agreements with Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network, two Marketing Alliances that allow Switzerland Tourism to reach qualified contacts and to raise the awareness of the Destination within the networks. Until today a lot has been achieved with Virtuoso due to the high amount of money and time invested. Successful overnights results prove it. The number of marketing activities undertaken with Signature Travel Network is smaller and the amount of money invested too. For 2015, Switzerland Tourism needs to reposition itself and wants to invest a certain sum of the Virtuoso affiliation in either Signature Travel Network or a new Marketing Alliance.

This study analyses the potential Marketing Alliances with a non-traditional benchmarking method. It is from internal research of performance criteria for Switzerland Tourism to apply then to the comparison of the companies. The whole process is presented as a tool reusable in the future for ongoing assessment of Marketing Alliances. The first chapter explains a few

definitions specific to the Travel Industry and reviews the existing literature related to the topic. The second chapter establishes the current situation of Switzerland Tourism and its needs as well as the situation of the Travel Industry in general and in the United States. Virtuoso is described as a best-in-class example and the objectives of the research are defined. The third part of this work presents justifications of the non-traditional benchmarking approach, the way the population was chosen and how the data were retrieved. In the fourth chapter, first the process to waive the non-relevant candidates for the study is detailed as well as the identification of the performance criteria. Then, all the companies are analyzed regarding the same criteria and the data displayed. The last chapter interprets and combines the data presented in chapter four and recommendations are given regarding a Marketing Alliance for Switzerland Tourism's strategy. Also, the whole process is suggested as an ongoing assessment tool that can be easily picked by Switzerland Tourism in the future.

## 1. Literature reviews

Before beginning the actual study, an explanation regarding some specific terms used in the Tourism Industry is given. After that, a review of general and tourism benchmarking literature, assessment tool development processes and specific studies in the tourism domain are presented.

### 1.1 Definitions

**Switzerland Tourism North America:** The topic of this thesis concerns Switzerland Tourism North America specifically, meaning the three office locations in New York, Los Angeles and Toronto. However, the term Switzerland Tourism or Company (capital letter) is used throughout the study in order to simplify. There is one exception, Chapter 2.1, where the full name is mentioned because it is the introductory part to the research topic.

**Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks:** The three terms are defined further below in the text in order to understand the topic better. However to simplify, throughout the thesis the general term of Marketing Alliance (or Alliance) is used to talk about the three kinds of companies.

**Travel Agent (or Agent):** Travel Agent is any person or organization (excluding persons or organizations acting as Tour Operators or actually providing transportation, accommodation, or other travel-related services, and the employees or subcontractors of such organizations) offering a public travel information, reservation, and ticketing service, who for profit, solicits, obtains, receives, or furnishes, directly or indirectly, passengers or groups of passengers for transportation by a carrier, or the supply of other services by another travel Industry principal. (Oxford Reference, 2012)

**Tour Operator:** A person or company that provides package holidays (Collins Dictionary, 2013).

**Travel Supplier (or Supplier):** In the travel industry, any company providing travel services to the public (hotels, restaurants, transportation, etc.) (Travel Industry Dictionary, 2013).

## **1.2 Former studies and current knowledge**

Benchmarking studies have a same aim but do not all strictly apply one same model. Usually it is used by a company which then adapts the tool to its functioning and needs. The process differs from one company to another as well as the number of phases. (Pyo, 2002, pp. 11-12) Voss, Ahlström & Blackmon (1997, p. 1047) argue that benchmarking is the action of recognizing practices and performance criteria. The main goal is to have an overview of the competitor's situation, to learn how they work and finally to use these precious information to increase performance. Until the 2000s, benchmarking studies in the Tourism Industry mainly involved hotels. It was then extended to tourist attractions and later to Destinations. However the topics analyzed are principally qualitative, for example customer satisfaction, and very few concern quantitative data. (Pyo, 2002, p. 14) Wöber (2001) claims that "benchmarking is still a vague concept in the service Industry, particularly in the tourism field" (p.4).

In Switzerland, BakBasel is a company that does different economic researches in many domains. Among them, tourism benchmarking studies at a national and international level. (BakBasel, 2013) For example, a study about an international comparison of the Swiss tourism sector has been published in 2010 in French, German and Italian. This study evaluates and compares the performances of the countries, the regions and the destinations in the European alps. Finally, the different areas are ranked regarding many criteria that were set during the analysis and the whole process became a reusable tool for tourism professionals. (BakBasel, 2010) The idea of developing an assesement tool has also been studied by Dong & Gu (2005), for example, who wrote a paper about creating an assessment tool for sustainable tourism in destinations by combining different criteria. Another example is presented by Haber & Reichel (2005) who propose a concept to find performances of small companies in the Tourism Industry.

Only one document produced by Travel + Leisure Magazine & the Singapore Tourism Board (2013) mentioning the specific topic of the Marketing Alliances in the U.S Travel Industry was found.

## **2. Research topic**

### **2.1 Company profile and problem definition**

Switzerland Tourism is the national marketing company that promotes the country as a vacation, travel and congresses destination both in Switzerland and all around the world (Switzerland Tourism, 2013). The company is represented in 27 countries and employs more than 200 persons (Switzerland Tourism, 2012, p. 7). Sixty percent (60%) of its budget comes from the government and the rest from the Partners contributions and marketing earnings (Secrétariat d'État à l'Économie [SECO], 2010).

Switzerland Tourism North America is composed of three offices located in New York, Los Angeles and Toronto. Fourteen (14) employees work in New York, the largest office, and two employees in each location in Los Angeles and Toronto. Four departments are covered: Media, Trade, Promotion and Meetings Incentives Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE). As mentioned above, the main goal of Switzerland Tourism is to promote the country at a national and international level. By developing a strong and appealing marketing strategy, each Department focuses on attracting foreign and Swiss visitors to Switzerland with a different approach. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office (in Huser & Glanzmann, 2013, p.1) shows that the U.S., with a total of 1,525,178 overnights in 2012, are one of Switzerland Tourism seven priority travel markets together with Switzerland, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy and Netherlands. All together they have represented 71.6% of Swiss hotel overnights in 2012. Canada is considered as a Switzerland Tourism active market with nine others. They have produced 10.9% of Swiss hotel overnights in 2012. According to the high importance of the North American market it is imperative to maintain the strong image of the Switzerland brand which has been established in this part of the world since 1927.

All the Departments of the Company are striving to reach the largest amount of clients possible and make them go to Switzerland. Besides reaching the final Consumer directly and stimulating their desire to travel, the Company focuses in providing high quality, informative, reliable and long-term contacts with American Travel Agents and Tour Operators. Referred to as Trade market, these key accounts, are essential. This is the mission of the Trade Department of Switzerland Tourism North America (Company) and the subject of this thesis. Indeed Travel Agents and Tour Operators are the ones who help make the travel dreams of

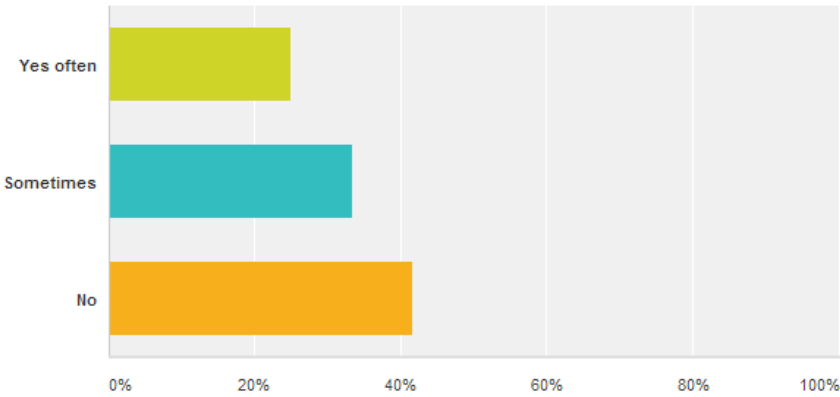
the clients become true. They create and sell packages targeting the final Consumers and provide advice on taking Swiss vacations. In 2012, the U.S were the fourth most important market for Switzerland, after Switzerland itself, Germany and the United Kingdom (Huser C. , 2013). A lot of other destinations are also popular and therefore the Travel Agents do not have perfect knowledge on Switzerland. This is the turning point where Switzerland Tourism intervenes and gives them tools and assistance needed to promote Switzerland at its best. There are different ways of supporting the key accounts in promoting Switzerland. For example, Switzerland Tourism Managers are organizing tours for Swiss Partners, called Best of Switzerland, six times a year throughout the U.S. and Canada. The tour consists of having a couple of appointments with some Travel Agents and Tour Operators every day and to provide them training on selling Switzerland. Secondly the possibility of attending bi-weekly audio-visual presentations is another tool for educating the Trade. Those so called Webinars are presented by a Trade Representative of Switzerland Tourism in collaboration with either a Swiss Partner or an American Tour Operator. Travel Agents can take the opportunity to learn more by listening to them live or online afterwards. Also, the Trade Department produces a yearly Sales Manual that contains the main contacts for assistance and the basics on why and how to sell Switzerland. Finally the Travel Agents have the opportunity to complete an e-learning course as well and get benefits upon graduation. All activities mentioned above are developed and implemented internally, by Switzerland Tourism. It is crucial to offer the Travel Agents and Tour Operators constant support and networks to better promote Switzerland. They need that support in order to better advised their clients when purchasing travel to Switzerland.

In addition to those mentioned above, other activities are undertaken to reach the Key Accounts. These include collaborations with external entities with the goal of promoting the Destination, increasing the Swiss presence in the market and raising the awareness of Switzerland among the associated Trade members. These companies are called Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks and are all essentially Marketing Alliances, each having its distinctive characteristics and group type (TravAlliance Media, 2013, pp. 6-7). For example, some are member-owned companies while others sell their brand to the members. Switzerland Tourism has a current affiliation with two consortia in North America: Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network. Both are luxury/leisure focused and offer a wide range of

services and benefits to their members (TravAlliance Media, 2013, pp. 22-23). The decision by the Company for the two memberships was taken in order to target the right audience. In the U.S. the number of Aravel Agents is very high. In fact, almost anyone can pretend to be a Travel Agent by selling travel services (A. Herrmann, Switzerland Tourism Director of Americas, personal communication, 13September2013). The Bureau of Labor Statistics counts 105,399 travel advisors (in American Association of Travel Agents, 2013) plus PhoCusWright estimates an additional 30,000 independent agents (in American Association of Travel Agents, 2013), many who are home-based, in the U.S. Due to this very high number of actors in the Industry and the Company’s restricted budget, Switzerland Tourism has to be selective and focused on reaching the right target audience. Having a partnership with a Marketing Alliance allows the Company to better reach pre-qualified contacts who pay to be part of the network and are willing to increase their Swiss sales. (A. Imhof, Trade Manager West Coast, personal communication, 6 August 2013a)

The Marketing Alliance business involves more than the half<sup>1</sup> of the total number of employees at Switzerland Tourism North America (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 - Who work with Marketing Alliances at Switzerland Tourism North America**



Choix de réponses	Réponses
Yes often	25% 3
Sometimes	33,33% 4
No	41,67% 5

Nombre total de répondants : 12

Source: Data collected by the author (survey 2013)

<sup>1</sup> Footnote: Two positions were vacant when the survey was distributed and the four interns are not counted

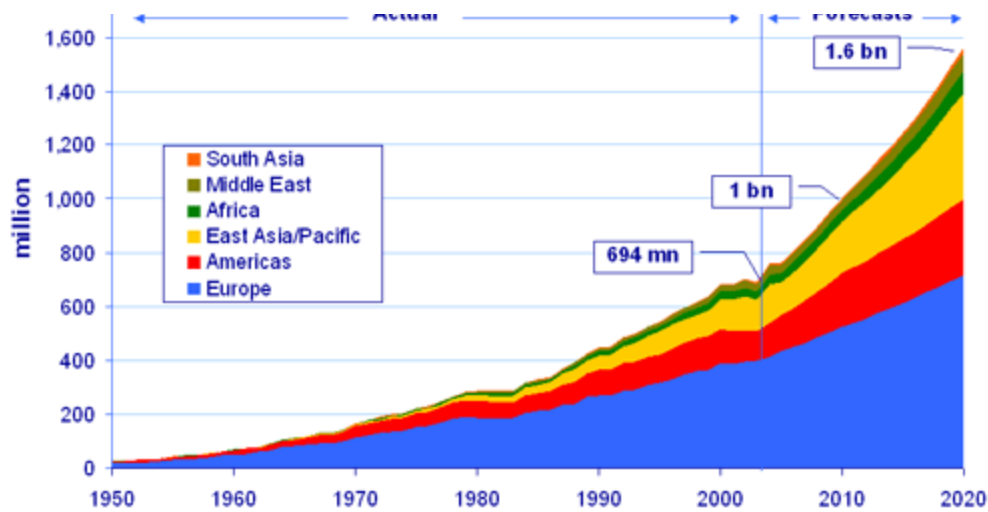
In the Company 100% of the Trade Department work often closely with the Marketing Alliances whereas the rest of the Company is dealing with it sometimes or most likely never. The activities undertaken with Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network are beneficial to the entire Company. It can be claimed, for example, by looking at the Virtuoso travel related overnight growth in Switzerland. Indirectly the Company's Media Department is also involved when it comes to any kind of publications. One hundred percent (100%) of the Media team claims of working from time to time on activities connected with one of the partner Marketing Alliances according to the same survey (2013). However workwise, the negotiation of the partnerships and the concrete marketing actions assumed throughout the year are mainly tasks of the Trade Department. Obviously this is mainly because the Alliances are basically for Travel Agents and Tour Operators, the Trade Key Accounts.

## **2.2 Travel agency Industry overview in the U.S.**

The use of the Marketing Alliance in the North American travel agency Industry is growing and is a key reason of the Industry's success nowadays. In order to understand better why this statement can be claimed, both the global trend evolution and the challenges of travel Suppliers and the Consumers side have to be looked at closely. The Travel Industry keeps on progressing due to *the dynamic nature of the Industry, the Consumer's continuous behavior changes and the influence of new technology*. The travel agency Industry is constantly changing and has always to adapt to the global economic, demographic, political, social, cultural and ecological fluctuations. From the 1950s, birth of the modern Travel Industry, until today, the number of international arrivals has almost increased every year (Figure 2). The 1980s was a period of glory for the travel agency Industry. The number of Agencies was increasing year after year and the results of international arrivals were excellent. In the first years of the 2000s, the global economy was in recession and the crisis certainly touched the Travel sector as well. A lot of small Trade businesses were bought or merged with the mega-firms and at the same time a new threatening trend was growing: online booking. (The Gale Group, Inc., 2013)



Figure 2 - International arrivals from 1950 to 2020



Source : World Tourism Organization (2005)

Like other economic sectors, Tourism has always been competitive but after those major changes it faced a new type of rivalry: brick and mortar agencies versus online travel agencies. (The Gale Group, Inc., 2013) Consumers can now take advantage of the quickness to book directly and find information online. They can easily switch from one website to another, using different devices (laptops, smart phones, tablets, etc) to compare the prices and services of the different packages available and even to tailor their own. (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2011, p. 12)

In addition to this online menace to the Trade, *the Consumer's continuous behavior changes* are becoming a new challenge for travel agencies too. Customers are seeking an exclusive and authentic travelling experience to remember. They have higher expectations and wish to learn something new about the local lifestyle and people. (IPK International, 2012, p. 18) The standard 3xS offer (Sea, Sun and Sand) is moving on to a new kind of more active-oriented offer or the 3xE experience (Entertainment, Excitement and Education). This new travel trend is therefore emphasizing the changing demand factors. The Travel Suppliers no longer only create ready-made packages from A to Z with the purpose of selling it in large quantity. The Consumers are taking a more meaningful role in the whole process of organizing a trip and they are often seeking to have a personalized travel product. (Alejziak, 1999, pp. 5-7) As described by Ostrowski S. (in Alejziak, 1999, p.5) in Table 1 below, tourism is moving from a traditional or hard conception to a softer notion of traveling where the

peace and quiet, the learning, the respect, the effort and the spontaneity associated with a travel experience are brought to the forefront.

**Table 1 - Tourist demand changes**

<b>Hard Tourism. Characteristic of "so far tourism"</b>	<b>Soft Tourism Characteristic of "future tourism"</b>
Package tours;	Individual travelling ;
A lot of time, short-term residences;	A lot of time, long-term residences
Model of one big travel during holidays;	Model of two shorter travels during a year
Everything organised earlier from "a" to "z" (sights, a route, program etc.);	Program decisions made individually and spontaneously;
Comfort and passivity;	An activity and effort;
Expectation of number of travels and attractions;	Expectation of new experiences and higher quality;
Sense of superiority, demonstration effect;	Respect and relationship with hostess;
Lack of knowledge about attractions, culture and tradition in visiting areas;	Knowledge about countries we want to visit;
Imported life style and behaviour;	Lifestyle following to an example of local population
Purchases;	Gifts
Noise;	Silence;
Freely available souvenirs (e.g. a mass production of Eiffel Tower figurines;	Individual souvenirs (e.g. photo and picture took individually, private video film)
Lack of interest in language of visiting country;	Studying local language (at least a few words);
Fast transport and frequent moves;	Less importance of moving speed;
Curiosity;	Tact;
Expectation of comfort;	Comfort is not essential;
A distance between client and tourist staff;	A good relationship with tourist staff;

Source : Ostrowski in Alejziak, 1999

The third trend (*influence of new technology*) noticed as significant for the Travel Suppliers is a crossing between modern technology and Consumer behavior. The boom of the social media platforms plays a considerable role in the planning of vacations nowadays. Consumers are using the social media to talk about their vacations and to review or seek reviews about any kind of tourist services in Destinations under consideration. The social media influences 40% of the travelers on their trip arrangements. The Travel Industry has therefore to deal with this new form of transparency and needs to be more aware than ever of what is happening online before, during and after the Customer's vacations. (IPK International, 2012, p. 27)

As of the last couple of years in several magazines and newspapers, the traditional way of booking a trip through a travel agency is a popular topic given the competition from direct Customer online bookings. Indeed the appearance of the new media and the ascent of

internet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century drew attention to the topic. In 2009, the travel agencies sales volume collapsed 23% in one year. The big question was to know if the traditional travel agencies where the customer stepped in, sat down, asked for advice and let the sales person organize and book the diverse services for his /her vacations will still exist in the next years and, if yes, for how long. One sure thing: yes the Travel Agents Industry was stress for a certain period of time. However, since a few years there is an alteration of the discourse and more positive disclose can be found on the matter. According to PhoCusWright (in Higgins, 2012, p.6), one in three travel agencies is hiring nowadays and a significant growth could be noticed. One third of the \$284 billion United States travel market is due to Agent bookings. At the height of internet success, when online booking was brand new, Customers rushed at the online platforms to reserve their whole vacation by themselves, trying to find that special perfect cheap trip. Today the excitement has been damped as people tend to get annoyed about the endless possibilities available online. Looking for a descent trip corresponding to everybody's wishes in the family can take more than five hours according to 20% of travelers worldwide (in Higgins, 2012, p.6). Consumers are lost in the humongous amount of information and it can become too time-consuming for them. (Higgins, 2012, p. 6)

Although this traditional distribution channel is making a comeback, it is mostly due to some specific Customer segments. Clients who want to use the services of a travel agency have particular desires and needs. They require a human contact who has a good knowledge of desired destinations and who is able to sell them an unforgettable experience. According to the *MMGY Global 2013 Portrait of American Travelers survey* (in TravelAgent, 2013, p.10-11), currently people born between 1980 and 2000, as well as the segment of 'Matures', are the greatest users of the Travel Agent services (Table 2). The same two segments plus the 'Boomers', born between 1945 and 1960, will most likely use a Travel Agent service more than others in the next two years. The 'Matures' group has the highest potential usage rate and they all plan to increase.

**Table 2 - Agent Usage by Generation**

2013	Millennials <sup>2</sup>	Xers <sup>3</sup>	Boomers <sup>4</sup>	Matures <sup>5</sup>
Used a Traditional Travel Agent in the Past 12 Months	14%	11%	11%	14%
Plan to use a Traditional Travel Agent During the Next 2 Years	18%	14%	18%	23%

Source: Adapted from MMGY Global 2013 Portrait of American Travelers (Travel Agent, 2013, p. 11)

All these trends and the evolution of the market explained above have to be taken into consideration by the Trade agencies in order to adapt their products and stay up to date. They must develop an adjusted marketing strategy to remain appealing and draw the customers toward them. Today, one of the marketing strategies is being a member of a Marketing Alliance which can help them on knowing the products better and following the trends.

The world of the Marketing Alliances (or Travel Consortia) in the U.S. is wide and diverse but all have one common aim: helping their members to be successful in their business and to guarantee them a personal treatment for their specific needs (TravAlliance Media, 2013, p. 2). In the Trip Report called *Examining Top U.S. Travel Companies* (in Travel + Leisure Marketing & the Singapore Tourism Board, 2013, p. 10), consortia are characterized as follows:

“Consortia are collections of like-minded agencies that cooperate for marketing and purchasing power. (...)

<sup>2</sup> Born between 1980 and 2000

<sup>3</sup> Born between 1960 and 1980

<sup>4</sup> Born between 1945 and 1960

<sup>5</sup> Born between 1915 and 1945

One benefit of joining a consortium is its 'seal of approval'. There are various regulations in the U.S., and joining a consortium assures businesses and Consumers of an agent's quality and integrity.

Another benefit is shared databases. While each member owns its own client database, they can all data-mine for more prospects for email blasts and direct mail marketing.

In addition, consortia conduct extensive research and survey the market to identify trends and understand Consumer behavior. This information informs Travel Agents who then craft relevant products and services.

Finally, consortia also produce marketing materials, such as publications and e-blast, which greatly reduces advertising costs for the agency." (Travel + Leisure Marketing & Singapore Tourism Board, 2013, p. 10)

The above definition gives a good summary of the Marketing Alliance role and benefits. However there is also another aspect that has to be considered. Most of these Alliances have three types of members: the Travel Partners, the Destination Partners and the Travel Agents. Hotels, Tour Operators, Cruise Lines, Airlines, Car Rentals, Rail Transport and Travel Insurance are most of the preferred Travel Partners and try to work closely within the group in order to provide the best service for the Customers. The role of the preferred Destination Partners is to raise the country awareness throughout the network and to educate the Agents. The third members are the Travel Agents who, thanks to the services of all the others, can give personal advice and special recommendations to their clients. A major benefit also for Customers and Travel Agents are the additional amenities that they can get, for example upgrades if available, special care of sales people, 100\$ gift certificate for spa or restaurant and many more. At least this is the case for Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network.

Obviously the Travel Agents and the Travel Partners do not sign the same kind of contract because their needs and goals are different. The common expectation is to reach the right

target audience by receiving support and access to a qualified database. Each Marketing Alliance has different services to offer as well as diverse kinds of processes. Switzerland Tourism experienced a great achievement since the beginning of the partnership with Virtuoso for instance. This partnership will be analyzed in the next chapter.

### **2.3 Virtuoso as a best-in-class example for Switzerland Tourism**

Since its first year of partnership in 2007, Switzerland Tourism invested time and money with the goal of raising the awareness of Switzerland among the target Trade. The budget is reviewed every year in order to increase the return on investment. At the beginning the approach was different with a greater focus on marketing. This tendency moved over time and today the most important part of the partnership is to train and educate the Travel Agents. However marketing was not be forgotten and is still considered with Virtuoso too. (A. Herrmann, PC, 13 September 2013)

The partnership with Virtuoso is a good example of what can be accomplished. It is presented here as a best case example because more has been achieved than with the other Company's partner, Signature Travel Network. Also, Virtuoso provided Switzerland Tourism with precise results while Signature Travel Network did not communicate them as from the date of this report. Switzerland Tourism had an evolving relationship with the Virtuoso Alliance and has been rewarded for its efforts. Successful results in term of overnight numbers of travelers in Switzerland are available (Table 3). Also, in 2013 Switzerland was voted Virtuoso Tourism Board of the Year and was identified as hosting the most exclusive and selective FAM trip: The Virtuoso Chairman's Event. (A. Herrmann, PC, 13 September 2013)

The positive results, as suggested above, can be appreciated by the number of visitor overnights with Virtuoso preferred hotels in Switzerland but also by the achievements reached due to the great Swiss awareness within the network. For example it is the Virtuoso Travel Agents who voted for Switzerland to win the Award against five big competitors: New Zealand, Mexico, South Africa, Madrid and Kenya. Furthermore, for 2012 the results show that Virtuoso network continues to grow stronger than the U.S. market in terms of Swiss overnights. The Switzerland hotel production including all hotels shows a 13% growth from 2011 to 2012 and a 6% growth for the Virtuoso preferred hotels only (Table 3). In

comparison, the U.S. market showed a growth of 2.2% between 2011 and 2012 (Huser & Glanzmann, 2013, p. 1).

**Table 3 - Switzerland Hotel Production Virtuoso 2011-2012**

Switzerland Hotel Production – All hotels	2012	2011	Year over year change	% year over year change
Hotel	\$6,495,888	\$5,724,457	\$771,431	13%
Hotel Nights	11,907	10,680	1,228	11%
Switzerland Hotel Production – Preferred	2012	2011	Year over year change	% year over year change
Hotel	\$3,707,005	\$3,488,922	\$218,083	6%
Hotel Nights	4,546	4,139	407	10%

Source : Adapted from Virtuoso (2013)

## 2.4 Importance of collaborations in tourism

The promotion of tourism Destinations is a concept that implicates many different market players. The overall tourism product is a complex combination of services, each provided by individual stakeholders, but which is seen as a single item for consumption by the final Customers. (Fyall & Garrod, 2005, p. 36) Palmer & Bejou (1995) explain the need for collaboration in the complex tourism Industry referring mostly to regional or local Destinations having a partnership with each other to develop a product. This is not exactly the kind of collaboration of this study but the general theory is definitely applicable to Travel Agent Marketing Alliances collaborating with Tourism Board, with some slightly divergences.

Parts of the final tourism product are tangible components as for example tourist attractions, hotel rooms or flight seats and other parts are intangible as for example the image or the reputation of a region. Indeed the composition is complex and tourism is a fragmented Industry. In consequence, collaborations between the different service-providers are indispensable in order to deliver a product of quality and reliability. Joining forces to increase the awareness of a Destination is a way to achieve various objectives that

would be less accessible as an individual. Also, it can reduce risks because there is an exchange of information and resources that diminishes the uncertainty of the context. (Palmer & Bejou, 1995, pp. 617-618) According to Hagedoorn (in Fyall & Garrod, 2005, p. 138), there are more than 10,000 different types of collaborations. Hanlon (in Fyall & Garrod 2005, p. 139-140) established a list of the diverse reasons why companies would pool efforts. The eight motives are:

1. Market entry and market position-related motives
2. Product-related motives
3. Product/market-related motives
4. Market structure modification-related motives
5. Market entry timing-related motives
6. Resource use efficiency-related motives
7. Resource extension- and risk reduction- related motives
8. Skills enhancement – related motives

Hanlon specifies that for the tourism Industry the stimulus to join an alliance are rather “issues such as building Consumer base, gaining access to new markets, defending existing markets and conducting marketing strategies” (p.140). For Switzerland Tourism the motivations are to have access to a qualified Travel Agent database, defend and enhance Switzerland’s position within the North American market, increase the Swiss product’s value, awareness and sales, and conduct a marketing strategy.

In the North American Tourism Industry, joining a Marketing Alliance is nowadays seen as a must-have for Travel Agents due to the many advantages they can get. The Marketing Alliances have evolved with time to make sure the services for the members remain of high-quality and competitive. The Travel Agents’ goal is to sell their products, know how to advice the clients at best and afterwards get a positive feedback from them. This can all be achieved by having the right tools, knowledge and expertise. The Marketing Alliances are can



offer that thanks to the services they propose and their affiliations with Suppliers. (Terrero, 2013, pp. 26-28) In consequence to the growing importance of those Marketing Alliances, it is a big opportunity for Switzerland Tourism to become partner with some of them and promote the country with a network of quality, support the Travel Agents and collaborate closer with other Suppliers. If all the members have their own role but work together with a same aim, the outcome will be greater according to Huxham (in Fyall & Garrod, 2005, p. 137).

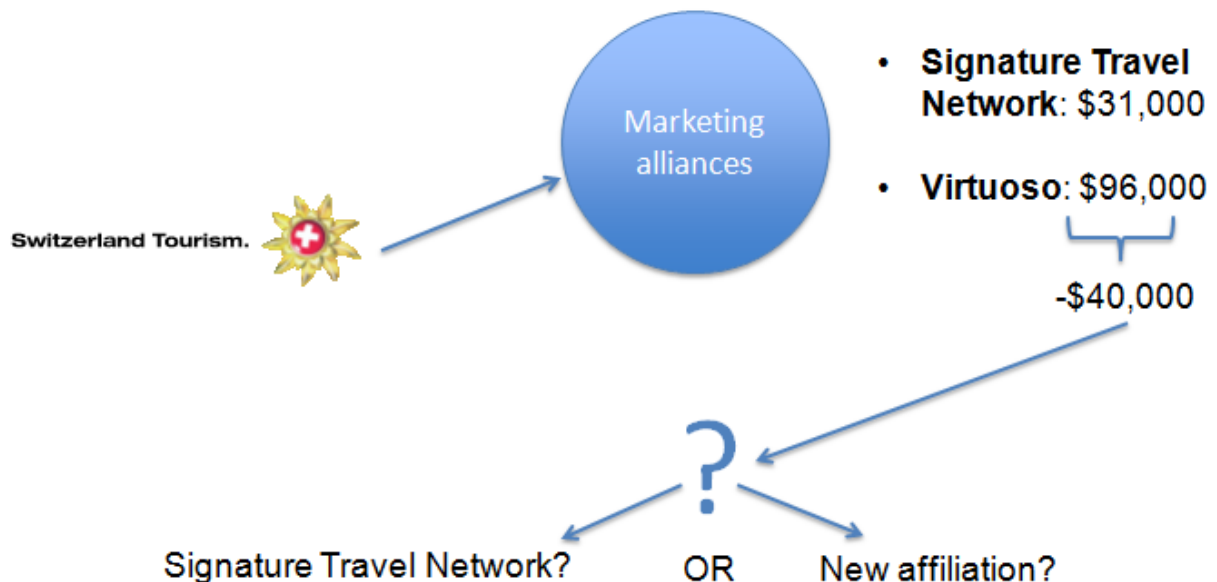
John Lovell, president of the consortium Vacation.com and part of Travel Leaders Group, is convinced of the importance of the Marketing Alliances: “The Supplier needs to make money, the agent needs to make money and the customer needs to get the best value, and I think that consolidation is only going to help drive that in the future” (in Terrero, 2013, p.30). This brings to the research question of this thesis which is highly related to the need of collaborating in Tourism.

## **2.5 The Research Question**

As mentioned above, Switzerland Tourism has experienced a fruitful collaboration with Marketing Alliances until today. Especially with Virtuoso, a fair amount of the Trade budget has been invested in 2013, \$96, 000, with the goal of increasing both Switzerland awareness and sales. Switzerland has built itself a noteworthy reputation and large presence throughout the network. In spite of the fact that actual Signature Travel Network key figures were not communicated yet, Switzerland Tourism could observe a noticeable interest and need within the network. In 2013, \$31,000 were put into Signature Travel Network. These achievements have now to be maintained but for 2015 Switzerland Tourism North America decided to rethink the strategy and to look into different possibilities. Choosing how to invest in Marketing Alliances is actually an ongoing strategic process that is discussed every year before signing the agreements. However, due to the current situation and recent accomplishments, Switzerland Tourism is willing to make a bigger change for 2015 and reallocate about \$40,000 of the Virtuoso budget (Figure 3). The question is now to see where to share out that money. The number of potential partnerships is high and there are many factors to take into account in order to find the best solution. In consequences Switzerland Tourism needs to study closely which companies would be the most adapted in

order to reach a qualitative network and invest money appropriately in the future. Also, it would be useful for Switzerland Tourism to have a process to follow if in the future the question of money allocation in Marketing Alliances is topical again.

**Figure 3 - First part of the Research Question**



Source : Author's data

On that basis, two research questions were formulated. They are explained in the next chapter

## 2.6 Research objectives

The two research questions can be formulated as follow:

- In which Marketing Alliance to invest money strategically in order to have exposure and Switzerland Tourism's needs covered?
- Which efficient ongoing tool to use for Switzerland Tourism in order to be able to simplify the Marketing Alliance assessment process in the future?

The duality of research concerns on one hand specific recommendations needed for 2015 and on the other hand the creation and application of an assessment tool that will be reusable in the future. The aim of this paper is to present Switzerland Tourism concrete

results and recommendations so the Company can plan the 2015 Marketing Alliance strategy and budget. Also, it is to provide the Company with a management tool in order to assess the best potential Marketing Alliance strategy. The concept will be developed and tailored for Switzerland Tourism regarding its needs and identification criteria.

The general objective is thus to analyze possibilities of improvement for the Switzerland Tourism North America Trade department through a benchmarking study of potential partnerships with available Marketing Alliances. A list of the most important performance evaluation criteria will be worked out and will be considered in order to choose the most adapted affiliation in which to invest money. The benchmarking objective is to carry out an analysis of two to six companies with a non-traditional approach and to seek advantages and disadvantages of joining some Alliances for promoting Switzerland.

Switzerland Tourism will be able to have a good overview of the Marketing Alliances available in the U.S. and what they offer as well as a studied and adapted solution. Because reviewing the strategy, renegotiating and signing the contracts are ongoing operations, the measurement tool applied in this work will be presented as an efficient way to make analyses and take decisions in the future.

### **3. Methodology**

The methodology of this thesis is explained in four parts. First of all the reasons why a benchmarking method was chosen is explained and justify. In the second part, the special benchmarking approach tailored for Switzerland Tourism's needs is described. The third and fourth part show how the research of the population was made and how the data were collected.

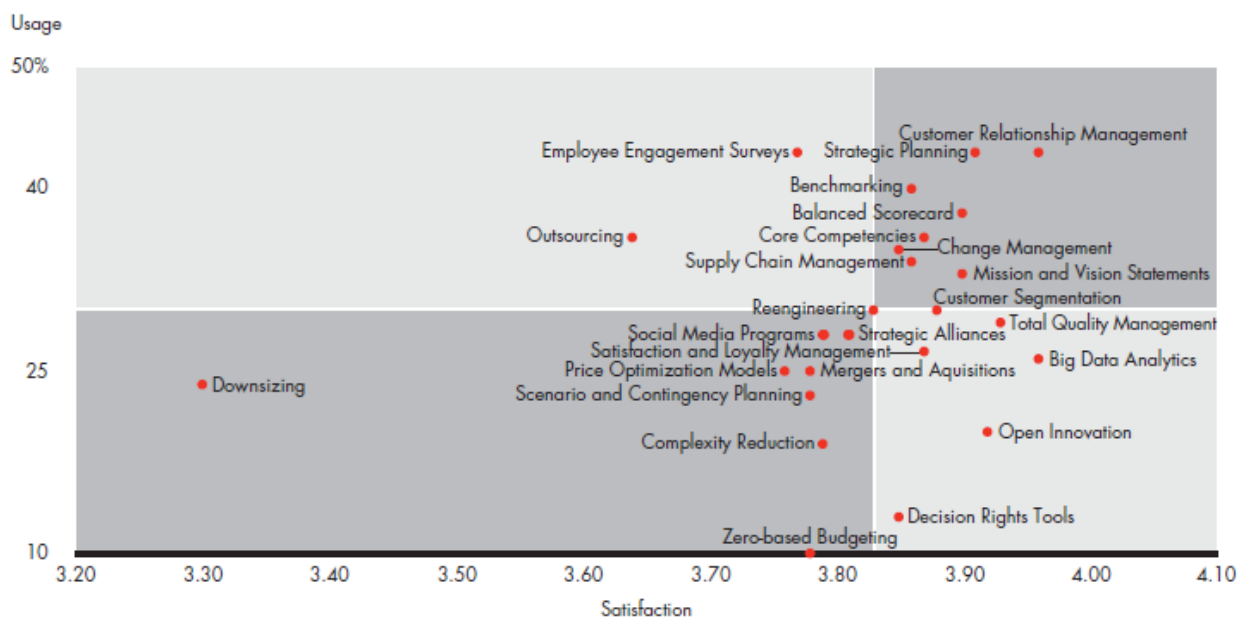
#### **3.1 Research methods and justification**

Benchmarking is a management tool used since the 70's. One of the first companies that utilized and integrated it in its working process is Xerox, an American firm specialized in any kind of office printers and services. In the 1970s Xerox came across competitive difficulties because of another printer company who arrived on the market with very low price items. The competitor had apparently a very different and successful fabrication process because the price of his products was below the production cost of Xerox. Obviously Xerox was

curious to know the competitor's technique and what exactly differed from his own process. This is when Xerox decided to research what makes the other company so successful and to learn then how to improve performance and remain competitive on the market. (Huber & Susanne, 2008, pp. 89-90) This first experience of improving through comparison was called Benchmarking. Xerox having found it very triumphant has even created a basic model and implemented it its quality management system. (David Hutton Associates, 2013) The type of benchmarking practice in the case of Xerox is process-based because it is basically what the competitor was better at and therefore it needed to be analyzed and compared. Nevertheless different benchmarking methods for all kind of companies exist and were used after that one.

After the Xerox success story, Robert C. Camp was hired as Manager, Benchmarking, Competency and Quality Office for the company and was in charge of expanding the benchmarking studies for other subsidiaries (Quality Gurus, 2013). Mister Camp is one of the first authors who has published a book, explained and discussed the benchmarking process. Also, he is broadly, if not the most, referenced researcher on the topic, with two publications: *Benchmarking: The Search For Industry Best Practices That Lead To Superior Practices* and *Business Process Benchmarking finding and implement best practices*. (Llyod, 2004, pp. 136-137)

According to a recent survey by Bain & Company (2013, pp.2-8), Benchmarking is in the top five of the 25 most popular management tools around the globe. Companies use benchmarking to improve performance, understand relative cost position, gain strategic advantage or increase the rate of organizational learning (Rigby K. D., 2013). In general the strategic approach of benchmarking is among the highly used and the satisfaction rating appears to be good (Figure 4). The percentage of use has developed positively since a few years and is planned to increase even more. The actual usage in 2012 was 40% around the world and the forecast for this year is a growth of 40% more.

**Figure 4: Tool usage and satisfaction**

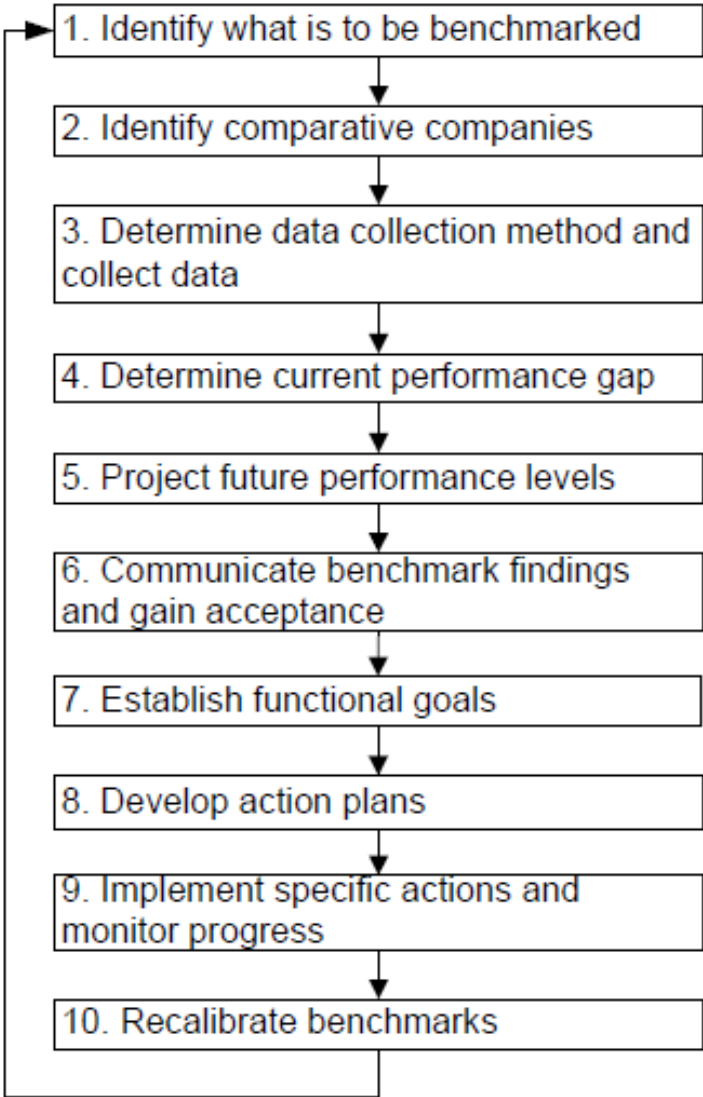
Source: Rigby & Bilodeau (2013)

This management tool is thus broadly used in many different fields. This also means that the different approaches of benchmarking as well as the definitions are multiple because each domain has to adapt the process in order to obtain the most efficient results and implement them.

In the Tourism Industry the most common benchmarking studies are on hotels and tourist attractions. In the past ten years more work has been done concerning the Tourist Destinations although the concept is still vague sometimes. (Pyo, 2002, pp. 13-14) However many firms like BakBasel based in Basel, Switzerland (BakBasel, 2013) or Bain & Company based in Boston, Massachusetts (Bain & Company, 2013), do research and produce studies for the Tourism sector, including benchmarking analysis. Theory on benchmarking process focusing on Tourism Organizations is rather hard to find. Nevertheless Karl W. Wöber wrote an eGuide (2001) which gives a good overview of the steps and types of benchmarking possible within the Tourism Industry. In his work, he refers to many authors, Robert C. Camp being one of them. Camp's process stages (Table 4), as mentioned in Wöber's guide, are followed in this benchmarking of Marketing Alliances for Switzerland Tourism because they are largely known and can be integrated in a tourism oriented study. Also, the second book of Robert C. Camp named previously is highly taken into account for the whole

benchmarking process. Obviously some stages and way of going about things approach have to be adjusted regarding the topic but mainly the process is constructed based on this theory.

**Table 4 - The formal 10-step benchmarking process**



Source : Camp in Wöber (2001)

The whole benchmarking process defined by Robert C. Camp is ongoing. Reaching step ten does not mean the work is finished. On the contrary, it leads to the beginning of the procedure again in order to have a constant progress and improvement. The process can be divided in two parts which are the first four steps and the six last ones. Steps one to four are actually the most important throughout the entire process. They are associated with planning, analysis and results whereas steps five to ten are implementation stages. (Camp, 1995, pp. xvii-xviii) In this benchmarking study only the first five steps are carried out. Indeed the rest is up to Switzerland Tourism Managers to know what, how and when they want to implement the findings and develop action plans. Nevertheless a solution for ongoing action is proposed at the same time: the tool resulting from the whole analysis. The researches conducted to choose a proper candidate list, to set up criteria and to best compare the different Alliances follow the first two phases of Robert C. Camps process (Table 5) which include steps one to five mentioned before. Along the process, Switzerland Tourism’s needs are always taken into account in order to find out the most adapted Marketing Alliance.

**Table 5 - The five phases of the benchmarking process**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Planning:</b> Identify what to benchmark, identify whom to benchmark, and gather data</li> <li>• <b>Analysis:</b> Examine the performance gap and project future performance.</li> <li>• <b>Integration:</b> Communication the findings and develop new goals.</li> <li>• <b>Action:</b> Take actions, monitor progress, and recalibrate measures as needed.</li> <li>• <b>Maturity:</b> Achieve the desired state.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 1: Planning</b></p> <p>A plan for benchmarking is prepared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide: What to benchmark</li> <li>• Identify: Who to benchmark</li> <li>• Plan: The investigation and conduct it → gather necessary information and data and observe the best practices</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase 2: Analysis</b></p> <p>The gap is examined and the performance is assessed against best practices.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine: The current performance gap</li><li>• Project: Future performance levels</li></ul>
<p><b>Phase 3: Integration</b></p> <p>The goals are redefined and incorporated into planning process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication: Benchmarking findings and gain acceptance</li><li>• Revise: Performance goals</li></ul>
<p><b>Phase 4: Action</b></p> <p>Best practices are implemented and periodically recalibrated as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop: Action plans</li><li>• Implement: Actions and monitor progress</li><li>• Recalibrate: The benchmarks</li></ul>
<p><b>Phase 5: Maturity</b></p> <p>Leadership may be achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine: When leadership position is attained</li><li>• Assess: Benchmarking as an ongoing process</li></ul>

Source : Adapted from Camp (1995)

The study is inspired by the steps mentioned above but is still not exactly the same. The benchmarking process used is specially tailored for Switzerland Tourism.

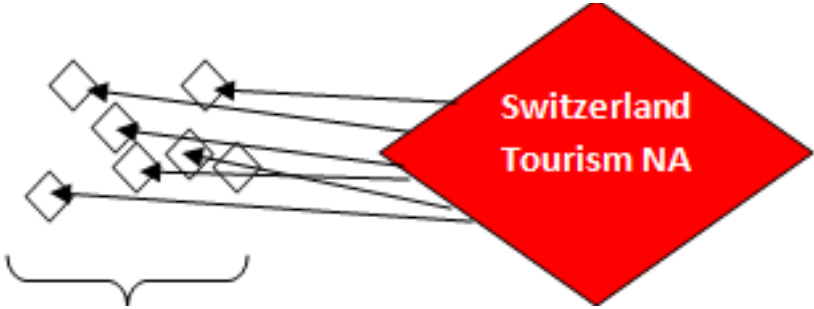
### **3.2 Justification of the benchmarking approach**

The type of tool management chosen for this work is not a traditional benchmarking method. Most of the definitions of the term benchmarking mention “the comparison of the performance of their [companies] products or processes externally with those of competitors and best-in-class companies” (Rigby K. D., 2013, p. 14). In this study the assessment of current processes, the comparison and the learning from the best remain present but are not analyzed for Switzerland Tourism itself toward other companies. It is actually the potential firms to have a partnership with Switzerland Tourism that are benchmarked.



Carrying out a traditional benchmarking would therefore mean analyzing and comparing Switzerland Tourism with other entities, for instance other Tourism Boards (Figure 5). Then, it would be to find out who has the best processes, strategies, partnerships or whatever needs to be benchmarked related to Marketing Alliances.

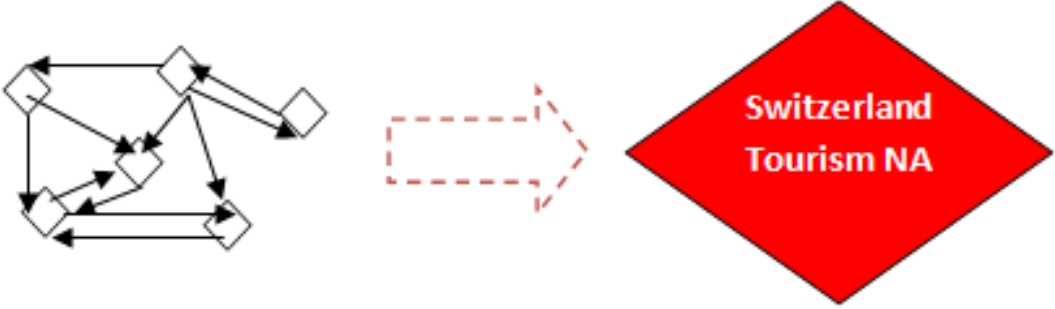
Figure 5 - Traditional benchmarking method



Source : Author's data

However this work does not exactly follow the definition because it is from internal research, focusing on identification and prioritizing performance assessment criteria to apply then to the benchmarking study of the Marketing Alliances. The companies selected for the benchmarking are analyzed and compared between themselves regarding some attributes (Figure 6). The critical performance factors are the miscellaneous needs and available services as provided from interviews and discussions with internal stakeholders as well as positive results observed with the existing affiliations.

Figure 6 - Consortia's benchmarking for Switzerland Tourism North America



Source : Author's data

In spite of special characteristics, this benchmarking study can still be categorized as suggested by Karl W. Wöber in his document *Benchmarking for tourism organizations* (2001, p.5) with a few variations. The approach is external and competitive because the services of external competitors within the same Industry (Marketing Alliances) are compared. The companies are not competitor with Switzerland Tourism but between themselves. However as mentioned above, here is one additional factor to take into account for the comparison: the performance objectives of Switzerland Tourism regarding the services offered.

### **3.3 Research of the population under study**

The source document to begin choosing companies to benchmark is *The Little Black Book 2013* (TravAlliance Media, 2013) which features all the Marketing Alliances to consider as partners for Switzerland Tourism in the U.S. travel Industry. The magazine gives a good overview of which benefits travel agencies can get out of a partnership and the reasons why they should join such networks. TravAlliance Media (2013) is a brand “that supports and promotes the leisure travel Industry” (Internet page). It owes several main brands like the *Vacation Agent* magazine, *Travel Agent Academy*, *TravelPulse.com...* *The Little Black Book* is the most complete brochure of its kind where an exhaustive list of the possible affiliations in the North American Travel Industry is available. The first pages are devoted to the reasons why joining such Alliances will help in business and how to make up his mind in between the multiple possibilities offered. Then, the rest of the magazine presents all the companies existing. Obviously they target different groups, have special focuses and offer varied types and levels of support. They are presented in three categories: Associations, Host Agencies, and Consortia.

First of all, in the analysis part the meaning of all three categories is defined in order to explain which one is taken into account for the study. Some researches regarding the definitions of the words and their differences in the Travel Industry are made. After that, the actual waiving process of the Alliances can begin with the full list of candidates available in that category. From this point a first screening process is implemented to reach a smaller number of companies to compare. Those preliminary criteria are not from performance assessment toward Switzerland Tourism’s needs in term of marketing activities but external and non-relevant factors for the study. What could be called the preliminary criteria waiving

process leads to a decent number of companies that will be part of the detailed benchmarking analysis from internal research focusing on performance criteria.

These criteria are chosen by matching Switzerland Tourism's needs, the positive past experiences with the two existing affiliations, descriptions of the Alliances in *The Little Black Book* (TravAlliance Media, 2013) and the offers provided by the companies in question. The different performance criteria for the benchmarking study do not all have the same weight and some are qualitative while others are quantitative. All the companies are then analyzed, compared and their importance is weighted by using the data available and the criteria. Signature Travel Network and Virtuoso's characteristics are also always exposed in order to see where they situate themselves with regard to the others. At the end of the analysis, some recommendations are given and a ranking of the candidates from the most to the least appropriate is established.

### **3.4 Data collection**

For the literature and theoretical parts the data researches were made online (book orders or websites) and mainly at the New York City Public Library. Regarding information, trends and numbers on the American Travel Industry, it was found in travel Trade magazines, newspapers, international surveys, and online. When the information concerns the American tourism market in relation to Europe or Switzerland specifically, the data were essentially found on the intranet of Switzerland Tourism. The figures often come from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and are put together in some documents by Switzerland Tourism.

Regarding the data about the Marketing Alliances, there were collected in three different ways: in *The Little Black Book 2013*, (TravallianceMedia, 2013), online on the respective websites and from each Representative of the companies. In the first place, an email showing Switzerland Tourism's interest was sent to each of them. Then, if the interest was confirmed, a conference call took place together with the Representative, one internal stakeholder and the author of this thesis in order to discuss what kind of services are needed with which budget. That step is followed by the Marketing Alliance Representatives sending Switzerland Tourism a customized offer. For Signature Travel Network and Virtuoso, the two 2013 signed agreements were taken into account for the study as well as some key results

provided by Virtuoso itself. In order to know what the needs of Switzerland Tourism are exactly, two internal stakeholders were interviewed and questioned throughout the study progress: Alex Herrmann, Director of Americas and Alexandra Imhof, District Manager Western USA. They are the two persons working closely with the Marketing Alliance business during the year.

Once all the data were collected, the actual analysis that leads to the results could take place. Data are put together in texts, graphs and tables. Throughout the analysis the internal stakeholder's inputs are still important and taken into account in order to come out with the best adapted solution and get to develop a tailor-made management tool for future assessment.

#### **4. Synthesis of the results**

In the following chapter three kinds of results are exposed: the candidate waved because they are non-relevant for the benchmarking study, the description of the performance criteria and their importance, and the presentation of the results obtained by analyzing the Marketing Alliances' offers and criteria.

##### **4.1 Waiving process**

As mentioned before, *The Little Black Book 2013* (TravAllianceMedia, 2013) presents three categories of Marketing Alliances: *Associations, Host Agencies, and Consortia*. *The first* category lists *Trade Associations* and *Organizations*. This type of firms represents and defends the interests of different groups (Oxford University Press, 2013), for example the American Society of Travel Agents or Cruise Lines International Association (TravAlliance Media, 2013, p. 24). *The second company type* is meant for smaller independent travel agencies, home-based for example, who need support in their daily business (TravAlliance Media, 2013, pp. 26-27). *The third*, and most important category for this work, contains the *Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks* which are Marketing Alliances with elaborated programs to support the members (TravAlliance Media, 2013, p. 6). While the role of an Association is clear and widespread, the Host Agencies and Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks are very specific to the Tourism sector and also to the U.S. market. Both groups have annual fees, offer support to their members through technology, marketing and

training but have a different target audience and commission system for Travel Agents. The difference is that Host Agencies help independent Agents to run their business and cumulate one revenue which is shown as global for the company. Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks operate with a different model, an override commission system and have a direct relationship to the Suppliers. They can therefore see the individual results of the agencies. (FindAHostTravelAgency.com, 2013) The possibilities are broad for Travel Agents and they have to decide according to their needs and level of support expected. This is mainly why *The Little Black Book* is published every year: to guide the potential members in making a decision.

As Signature Travel Network and Virtuoso proved it the past years, these kinds of affiliations are attractive for Switzerland Tourism. It is essential to reach a large network of pre-qualified Travel Agents with potential for Swiss sales. Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks are companies with “comparable operations” (Camp, 1995, p. 77) within the U.S. Travel Industry, they provide similar services and they have an analogous process. Consequently the selection of potential candidates begins with the list of 19 Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks featured in *The Little Black Book 2013* (TravAlliance Media, 2013, pp. 8-9 & 22-23). The waiving process contains six steps to reach three to six companies, a decent number to benchmark according to Camp (1995, p.97). The process is schematized in Figure 7 below. On the left hand side the blue rectangles represent each step of the waiving process including the criteria. The green rectangles show the number of candidates left after each waiving step. On the right hand side the companies are named.

Figure 7 - Waiving process - which companies to choose for the benchmarking

Waiving steps	Waiving results
19 potential consortia, co-ops, franchise networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Little Black Book 2013</i> list</li> </ul>
Already affiliated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtuoso</li> <li>• Signature</li> </ul>
17 potential candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Little Black Book 2013</i> list minus Virtuoso &amp; Signature</li> </ul>
External elimination factors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cruise Specialist</li> <li>- No longer exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 consortia eliminated on 17: Cruise Holidays, CruiseOne, Cruise Planners, Expedia CruiseShipCenters, Helix</li> </ul>
12 potential candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Affluent Traveler, AMEX, Ensemble, MAST, NEST, Results!Travel, Travel Leaders, Cruise &amp; Vacation Specialists, WESTA, Travelsavers, Vacation.com, Leisure Travel Alliance</li> </ul>
Not interested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leisure Travel Alliance</li> </ul>
11 potential candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Affluent Traveler, AMEX, Ensemble, MAST, NEST, Results!Travel, Travel Leaders, Cruise &amp; Vacation Specialists, WESTA, Travelsavers, Vacation.com</li> </ul>
Grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travelsavers &amp; NEST (American Marketing Group) / Results!Travel &amp; Travel Leaders (Travel Leaders Group)</li> </ul>
9 potential candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMEX, Ensemble, MAST, Cruise &amp; Vacation Specialists, WESTA, Vacation.com, The Affluent Travelers, NEST &amp; Travelsavers, Travel Leaders Group</li> </ul>
No answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMEX, Vacation.com, WESTA, Cruise &amp; Vacation Specialists</li> </ul>
5 potential candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensemble, MAST, Travel Leaders, NEST &amp; Travelsavers and The Affluent Traveler</li> </ul>
Performance criteria	

Source : Author's data

First of all, out of 19 companies, two can automatically be qualified because Switzerland Tourism already has agreements with them: Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network. Then, in the second step the list of the 17 remaining is scaled down to 12 because of two external factors that make the candidates non-relevant for the study: four are Cruise Specialists (TravAlliance Media, 2013, pp. 8-9), and therefore do not match the Swiss market, and one will no longer be in place after December 2013 (Arccorp, 2013). These first two steps mentioned until here are conducted without any direct contact with the companies concerned.

After sending emails to the 12 potential companies left to obtain more information on whether or not they work closely with Tourism Boards and would be interested in working with Switzerland Tourism, step number three is obvious: the negative answers. Leisure Travel Alliance is the only one falling into this category. Thereafter step number four is rather a grouping phase which reduces the list as well but without waiving any entity. Indeed some large marketing groups are umbrella companies and own different brands. In consequence, they have the same Representative person for several brands and propose an only offer. Travel Leaders Group owns many different brands including Travel Leaders and Results!Travel. The Travel Leaders proposal offers activities with both brands. Same case for American Marketing Group which owns NEST and Travelsavers and have them in one offer. At this point of the screening process, the candidates still in the race are real potential companies who could be part of the final benchmarking study. However, a fifth step is further added to the process because of the timeframe in the course of which the work has to be completed. After three follow-ups to the companies that were asked to give more information for a potential partnership, some did not reply at all. This is understood as a lack of interest or a negative feedback to the question asked.

For that reason the remaining candidate list is once again scaled down and brings to the final number of companies that will be benchmarked according to some specific performance criteria. The last step of the process is the actual benchmarking study to find the best match for Switzerland Tourism. The performance criteria will be described further below.

## 4.2 Performance criteria

The performance criteria are the deciding factors to apply to the benchmarking study. They are in the heart of the study because the five offers of potential new companies and the two agreements of the present affiliations are analyzed with regard to them. The full list with descriptions is represented in Table 6 below. Some of the criteria are financial, some non-financial measures and they are at the level of analysis of the services mentioned in the offers and the companies themselves (Phillips & Moutinho, 2000, p. 370).

**Table 6 - Performance criteria**

Performance criteria	Description
<b>1. Tour Operators having Swiss tours</b>	Tour Operators with European tours including Switzerland or Swiss tours only within the network
<b>2. Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels</b>	Swiss properties within the network
<b>3. European preferred Destination(s) in the network</b>	One or more European Tourism Boards representing their country within the network
<b>4. Annual conference</b>	At least one annual conference in order to meet the members in person once a year
<b>5. FAM Trip</b>	Joint organization of an educational trip to Switzerland with the best Travel Agents of the network
<b>6. Mix marketing-education/training</b>	Good mix of marketing and education/training regarding the opportunities and money invested. Marketing should have more Trade opportunities and the amount of educational activities should be significant
<b>7. Mix marketing Travel Agents - Consumers</b>	Good mix of Travel Agent and Consumer marketing activities with a preference for Trade marketing first
<b>8. Efficiency of e-marketing communications</b>	Price per address email sent and number of Travel Agents or Consumers reached

Source : Author's data



### **Tour Operators having Swiss tours and Preferred Hotel Program including Swiss hotels**

A Marketing Alliance having Tour Operators offering Switzerland in their range of products and a hotel program with Swiss properties are key criteria for Switzerland Tourism (A. Imhof, PC, 8 October 2013b). The tour Suppliers, the hotel Suppliers and the Tourism Boards are three entities that can achieve more by joining forces to sell a tourism Destination. They are more efficient because their efforts sum up and they can deliver a product of quality, superior support to Travel Agents and enhance the Swiss presence within the network. (Palmer & Bejou, 1995, p. 618).

### **European preferred Destination(s) in the network**

Another criterion is to see if other European Tourism Boards are present in the Marketing Alliance. This is important for Switzerland Tourism in order to evaluate Europe's level of presence throughout the network. Usually if other European countries have a partnership, it means that there is potential for Switzerland too. (A. Imhof, PC, 8 October 2013b)

### **Annual Conference**

The performance criterion number four, Annual Conference, is an important item to have in an offer because it allows the members to meet each other in person at least once a year (A. Imhof, PC, 8 October 2013b). Even though virtual reunions are common nowadays, people still prefer to have a face-to-face to meet clients or negotiate contracts. In North America 74% of the workers would rather have an in-person meeting against 19% by email, 4% by phone and 4% by instant message/chat. (Newman & Ober, 2012)

### **FAM trip**

The next criteria concerns educational trips. FAM trips are a great way to offer the Travel Agents a chance to familiarize with a Destination and experience by themselves what it can offer. For Switzerland Tourism and other Swiss Suppliers (airlines, hotels, services, etc) it is an expensive activity but an essential collaboration to get the agents to know the country. (A. Imhof, PC, 8 October 2013b)

These first five performance criteria are part of the same category because they can clearly be identified or not in the Marketing Alliances offers. The last three are more difficult to compare but essential for the analysis and Switzerland Tourism. They concern marketing and education/training.

### **Mix marketing-education/training**

The mix marketing-education/training is a criterion that has to be looked closely by Switzerland Tourism in order to have the right activities and amount of money in both categories. Education and training have become more and more important in time and Switzerland Tourism noticed by experience that the activities are very useful and appreciated by the Travel Agents. The general good feedbacks from Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network Agents and the excellent Virtuoso results proved it until today. Marketing activities should not be overlooked, as it is key as well to keep Switzerland on top the mind of the Travel Agents and Consumers when deciding on their next vacation destination. It is important to have a good balance of opportunities in each category and to reach the right target audience. (A. Herrmann, PC, 13 September 2013) This brings to another important mix to consider concerning the target audience: mix marketing Travel Agents – Consumers.

### **Mix marketing Travel Agents - Consumers**

As a Tourism Board and as the Trade Department in this case, Switzerland Tourism wants to make people travel to Switzerland by communicating with the key persons, the Travel Agents. The more opportunities to reach them the better it is and they will become aware of Switzerland Tourism's presence to support them. Consumer marketing is not the a priority at all but a maximum of two or three activities are often included in the Marketing Alliances' offers. (A. Imhof, PC, 8 October 2013b)

### **Efficiency of printed and e-marketing communications**

Efficiency of the Travel Agent and Consumer communications is the eighth and last defined criterion of this study. Aside from considering the best mix marketing-education/training and Travel Agents – Consumers marketing investment, Switzerland Tourism also needs to weight the impact of each action. The price of a single sending and the

number of contacts reached are analyzed. If possible, a low price reaching a high number of quality contacts is what Switzerland Tourism wants to get. Special targeted group communications are also valuable because it touches the right Agents who may have an interest in Switzerland. The ratio for these kinds of special interest communications will not be calculated because the goal is not to reach as many contacts as possible but the right ones (A. Imhof, PC, 8 October 2013b)

The first five criteria in Table 6 are the key criteria to take into consideration to begin the benchmark; they are must-have. Then, the marketing related criteria number six and seven come at the same time to tip the scales in favor of some companies. Finally, the Marketing Alliances having all the criteria mentioned before are compared regarding the size of their impact with communications.

**4.3 Presentation of the data**

The five potential companies have a basic similar functioning because they are all from the same category (Consortia, Co-ops and Franchise Networks). They propose marketing, technology and education support to Travel Agents. However they set oneself apart from each other by their company type, size, target audience and services (Table 7)

**Table 7- General information on the new five potential companies compared**

	The Affluent Traveler Collection	Travel Leaders & Results!Travel	Ensemble Travel Group	MAST Travel Network	Travelsavers & NEST
<b>Members</b>	250	1100	850	200	2,700
<b>Type</b>	Marketing group for luxury travel advisors	Both Franchise Networks	Cooperative	Member-owned cooperative	International marketing group & Marketing group for independent home-based Travel Agents
<b>USA or/and Canada?</b>	USA & Canada	USA	USA & Canada	Midwest (USA)	USA
<b>Target audience</b>	Luxury for affluent	Broad	Broad	Leisure travel	Broad & home-based

Source : Author’s data

### **MAST Travel Network**

MAST Travel Network is the smallest of the five companies with 200 members (TravAlliance Media, 2013, p. 22). This member-owned cooperative focuses mainly on leisure travel with a small component on business travel. The travel agencies are composed of two to six employees located in the Midwest of the U.S., mainly in Illinois and Wisconsin States. (J. Werner, President and COO MAST Travel Network, personal communication, 23September2013).

**Figure 7 - MAST Travel Network logo**



Source : MAST Travel Network,

### **The Affluent Traveler Collection**

With more than 250 members (TravAlliance Media, 2013, p. 8), The Affluent Traveler Collection is the second smallest marketing group in this benchmarking study. The members are located in the U.S. and in English speaking Canada and have a luxury travel focus (A-M. Moebes, Executive Vice President Well-Being Travel & D. Press, Marketing Director Well-Being Travel, personal communication, 26September2013). The Affluent Traveler Collection is part of the American Marketing Group that is specialized in business, coaching, training and consulting. It has a large family of brands of 17 including NEST and Travelsavers as well. (American Marketing Group, 2013)

**Figure 8 - The Affluent Traveler Collection logo**



Source : The Affluent Traveler Collection, 2013

**Figure 9 - American Marketing Group logo**



Source: Market to Riches Team, 2013

### **Ensemble Travel Group**

Ensemble Travel Group is the mid-size company of this study but is more than three times larger than the two mentioned above with more than 850 agencies independently owned that are shareholders (TravAlliance Media, 2013, p. 9). The target audience is broad and there are as many American members as Canadians. The company has a strong presence in both countries. (S.Hall, Senior Director Supplier Relations Ensemble Travel Group, personal communication, 17September2013).

### **Travel Leaders/Results!Travel**

The second largest network with 1,100 members is composed of two companies: Travel Leaders and Results!Travel. They are both franchise networks of Travel Leaders Group which owns several and diverse brands. The target audience is very broad and throughout the U.S. only. The offer includes activities that most of the times touch both networks with a few exceptions. (B. Hegarty, Vice President – Destinations Travel Leaders Group, personal communication, 17September2013)

### **Travelsavers/NEST**

Travelsavers and NEST are two marketing groups with a total of 2,700 members in the U.S. (TravAlliance Media, 2013, pp. 22-23). As mentioned before, they are part of the American Marketing Group. NEST's network is made of 600 independent home-based Travel Agents while

**Figure 10 - Ensemble Travel Group logo**



Source : Dooley, 2011

**Figure 11- Travel Leaders logo**



Source : Host Agency Reviews, 2013

**Figure 12 - Results!Travel logo**



Source : Results !Travel USA , 2013

**Figure 13 - Travelsavers logo**



Source : Villaverde De Rico, 2013

Travelsavers regroups all types of agencies. They both have a broad target audience. The offer includes both companies but with distinctive activities for each Marketing Alliance. (A-M. Moebes, Executive Vice President Well-Being Travel & D. Press, Marketing Director Well-Being Travel, PC, 26 September 2013)

### **Signature Travel Network and Virtuoso**

Regarding the number of members from the smallest to the largest company, Virtuoso and Signature Travel Network would rank respectively at the second and fourth position with 214 and 333 members. Signature Travel Network is a member-owned company and Virtuoso a consortium. Both are present in the U.S. and Canada with a luxury/leisure focus.

After the general presentation of all Marketing Alliances above, Table 8 below shows which networks have Tour Operators with packages including Switzerland, offer FAM Trip in their program, possess a preferred hotel program including Switzerland, has an Annual Conference and are affiliated with other European Destinations. All the of them have Tour Operators offering Switzerland, preferred Swiss hotels and an Annual Conference that allows the members to meet each other in person and do networking. They also almost all offer a FAM trip experience. This can be seen in Table 8 below with more details in the text following.

**Figure 14 - NEST logo**



Source : Holman Travel, 2013

**Figure 15 - Signature Travel Network logo**



Source : Eisen, 2013

**Figure 16 - Virtuoso logo**



Source : Virtuoso, 2013a

**Table 8 - Fact-criteria of the Marketing Alliances**

	The Affluent Traveler Collection	Travel Leaders & Results!Travel	Ensemble Travel Group	MAST Travel Network	Travelsavers & NEST	Virtuoso	Signature Travel Network
Tour Operators offering Switzerland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FAM trip	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Preferred hotels in Switzerland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Annual Conference	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
European preferred Destinations	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Source : Author’s table with data from Marketing Alliances’ offers

**FAM trip, Tour Operators offering Switzerland and Annual Conference**

The seven Marketing Alliances presented in Table 8 above offer a FAM trip, feature Tour Operator offering Swiss tours and propose to participate at their Annual Conference. There is one exception that concerns Signature Travel Network, no FAM trip was organized/proposed with Switzerland Tourism until today.

**Preferred Hotel Program**

The Affluent Traveler Collection’s hotel program is composed of five hotels in Switzerland (The Affluent Traveler, 2013), Ensemble Travel Group six (Ensemble Travel Group, 2013) and Travel Leaders/Results!Travel 91 (B. Hegarty, PC, 17 September 2013). MAST Travel Network slightly differs from the others because they do not have a proper hotel program but work through Travel Bound, a big Tour Operator that collaborates with many hotels in Switzerland (J. Werner, PC, 23 September 2013). Travelsavers/NEST has a hotel network of mainly large brands and international chains like Hilton, Starwood, Hyatt. No information concerning the

number could be obtained. (A-M., PC, 26 September 2013) The preferred hotel program of Virtuoso gathers 26 luxurious properties in Switzerland (Virtuoso, 2013b) and Signature Travel Network 12, high standard as well (Signature Travel Network, 2013).

### **Presence of European Tourism Boards**

Each Marketing Alliance shows a different situation regarding the European Tourism Boards. First of all, Travelsavers/NEST and The Affluent Traveler Collection do not partner with any of them. However, according to A-M. Moebes (PC, 26 September 2013) The Affluent Traveler Collection collaborates from time to time with European Tourism Boards on specific events. MAST Travel Network has an affiliation with Germany and Ireland Tourism (J. Werner, PC, 23September2013) and Travel Leaders/Results!Travel with Germany only (B. Hegarty, PC, 17 September 2013). Wales is a partner of Ensemble Travel Group and Monaco plans to join the network in 2014 (S.Hall, PC, 17 September 2013). Virtuoso features more than 130 Destinations Specialists around the world (Virtuoso, 2013c) and Signature Travel Network over 80 (Signature Travel Network, 2012), both including European countries.

### **How the money is split between Marketing, Education/Training and other activities**

The five offers provided by the Marketing Alliances have prices going from \$6,000 to \$58,850. They have different ways of displaying the items and their prices but in general the activities proposed are similar and can therefore be classified in categories corresponding to Switzerland Tourism's performance criteria. These categories are displayed in the first column of Table 9 below. They allow showing how the money is split in the offer. For the first two categories, the results will be exposed in percentage of money invested. The percentage is calculated on the great total of the offer except for the mix Travel Agent-Consumer marketing which is based on the total marketing amount. This allows making comparison at fair value.



**Table 9 – Allocation of the money in Marketing Alliances offers**

	The Affluent Traveler Collection	Travel Leaders & Results !Travel	Ensemble Travel Group	MAST Travel Network	Travelsavers & NEST	Virtuoso	Signature Travel Network
Direct online & printed marketing to Travel Agents	\$9'625.00	\$16'500.00	\$10'250.00		\$10'750.00	\$ 5'500.00	
Direct online & printed marketing to the Consumers	\$38'625.00	\$22'500.00	\$12'250.00	\$1'000.00	\$14'250.00	\$ 41'500.00	\$20'000.00
Webinars	\$600.00 <sup>6</sup>	\$1'000.00 <sup>7</sup>		\$500.00 <sup>8</sup>	Included	\$ 8'000.00 <sup>9</sup>	
FAM trip							
Annual conference	\$10'000.00	TBD	\$15'000.00	\$1'500.00		\$ 15'000.00	\$3'000.00
Other in-person training opportunities		TBD	\$8'000	\$2'500.00		\$ 6'000.00	\$8'000.00
Other activities		\$10'000.00	\$3'500.00	\$500.00		\$ 20'000.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$58'850.00	\$50'000.00	\$49'000.00	\$6'000.00	\$25'000.00	\$ 96'000.00	\$31'000.00

Source : Author's data

<sup>6</sup> Two webinars

<sup>7</sup> Three webinars

<sup>8</sup> One webinar

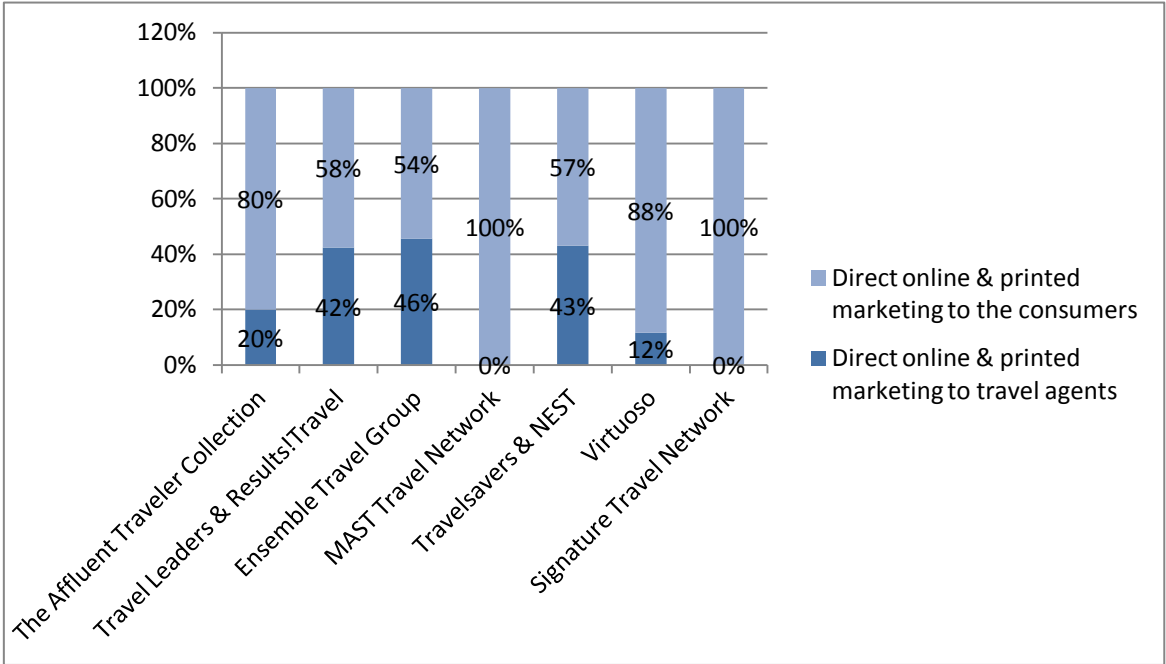
<sup>9</sup> Six webinars

As it can be seen in Table 9 above, there is generally online and printed marketing which target two different audiences proposed in the offers:

1. Direct online and printed marketing targeting the **Travel Agents**
2. Direct online and printed marketing targeting the **final Consumers**

The first marketing type targets Travel Agents only within the network and the activities are for example e-newsletters, ads or banner on the extranet platform of the company, targeted emails, direct mails, postcards and Trade magazines. The other targets final Consumers only, meaning the clients of the Travel Agents. Consumer magazines, direct mails, targeted emails, ads and banners on the company’s website are some examples of activities. The highest percentage of money dedicated to Travel Agent marketing within the potential new affiliations is 42% with Travel Leaders/Results!Travel. MAST Travel Network and Signature Travel Network have the lowest rate because they actually do not have any Travel Agent marketing activities at all. Travel Leaders/Results!Travel and Ensemble are the two companies that have the percentage rate the most balanced between the Travel Agent and Consumer marketing, respectively 42% - 58% and 46% - 54% (Figure 7).

**Figure 17 - Percentage of money invested into travel agent and Consumer marketing**



Source : Author’s data

As seen above in Table 9, most of the companies propose webinars in their offers except Ensemble Travel Group. No price is showed for Travelsavers/NEST but the overall price includes one complementary webinar during the year. The FAM trips on line four, as mentioned before, are offered by all the Marketing Alliances but was not conducted with Signature Travel Network. However they do not have a price indicated because they are customized tours organized jointly with Switzerland Tourism and both parties provide different services for it in due time. For example the Marketing Alliance can provide a list of qualified agents and Switzerland Tourism hotel nights, flights and so on.

On the fifth line, the Annual Conference costs can be observed. Travel Leaders/Results!Travel do not know the final price of participation yet. The Affluent Traveler Collection Symposium costs \$10,000 and welcome every year around 1,000 participants (Poder, 2012), same number as for the Ensemble International Conference (Travel Press, 2011) which costs \$15,000. MAST Travel Conference is way less expensive but the price is proportional to the number of members. Travelsavers/NEST also has an Annual Conference but the service is available as an additional item from the offer.

Other in-person training opportunities on line six of Table 9 are for example some additional regional or national networking events throughout the year. Ensemble Travel Group and MAST Travel Network included them in their offer and Travel Leaders/Results!Travel could not communicate a price yet but have that service available.

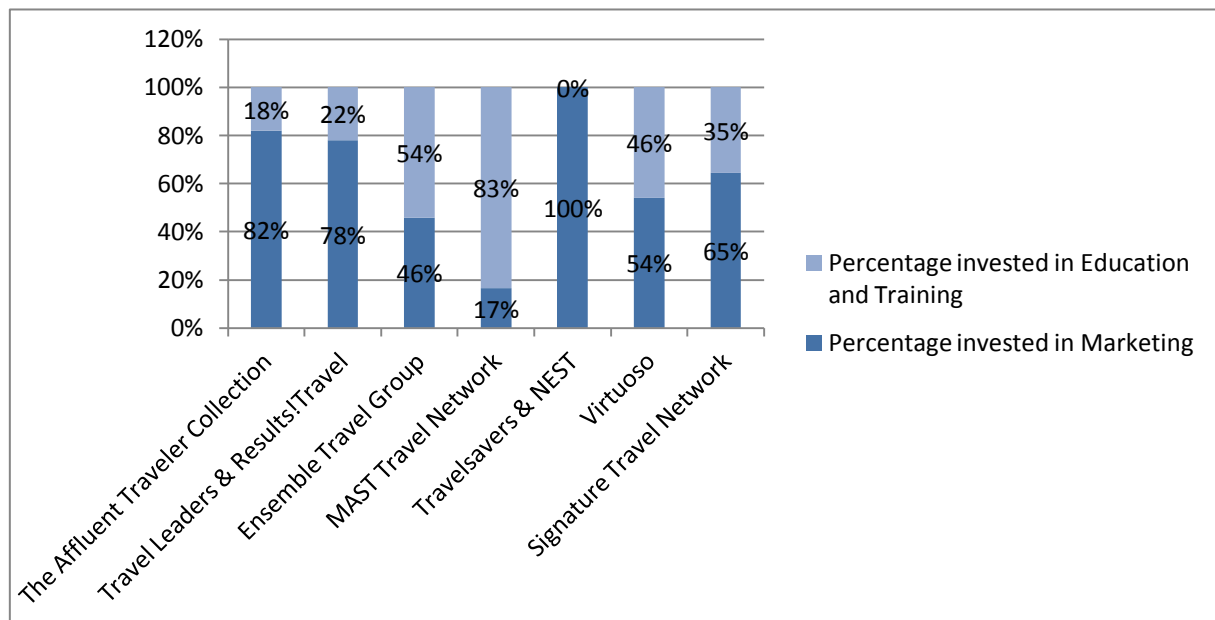
The line showing other activities regroupes some service proposals that cannot be classified in the above categories. They are usually mandatory packages for the member but not of very high importance in comparison to other criteria. For Travel Leaders/Results!Travel, the \$10,000 are dedicated to the Switzerland Agent Toolkit, including an image gallery, some templates, member logos and so on. The \$3,500 of Ensemble Travel Group are for Supplier to Member Communication through a Preferred Supplier Guide, Online posting and weekly member-email. This is mandatory in the offer. MAST Travel Network has \$500 dedicated for Sales Communications (reference guide and newsletters). In the last two columns of Table 9, Virtuoso's and Signature Travel Network's costs are also detailed in order to see how the money was distributed in 2013. In the

category Other Activities, Virtuoso has \$20,000 for Switzerland’s presence on the extranet, some communications and an e-learning module for Travel Agents.

**Mix Marketing-Education/Training**

Another way to see how the money is distributed is the mix-education/training. The first two criteria in Table 9, Direct online & printed marketing to Travel Agents and Direct online & printed marketing to Travel Agents, are marketing activities. Webinars, FAM Trips, Annual Conferences and Other In-Person Training opportunities are part of the educative side. In Other Activities, depending on which company it can be marketing or education/training related to Travel Agents or Consumers. The money is scattered accordingly in Figure 18 in order to illustrate the mix. Most of the companies have a higher percentage of money dedicated to marketing except Ensemble Travel Group. It is mostly a blatant percentage over 75% and a bit lower for Virtuoso, 54% and Signature, 65%. Travelsavers/NEST stands out because 100% of their offer concerns marketing activities. However as mentioned before, two education/training items are listed in the offer: a complementary webinar included and additional money can be invested in the annual conference which is a separate.

**Figure 18 - Mix Marketing - Education/Training**



Source: Author’s data

**Contact reached and price per email address**

Beside the different characteristics of the companies, offers and how the money is spread over the activities, it is also interesting to know how many contacts reach the diverse marketing actions proposed in the offers. The following figures give first an idea of how much a single Travel Agent email or e-newsletter cost and to how many contacts it is sent. Then it shows how much money it costs per email address. In Figure 19 below, the Marketing Alliances proposing that kind of service in their offers are displayed. Some of the companies also have special interest segmented emails. Those are not counted in the list below because they are not considered as comparable since they focus on a certain target group and therefore on purpose have fewer contacts.

**Figure 19 - Cost per email address and contacts reached for e-communications**



Source: Author's data

The lower price per email address is a result of Travel Leaders/Results!Travel eExclusive Agent emails: \$0.05 per email address going to a total of 8,500 contacts. Travel Leaders/Results!Travel also propose a special interest emailing with a focus on luxury. This Luxury Campaign includes one e-Special agent email to 1,100 agencies and two e-Exclusive agent emails to 200 select luxury agencies as well as other marketing actions. For Travelsavers, the Exclusive Agent emails are deployed three times a year to 3,342 contacts and one sending costs \$0.29. NEST has four Exclusive Agent emails per year at \$0.58 each

email address. Travesalvers and NEST both also offer respectively three and four Exclusive agent emails. The priciest e-communication costs \$1.06 per email address: The Affluent Traveler Collection E-newsletter which is sent out 12 times a year. About Virtuoso, it is difficult to evaluate the value of the e-communications because they are part of a marketing package and are ongoing. For example the contract mentions the possibility for Switzerland to be featured in bi-weekly e-newsletters with information content and weekly e-newsletters with call-to-action content. These activities are subject to relevance, availability and approval by Virtuoso. The number of members reached is 7,200. In the 2013 contract with Signature Travel Network, no e-communication was planned. If such an activity would be in the agreement, it would reach 6,000 network members.

Some of the Marketing Alliances have Consumer emails included in their offer as well (Table 12). This is the case for The Affluent Traveler Collection, Travel Leaders/Results!Travel and Travelsavers/NEST. Travel Leaders/Results!Travel propose targeted Consumer emails only whereas the two others have general Consumer emails. For those two, the number of contacts reached can vary because the agents also have the ability to opt-in. So far it has been sent from 9,000 to 30,000 persons. The Affluent Traveler Collection has a monthly e-communication but it does not mean that Switzerland can be included in each of them.

**Table 10: E-communication to Consumers**

	The Affluent Traveler Collection	Travel Leaders/Results!Travel	Travelsavers/NEST
<b>Email type</b>	Monthly e-communication	Consumer Travel Flash Email & e-Special Consumer email luxury campaign	Consumer emails
<b>Number of Consumers reached</b>	9,000-30,000	100,000 & 50,000	9,000-30,000
<b>How many times in the year</b>	12	Two times & one time	One time for Travelsavers contacts only & one time for NEST contacts only
<b>Price</b>	\$7,000	N/A <sup>10</sup>	\$2,500 & \$1,750

Source : Author’s data

<sup>10</sup> No email prices available because they are part of a whole package

As seen above, the Alliances show dissimilarities regarding the performance criteria. On the basis of these findings, the interpretation and recommendations follow in the next chapter.

## **5. Interpretation of the results and recommendations**

The results presented in the previous chapter are all directly related to the performance criteria defined regarding the requirements of Switzerland Tourism. Thanks to the analysis of each criterion, the final benchmarking and recommendation process can take place regarding the future strategic investment of \$40,000. The recommendation chapter has two parts: the results and the assessment tool. Some of the following points have to be kept in mind:

- All the offers received were analyzed as they are, without any further negotiation involved. Only some additional questions were asked afterwards to each company in order to have balanced information to benchmark them.
- This study is a first phase of offer analysis and recommendations in the process of choosing a Marketing Strategy. Switzerland Tourism gave the companies some information on their needs before asking for the offers and they took them into account at different levels. The ranking of the Marketing Alliances that will be done is rather a recommendation on who is best to negotiate further with than a suggestion of which contract to sign.
- Some contracts will be negotiated to get closer to Switzerland Tourism's needs and therefore after the first phase, others analysis will take place. In order to facilitate this process, an assessment tool containing the different steps for the analysis is designed.

First, the five potential new companies are compared regarding the performance criteria. Then Virtuoso as a best example is added to the comparison as well as Signature Travel Network. In Table 11, the column in the middle is the ideal Marketing Alliance profile for Switzerland Tourism because the first five criteria are met, the mix marketing-education/training and the two kind of marketing are balanced, and the price per email address is low and reaches a high number of contacts.

This table has been established according to the expectations of Switzerland Tourism and the trends observed in the five offers in order to be as close to the reality as possible. Regarding the mix marketing-education/training and the mix Travel Agent marketing-

Consumer marketing, the percentage is the amount of money invested but the number of opportunities and the price of each are also two very important factors to take into account.

**Table 11 -Ideal situation and Virtuoso as a best-in-class example**

Criteria	Ideal	Virtuoso
Tour Operators having Swiss tours	Yes	Yes
Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels	Yes	Yes
European preferred Destination(s) in the network	Yes	Yes
Annual conference	Yes	Yes
FAM Trip	Yes	Yes
Mix marketing-education/training	55% - 45%	54% - 46%
Mix Travel Agents –Consumers marketing	40% - 60%	12% - 88%
Efficiency e-marketing communications	Best ratio price per email address – number of contact reached	-7,200 contacts for different e-newsletters <sup>11</sup>

Source: Author’s data

The ideal invested money for mix marketing-education/training chosen is 55% and 45%. Regarding all the offers, there is generally more money invested in marketing than education. This is probably because there are more diverse opportunities in marketing than education and therefore it costs more. The same is noticeable for Travel Agent and Consumer marketing with a goal of 40% and 60%. Indeed more money is dedicated to Consumer marketing in general whereas Switzerland Tourism wants to reach Travel Agents

<sup>11</sup> Price of the activity non-available because part of a whole package



mainly. The reason is that Consumer marketing is more expensive because the target audience is larger. Furthermore, when it concerns printed Consumer publications, the price is usually quite high. Last but not least, Switzerland Tourism needs to have efficient communications, not too pricy going to many qualified Travel Agents.

Virtuoso's criteria are also represented in Table 11 in the last column. Indeed it is the best-in-class example for Switzerland Tourism because a lot has been achieved with this partnership. The Consumer marketing is very expensive and contains only one opportunity of direct mailing plus a small amount for the special adventure and active campaign brochure, emails and direct mails. Other than that, there are a lot of education/training opportunities and other marketing activities. Obviously the Virtuoso agreement has been negotiated many times since the beginning of the partnership with Switzerland Tourism in order to reach that stage. Today it is still not perfect because it is always possible to achieve more but it gives a good idea of what Switzerland Tourism's expectations are. The ideal offer is perhaps a bit too utopian whereas Virtuoso's offer is closer to the reality.

The importance of each Marketing Alliance is now weighted and compared in the order to rank them from the less to the most attractive for Switzerland Tourism.

### **MAST Travel Network**

MAST Travel Network (Table 12), does meet the first five criteria but with a slight drawback regarding the preferred hotel program. It is not ideal because the company does not have its own network of properties in Switzerland. In consequence it breaks the idea of having a group of Suppliers and Travel Agents who could work together and facilitate the process of promoting and selling the Destination. Furthermore, no Travel Agent marketing is done, only Switzerland Tourism's presence in the sales reference guide could reach the agents directly. On the contrary, the number of education/training opportunities is good, including many in-person trainings like for example a regional training, or the National Tourist Office training day and one webinar. Beside that 100% of the marketing money goes to Consumer marketing with only one activity. The mix is the most unbalanced of all five companies. MAST Travel Network is a special case because it is the only alliance that do not cover at least the full territory of the U.S. (at least because some companies have Canada as well). Illinois and Wisconsin are not target audiences big enough. The Trade department of

Switzerland Tourism is present in North America to promote Switzerland to a maximum of qualified Travel Agents all over. Therefore MAST Travel Network would not be able to satisfy this demand in addition to other points mentioned above.

**Table 12 - Summary of the criteria for MAST Travel Network**

Tour Operators having Swiss tours	Yes
Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels	Yes
European preferred Destination(s) in the network	Yes
Annual conference	Yes
FAM Trip	Yes
Mix marketing-education/training	17% - 83%
Marketing to Travel Agents – Marketing to Consumers	0% -100%
Efficiency of e-marketing communications	-

Source : Author’s data

**Travelsavers/NEST**

Like the previous Alliance, Travelsavers/NEST is one of the two companies that do not cover all the five fact-criteria. It does not have any collaboration with European tourist boards (Table 13). Regarding the agent education, with a single webinar targeting Travelsavers and NEST members, the Marketing Alliance does not satisfy the need of educating the Travel Agents. The mix Travel Agent-Consumer marketing is one of the most balanced of all the offers, 43%-57%, but does not clear the lack of education/training activities. Indeed no Travel Agent marketing budget is planned. The price per email address for NEST places the company in the second priciest position and Travelsavers’s the third. Compared to the other Marketing Alliances, a good number of Travel Agent e-communications is sent out throughout the year: six e-newsletter each, three agent emails for Travelsavers and four for NEST.

**Table 13 - Summary of the criteria for Travelsavers/NEST**

Tour Operators having Swiss tours	Yes
Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels	Yes
European preferred Destination(s) in the network	No
Annual conference	Yes
FAM Trip	Yes
Mix marketing-education/training	100% - 0%
Marketing to Travel Agents – Marketing to Consumers	43% - 57%
Efficiency of e-marketing communications	- 3,342 contacts for Travelsavers exclusive agent email , \$0.29 per email address -1,108 contacts for NEST exclusive agent email, \$0.58 per address email -9,000-30,000 contacts for Consumer e-communication, \$0.12 per email address for Travelsavers and \$0.08 for NEST

Source : Author’s data

**The Affluent Traveler Collection**

Table 14 below summarizes The Affluent Travelers Collection. Like Travelsavers/NEST, it does not have any affiliation with European Destinations. The Affluent Traveler Collection’s offer is rather marketing oriented than education/training oriented according to the amount of money invested. The money devoted for Travel Agent training is very low in comparison to the marketing and contains actually only two opportunities: the Annual Conference for \$10,000 and two webinars for \$600. During the annual conference there is an occasion of conducting two workshops of 45 minutes each attended by approximately 50 Agents. Switzerland Tourism has had good experiences and feedbacks with those kinds of training sessions, for example at the Signature Travel Network Annual Conference 2013. Nevertheless the split of the marketing costs between Travel Agents and Consumers is not well balanced neither: 20%-80%. It is the second worst imbalance of all five companies. Furthermore the e-communication analysis shows that it appears to be the highest price per

email address sent. The total offer is the most expensive of all, \$58,850, and comparing to others it does not offer more opportunities of marketing and training.

**Table 14 - Summary of the criteria for The Affluent Traveler Collection**

Tour Operators having Swiss tours	Yes
Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels	Yes
European preferred Destination(s) in the network	No
Annual conference	Yes
FAM Trip	Yes
Mix marketing-education/training	82% - 18%
Marketing to Travel Agents – Marketing to Consumers	20% - 80%
Efficiency of e-marketing communications	-550 contacts for agent e-newsletter , \$1.06 per email address -9,000-30,000 contacts for Consumer e-communication, N/A

Source : Author’s data

The two companies left are Ensemble Travel Group and Travel Leaders/Results!Travel. Both have the two the highest number of members, respectively 850 and 1,100.

**Ensemble Travel Group**

Ensemble Travel Group (Table 15) has a very good balance of marketing and education/training which is closed to the ideal mix. The number of opportunities is not high but of good quality: the Annual Conference and one additional in-person training. The price of the annual conference, \$15,000, is extremely high in comparison to the others. Surprisingly, the mix Travel Agent and Consumer marketing shows the exact same percentage, 46% and 54%. However some activities proposed are not very attractive for Switzerland Tourism because they are some online advertising presence on the extranet for example. The presence in the Supplier guide and weekly-email to the members are more interesting but none are specially tailored for Switzerland.

**Table 15 - Summary of the criteria for Ensemble Travel Group**

Tour Operators having Swiss tours	Yes
Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels	Yes
European preferred Destination(s) in the network	Yes
Annual conference	Yes
FAM Trip	Yes
Mix marketing-education/training	46% - 54%
Marketing to Travel Agents – Marketing to Consumers	46% - 54%
Efficiency e-marketing communications	-

Source : Author’s data

**Travel Leaders/Results!Travel**

The last Marketing Alliance meeting the ideal performance criteria considerably well is Travel Leaders/Results!Travel (Table 16). The preferred hotel program presents an attractive number of 91 hotels in Switzerland and the network is present in Europe. The offer emphasizes the will of promoting the Switzerland e-learning program and gives a lot of details about activities like FAM trips or targeted campaigns to Agents with a potential interest in Switzerland. Regarding the money dedicated to marketing activities and education/training, the company does not have an ideal balance. More than three times the amount of education/training is invested in marketing but still there are a lot of different opportunities comparing to The Affluent Traveler Collection, for example, which has a similar percentage rates. The positive point is that in marketing the money is well balanced with 42% for Travel Agents and 58% for Consumers. The amount of money matches with a fair number of opportunities for both kinds of marketing.

**Table 16 - Summary of criteria for Travel Leaders/Results!Travel**

Tour Operators having Swiss tours	Yes
Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels	Yes
European preferred Destination(s) in the network	Yes
Annual conference	Yes
FAM Trip	Yes
Mix marketing-education/training	72% - 28%
Marketing to Travel Agents – Marketing to Consumers	42% - 58%
Efficiency of e-marketing communications	8,500 contacts for exclusive agent email, \$0.05 per email address

Source : Author’s data

Furthermore, slightly less than the half is dedicated to a part of the Luxury Campaign targeting selective Customers. This is an even more valuable marketing activity since Consumers are not the primary target audience for Switzerland Tourism, here the communication is at least target to potential Clients. With reference to the efficiency of the communications, Travel Leaders/Results!Travel has the highest amount of contacts reached and the lowest cost per email address.

**Ranking and recommendations**

All the results mentioned above leads to the ranking of the five companies from the most to the least adapted for Switzerland Tourism as follows:

1. Travel Leaders/Results!Travel
2. Ensemble Travel Group
3. The Affluent Traveler Collection
4. Travelsavers/NEST

5. MAST Travek Network

Travel Leaders/Results!Travel is thus the Marketing Alliance that is worth to considered as a potential future Partner for Switzerland Tourism. The question raised at the very beginning of this work can now be answered: Does Switzerland Tourism have to add a new agreement with Travel Leaders/Results!Travel to its portfolio of Marketing Alliances or invest more in the existing agreement with Signature Travel Network? The question is delicate because they are both at different stages regarding their relation with Switzerland Tourism.

On one hand, Travel Leaders/Results!Travel is at an initial stage. A first offer which is fairly satisfying compared to four others has been suggested. There is still some parts of the contracts to negotiate obviously but the company definitely understood Switzerland Tourism’s needs and has a network in which some successful work may be done. On the other hand, Signature Travel Network is at a late stage regarding its relation with Switzerland Tourism but not yet too advanced and satisfying. This is why the question of keeping the agreement or not is raised because Marketing Alliance does not show the best results regarding the performance criteria defined further up and the 2013 agreement is rather poor (Table 17).

**Table 17 - Summary of the 2013 agreement with Signature Travel Network**

Tour Operators having Swiss tours	Yes
Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels	Yes
European preferred Destination(s) in the network	Yes
Annual conference	Yes
FAM Trip	No
Mix marketing-education/training	65% - 35%
Marketing to Travel Agents – Marketing to Consumers	0% - 100%
Efficiency of e-marketing communications	-

Source : Author’s data

The education/training side of the contract is clearly missing with the Annual Conference being the only service. During the 2013 annual conference, Switzerland Tourism has the opportunity to host two exclusive workshops attended by 150 Travel Agents in total. This is typically a valuable activity but unfortunately it cannot be conducted every year. On the marketing side, a single activity is undertaken: one Switzerland exclusive direct mail sent to 30,000 Consumers in February 2013. In addition to that a few more value-adds are included, for example some online content features.

An new agreement with Travel Leaders/Results!Travel would allow to deal with a broad target audience and no longer luxury focus only (Table 18). The way of working and promoting Switzerland could be different and might bring something new to the Swiss sales.

**Table 18: Travel Leaders/Results!Travel SWOT analysis**

Strengths	Weaknesses
-New kind of target audience -Promotion of the agent e-learning program	Network to be built from scratch
Opportunities	Threats
Preferred hotels in Switzerland	Target group

Source : Author’s data

In addition, the great network of Swiss properties could be a great opportunity to work because on the contrary, Signature Travel Network has a limited number of 12 properties in Switzerland and most of them in the city area (Table 19). The different target audience of Travel Leaders/Results!Travel could also turn out to be a threat for Switzerland Tourism if the whole marketing strategy does not appear to be a good match and does not show any result. A strong positive aspect of investing more with Signature Travel Network is that the awareness of Switzerland is already present within the network. Also, Switzerland Tourism knows how to work with the people from Signature Travel Network and have already a lot of contacts and relationships.



**Table 19: Signature Travel Network SWOT analysis**

Strenghts	Weaknesses
Image, awareness already present	Remain with a luxury focus Partner Number of preferred hotels in Switzerland and mainly in cities
Opportunities	Threats
-Acquaintance of the network, contacts	-Training/education activities not very developed

Source : Author’s data

At this point of the decision-making process, Travel Leaders/Results!Travel and Signature Travel Network would have balanced pros and cons with a slightly plus for Travel Leaders/Results!Travel. The fact of perhaps having a new agreement that could help having more educational opportunities with Travel Agents and a stronger presence by promoting the e-learning program is appealing. However, mid-November 2013 the three-day Annual Conference of Signature Travel Network took place in Las Vegas and the results, the changes and the future strategic decisions were presented. One of the big news was to push the Travel Agent educational and training activities within the network. However this is an announcement only and nothing proves that the promise will be kept but it will be taken into consideration for the final results of this study.

In consequence, Switzerland Tourism should invest the \$40,000 in Signature Travel Network in 2015 in order to achieve more on the education/training side and increase the awareness of Switzerland even more. The Virtuoso agreement has proved in the past that a long-term built relationship was one of the key to successful results. If Signature Travel Network really pushes Travel Agent education, Switzerland Tourism should be able to achieve a lot more. However, if the promises of Signature Travel Network are not kept after one year or two, Switzerland Tourism should definitely review this study and conduct further negotiations with Travel Leaders/Results!Travel.

### **Ongoing assessment tool**

The second part of the results suggests the whole process followed throughout this thesis as an assessment tool that would be easy to re apply in the future. The negotiation and choice of Marketing Alliances are part of an ongoing process. Wang & Xiang (2007) claim that in the Tourism Industry, collaborations “evolve more as a result of what is happening rather than from business initial ambitions” (p. 78). Therefore agreements with Marketing Alliances need to be regularly negotiated because the goals constantly change and the need of services evolves in time. Below, each step to follow is described with the charts accordingly.

**Step one:** Application of the waiving process to the initial list of potential candidates chosen. The aim of this first process is to reach a decent number of Marketing Alliances to compare. First, the number of candidates is reduced because they are existing affiliations, they are irrelevant due to their specification or they announced a firm closure for next year. Secondly, a first contact is taken with the remaining companies in order to see the level of interest. Then, the number is reduced again because some are not interested and some happen to be in the same group and can deliver an offer including both services and the rest. Finally, some candidates are out of the race because they never answered neither the first email nor the two follow-ups sent. Table 20 below helps to visualize the process and can be filled with the according content. It might be adapted depending on the circumstances.

**Table 20 - Waiving process**

Waiving steps	Waiving results
Number of potential candidates	
Already affiliated	
Number of potential candidates left	
External elimination factors	
- Specialist in an irrelevant field - No longer exist	
Number of potential candidates left	
Not interested	
Number of potential candidates left	
Grouping	
Number of potential candidates left	
No answer	
Number of potential candidates left	
<b>Performance criteria</b>	

Source : Author’s data

**Step two:** Organize a call or a meeting with each representative of the candidates left separately in order to explain them the reasons of this interest, the needs and goals of the Company and ask them a few questions. The topics of discussion are related to the performance criteria displayed in Table 21 below. Examples of questions and topic that can be discussed are listed below Table 21.

**Table 21- Performance criteria to choose a Marketing Alliance for Switzerland Tourism**

Performance criteria	Description
<b>1. Tour Operators having Swiss tours</b>	Tour Operators with European tours including Switzerland or Swiss tours only within the network
<b>2. Preferred hotel program including Swiss hotels</b>	Swiss properties within the network
<b>3. European preferred Destination(s) in the network</b>	One or more European Tourism Boards representing their country within the network
<b>4. Annual conference</b>	At least one annual conference in order to meet the members in person
<b>5. FAM Trip</b>	Joint organization of an educational trip to Switzerland with the best Travel Agents of the network
<b>6. Mix marketing-education/training</b>	Good mix of marketing and education/training opportunities and investments
<b>7. Marketing to Travel Agents – Marketing to Consumers</b>	Good mix of Travel Agent and Consumer marketing activities
<b>8. Efficiency of printed and e-marketing communications</b>	Price per email/mail sent and number of Travel Agents or Consumers reached

Source : Author's data

- Explain the main goals why it is beneficial for the Company to be a member of a Marketing Alliance
- Specify the focus on Travel Agents and explain that they have to be main target audience. Also, stress the fact that educating the Travel Agent has been observed to be a success in the past. Give a few examples of successful activities conducted with other Marketing Alliances.
- Ask if some Tour Operators within the network have Swiss tours
- Ask the kind of target audience

- Ask if the Marketing Alliance has preferred programs for Hotels, Airlines and Destinations and if they have a Swiss and European presence
- Ask if they organize FAM trips
- Ask if they have an Annual Conference
- Ask if Europe is doing well in terms of North American overnights
- Ask for a customized offer according to the subjects tackled during the discussion

**Step three:** Analysis of the offers received and the information retrieved during the calls and meetings regarding the performance criteria. In order to have a good overview of all the offer, a general informative table representing the repartition of the money has to be filled. This is Table 9 on page 32 of the thesis. An empty version is available in Appendix IV. This step takes time because all the activities do not have separate single prices and sometimes estimations must be done to be able to compare all the offers regarding the different categories mentioned in the table. Criteria one to five described in Table 21 above can be displayed in a simple table that shows if yes or no they are met. Table number 22 below is the one to be filled in for that.

**Table 22 - Table to fill with YES or NO**

	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3	Candidate 4	Candidate 5	Candidate 6	Candidate 7
Tour Operators offering Switzerland							
FAM trip							
Preferred hotels in Switzerland							
Annual Conference							
European preferred Destinations							

Source : Author's data

On the very last columns of Table 22, the existing affiliations must be mentioned and compared to the potential new ones in order to see the similarities and differences. This is also a way to see if the right activities are undertaken with the current Partners or if some changes are needed.

Criteria number six and seven (Table 21 above) are measured in percentage of money invested and displayed in bar charts. As already mentioned in the analysis before, not only the percentage of money has to be taken into account but the number and kind of opportunities as well.

The last criteria concerning the efficiency of communications (Table 21 above) has to be calculated. In order to know the price per email address or regular address the following calculation has to be done: price for a single communication divided by the number of contacts reached. Then the results show the different prices in regards to the number of people reached. How many times the communication is planned to be sent throughout the year can also be taken into account.

**Step four:** Summarize and compare the offers according to the results found in the previous steps. One chart per Marketing Alliance can be created (Tables 12 to 16 in the previous chapter) and then a final ranking can be established. At this point either the number one company appears to be the best company to negotiate further or if one of the existing affiliations seems to be weaker, both can be compared by creating a SWOT analysis. After this last comparison, based on the same criteria than mentioned before, a decision can be taken. Another possibility would be to conduct further negotiations with more than one Marketing Alliance, for example the top three of the ranking.

## Conclusion

Collaboration between the different stakeholders of the Tourism Industry is essential in order to deliver a travel product of quality and reliable services to the final Customers. In order to go in that direction, Switzerland Tourism wants to be affiliated to the most adapted Marketing Alliance. The Company needs to join a network where potential for European Destinations is present, a fair amount of opportunities to educate and train the Travel Agents on Switzerland are offered and a good mix of Travel Agents and Consumer marketing activities is proposed. The five potential Marketing Alliances compared regarding these performance criteria show that some of the candidates do not cover all the needs of Switzerland Tourism. Travel Leaders/Results!Travel is the Marketing Alliance with the better potential due an offer meeting most of the performance criteria. At the end it can therefore be compared with Signature Travel Network in order to see where the money should be invested.

The comparison of the two Marketing Alliance mentioned above leads to the following recommendations: More effort should now be invested in Signature Travel Network in order to make an impression and boost the Swiss sales within that network. It is difficult to tell in advance if the performance objectives will be achieved by investing in that Alliance but the analysis presents a good potential for Switzerland Tourism to achieve something in the near future. Indeed Signature Travel Network announced a strategic change with the goal of pushing the educational side for the Travel Agents, an opportunity for Switzerland Tourism. Furthermore the acquaintance to the network will facilitate the negotiations for future accomplishments. Also, Switzerland Tourism should use the tool developed along this thesis in the future in order to assess the Marketing Alliances when a changed is needed or wished.

The offers received were analyzed as they are, without any further negotiation involved. This study is a first phase of the offer analysis in the process of choosing a Marketing Strategy. The ranking of the Marketing Alliances that is suggested can be understood as a basis for further negotiations. For example, the study could be continued by reusing the tool proposed with the two Alliances best ranked, Ensemble Travel Group and Travel Leaders/Results!Travel, and Signature Travel Network. This would allow more precise and realistic results.

## References

- Alejziak, D. W. (1999). *Tourism in the face of 21st century's challenges*. Retrieved from <http://fama2.us.es:8080/turismo/turismonet1/economia%20del%20turismo/politica%20turistica/tourism%20in%20the%20face%20of%2021%20century%20challenges.pdf>
- American Association of Travel Agents. (2013). *Frequently Asked Questions - Travel Agents by the Numbers - Role of Travel Agents*. Retrieved from <http://www.asta.org/News/content.cfm?ItemNumber=1985>
- American Marketing Group. (2013). *Home*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanmarketinggroupinc.com/>
- Arccorp. (2013). *Helix your travel agency: evolved*. Retrieved from <http://www.arccorp.com/helix/>
- Association. (2013). In *Oxford University Press*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/association>
- Bain & Company. (2013). *Bain & Company*. Retrieved from <http://www.bain.com/>
- BakBasel. (2010). *Tourismus Benchmarking – Benchmarking du tourisme – Benchmarking turismo*. Retrieved from [http://www.bakbasel.ch/downloads/services/reports\\_studies/2010/20100121\\_bakbasel\\_seco\\_tourismus\\_benchmarking\\_fr.pdf](http://www.bakbasel.ch/downloads/services/reports_studies/2010/20100121_bakbasel_seco_tourismus_benchmarking_fr.pdf)
- BakBasel. (2013). *BakBasel economic research & consultancy*. Retrieved from <http://www.bakbasel.ch/indexW3DnavidW261010000.shtml>
- Camp, R. C. (1995). *Business Process Benchmarking Finding And Implement Best Practices*. Milwaukee: American Society for Quality.
- Daechi, D., & Gu, K. (2005, June). Development of a tourism sustainability assessment procedure: a conceptual approach. *Tourism Management*, 23 (3). 431-445.
- David Hutton Associates. (2013). *The search for best practices*. Retrieved from <http://www.dhutton.com/samples/sampbench.html>
- Dooley, G. (2011). *Ensemble Travel Members Explore New Luxury Travel Initiatives*. Retrieved from <http://www.travelagentcentral.com/consortia/ensemble-travel-members-explore-new-luxury-travel-initiatives-28918>
- Eisen, D. (2010). *New Member: Morris Murdock Travel Joins Signature Travel Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.luxurytraveladvisor.com/consortia/new-member-morris-murdock-travel-joins-signature-travel-network-2397>
- Ensemble Travel Group. (2013). *Ensemble Hotel & Resort Collection*. Retrieved from [http://www.ensembletravel.com/custom/search/advanced\\_hotel\\_search.php](http://www.ensembletravel.com/custom/search/advanced_hotel_search.php)



- FindAHostTravelAgency.com. (2013). *Host Agency, Franchise or Consortia?* Retrieved from <http://findahosttravelagency.com/Articles/hostfranchiseconsortium.htm>
- Fyall, A., & Garrod, B. (2005). *Tourism Marketing - A Collaboration Approach*. Bristol: Channel View Publications Ltd.
- Higgins, M. (2012, 22 April). Are Travel Agents back? *The New York Times*, pp. 8-9.
- Holman Travel. (2013). *About Holman Travel*. Retrieved from <http://www.holmantravel.com/About-Us.html>
- Host Agency Reviews. (2013). *Host Agency Reviews*. Retrieved from <http://hostagencyreviews.com/host-agency-list/members/iata/>
- Huber, M., & Susanne, O. (2008). *From Customer Retention to a Holistic Stakeholder Management System*. Muenchen: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg.
- Huser, C. (2013). *Research Report USA*. Zürich: Switzerland Tourism.
- Huser, C., & Glanzmann, M. (2013). *Market Analyses USA 2012*. Zürich: Switzerland Tourism.
- IPK International. (2012). *Studies*. Retrieved from [http://www.itb-berlin.de/media/itbk/itbk\\_media/itbk\\_pdf/WTTR\\_Report\\_2013\\_web.pdf](http://www.itb-berlin.de/media/itbk/itbk_media/itbk_pdf/WTTR_Report_2013_web.pdf)
- Llyod, R. (2004). *Quality Health Care - A Guide to Developing and Using Indicators*. Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Inc.
- Market to Riches Team. (2013). *Write. Sepeak. Influence...Succeed*. Retrieved December 2, 2013, from Market to Riches: <http://markettoriches.com/client-list/>
- MAST Travel Network. (2013). *MAST Travel Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.mvptravel.com/>
- Newman, A., & Ober, S. (2012). *Business Communication In Person, In Print, Online*. Stamford: Cengage Learning.
- Palmer, A., & Bejou, D. (1995). Tourism destination marketing alliances. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 22 (3), 619-629.
- Phillips, P. A., & Moutinho, L. (2000). The Strategic Planning Index: A tool for measuring strategic planning effectiveness. *Journal of Travel Research*. 38 (369), 69-379.
- Poder, M. (2012). *TravelSavers, Well-Being Travel and Affluent Traveler Collection Complete Conferences*. Retrieved from <http://www.travelagewest.com/Travel/News/TravelSavers--Well-Being-Travel-and-Affluent-Traveler-Collection-Complete-Conferences/>
- Pyo, S. (2002). *Benchmarks in Hospitality and Tourism*. Binghamton: The Haworth Hospitality Press.

- Quality Gurus. (2013). *Robert C. Camp*. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitygurus.com/gurus/list-of-gurus/robert-c-camp/>
- Results!Travel USA. (2013). *Welcome*. Retrieved from <http://www.resultstravelusa.com/>
- Rigby, D., & Bilodeau, B. (2013). *Management Tools & Trends 2013*. Retrieved from [http://www.bain.com/Images/BAIN\\_BRIEF\\_Management\\_Tools\\_%26\\_Trends\\_2013.pdf](http://www.bain.com/Images/BAIN_BRIEF_Management_Tools_%26_Trends_2013.pdf)
- Rigby, K. D. (2013). *Management Tools & Trends*. Retrieved from [http://www.bain.com/Images/MANAGEMENT\\_TOOLS\\_2013\\_An\\_Executives\\_guide.pdf](http://www.bain.com/Images/MANAGEMENT_TOOLS_2013_An_Executives_guide.pdf)
- Secrétariat d'État à l'Économie [SECO]. (2010). *Tourisme*. Retrieved from <http://www.seco.admin.ch/themen/00476/00508/index.html?lang=fr>
- Signature Travel Network. (2012). *Join*. Retrieved from <http://www.signaturetravelnetwork.com/join/images/PreferredSuppliersList.pdf>
- Signature Travel Network. (2013). *Signature Hotels & Resorts*. Retrieved from [http://www.signaturetravelnetwork.com/suppliers/signature\\_hotels/consumerSearch/hotel\\_listing.cfm?cr=0&agency\\_id=149&utp=consumer&type=consumer&client\\_id=0&campaign\\_id=0&srchByArea=0&srchByCountry=550&srchByCity=0&srchByState=&srchByDestID=0&srchByKey=0&s](http://www.signaturetravelnetwork.com/suppliers/signature_hotels/consumerSearch/hotel_listing.cfm?cr=0&agency_id=149&utp=consumer&type=consumer&client_id=0&campaign_id=0&srchByArea=0&srchByCountry=550&srchByCity=0&srchByState=&srchByDestID=0&srchByKey=0&s)
- Supplier. (2013). In *Travel Industry Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.travel-industry-dictionary.com/supplier.html>
- Switzerland Tourism. (2012). *2012 Annual Report*. Zurich: Author
- Switzerland Tourism. (2013). *Facts & Figures*. Retrieved from <http://www.stnet.ch/fr.cfm/st/facts/>
- Terrero, R. (2013, February). A consolidating industry - What does it mean to you? *Travel Agent Magazine*, 9, 26-33.
- The Affluent Traveler. (2013). *Experience Luxury*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaffluenttraveler.com/content/publiccontent.aspx?pageid=1791&cat=5&ld=1>
- The Affluent Traveler Collection. (2013). *The Affluent Traveler Collection*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaffluenttraveler.com/content/publiccontent.aspx?PageID=1602>
- The Gale Group, Inc. (2013,). *Travel Agencies - Industry Report*. Retrieved from <http://business.highbeam.com/industry-reports/transportation/travel-agencies>
- Tour Operator. (2013). In *Collins Dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tour-operator>

- TravAlliance Media. (2013). *About*. Retrieved from <http://www.travalliancemediacom/about.html>
- TravAlliance Media. (2013). *The Little Black Book - Consortium & Host Agency Guide 2013*. Westampton: TravAlliance Media.
- Travel agent. (2012). In *Oxford Reference*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191733987.001.0001/acref-9780191733987-e-5988?rskey=A2QPw6&result=5996>
- Travel + Leisure Marketing & Singapore Tourism Board. (2013). *Welcome to Trust*. Retrieved from <https://trust.yoursingapore.com/trust/downloadutil/STB%20TA%20USA%20Trip%20Summary%20-%20Trip%20Report.pdf;jsessionid=1CgvRtXZNcP2291qnMrqh6hIjgGWZRP8pH5ypbT3jhBKp4HhSV6s!1252641822?HANDLER=download&fileid=114>
- Travel Agent. (2013). Use of Traditional Travel Agents Is Set to Grow. *Travel Agent*, 11, 10-11.
- Travel Press. (2011). *Ensemble conference goes Oct. 19-22 in Vegas*. Retrieved from <http://travelpress.com/PHP/news.php?sid=14185>
- Villaverde De Rico, P. (2013). *Q&A With TRAVELSAVERS' Nicole Mazza (part 2)*. Retrieved from <http://www.recommend.com/departments/in-focus/qa-with-travelsavers-nicole-mazza-part-2/>
- Virtuoso. (2013a). *Download logos*. Retrieved from <http://tips.virtuoso.com/download/>
- Virtuoso. (2013b). *Hotels*. Retrieved from <http://www.virtuoso.com/hotels#CurrentPage=1&FacetCategoryIndex=3&FacetCategoryTitle=&FacetLimit=5&LeftToShow=0&RowsPerPage=25&SearchMode=&SearchTerms=Switzerland&SearchType=Property&SearchView=1col&SortType=HotelNameAsc&StartRow=0>
- Virtuoso. (2013c). *The Best Hospitality Partners Around the World*. Retrieved from <http://www.becomeavirtuoso.com/clientbenefits/virtuosoon-sites/>
- Voss, C. A., Ahlström, P., & Blackmon, K. (1997). Benchmarking and operational performance: some empirical results. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 17 (10), 1046-1058.
- Wang, Y., & Xiang, Z. (2007). Toward a Theoretical Framework of Collaborative Destination Marketing. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46 (75), 75-85.
- Wöber, W. K. (2001). *Benchmarking for Tourism Organizations*. Retrieved from <http://fama2.us.es:8080/turismo/turisonet1/economia%20del%20turismo/marketing%20turistico/benchmarking%20for%20tourism%20organizations.pdf>
- World Tourism Organization. (2005). *Tourism 2020 Vision*. Retrieved from <http://www.unwto.org/facts/eng/vision.htm>

World Travel & Tourism Council. (2011). *Research*. Retrieved from  
[http://www.wttc.org/site\\_media/uploads/downloads/traveltourism2011.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/traveltourism2011.pdf)

## Appendix I: Offers of the five new potential Marketing Alliance



# 2014 Supplier Marketing Plan

**The National Tourist Office package is \$6000.00 and includes:**

\$500.00 sales reference guide, news and notices to members throughout the year, web page on [mvptravel.com](http://mvptravel.com)

\$500.00 MAST Sales Sensation, [Tuesday, November 19](#)

\$500.00 (1) webinar

\$1000.00 specialty supplier and National Tourist Office training day and trade show

\$1000.00 regional training

\$1500.00 annual conference company registration fee and education program, [May 2-5, 2014 Santa Fe, New Mexico](#)

\$1000.00 introductory marketing package:

(1) featured offer and inclusion in accompanying article in 2 issues of 360 Degrees

John Werner, CTC  
President & COO  
MAST Travel Network  
17W635 Butterfield Rd,  
Oakbrook Terrace IL 60181  
[630-889-9817](tel:630-889-9817) ext 21  
[johnw@mvptravel.com](mailto:johnw@mvptravel.com)  
<http://www.mvptravel.com>



American Marketing Group, Inc. Companies

**Partnership Marketing Program – Switzerland Tourism January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014**

In accordance with an approved Partnership Marketing Program with the **American Marketing Group** companies including TRAVELSAVERS-US and NEST. This Letter of Agreement outlines and details the Partnership Marketing Program participation. This Agreement will allow Switzerland Tourism to participate with TRAVELSAVERS-US and NEST in the promotion of Switzerland.

Switzerland Tourism proposed participation is as follows:

- Partner with TRAVELSAVERS-US and NEST in marketing activities targeted toward front line travel agents to advertise and promote Switzerland.
  
- Partner with TRAVELSAVERS-US and NEST in marketing activities targeted toward consumers and have the agencies the call to action for those customers who want to book a trip to Switzerland.

There is a positive expectation that implementation of these Campaigns will drive incremental revenue, bookings and awareness of Switzerland thru these efforts.

Program Timeframe: These marketing activities will take place from January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014.

Program Market Focus: These marketing campaigns will be nationwide in scope and advertised to all TRAVELSAVERS-US and NEST affiliates throughout the U.S.

The strategy of all Campaigns is to create an awareness and demand by the direct consumer as well as educate the travel agents and consumers on Switzerland.

**Program Activities**

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS**

Our service team, who has over 80 years combined travel industry experience, is an extension of your field staff. They are a key component to reach and educate the agents on your products. Our business development managers will be trained via webinar with Tourism Switzerland.

**Complimentary**

**AGENCY EXTRANET**

Our exclusive extranet provides 24/7 access to frontline agents, managers and owners. Switzerland will have the opportunity to have their promotional material available to all TRAVELSAVERS and NEST agents.



*TRAVELSAVERS is a leading international marketing organization with 2,100 US based Travel Agency licensees. TRAVELSAVERS offers a complete range of marketing and sales support services to help our preferred destination partners to maximize both leisure and corporate sales through our network of travel agencies. Through our marketing, technology and media companies, we promote to our agents who close the sale on your behalf.*

**TRAVELSAVERS E-MAILS**

TRAVELSAVERS agencies will receive **qualified emails** dedicated to Switzerland. Each email will feature current information including training opportunities, updates, packages and highlights about Switzerland.

**3 Exclusive e-mails \$3,000**

**AGENT COMMUNICATION** –Agent E-Newsletter and Agentflash

Short, Precise, Effective. TRAVELSAVERS' agencies receive "qualified" messages via our segmented electronic newsletter.

**6 E-Newsletter Listing \$3,500**

**JOURNEYS MAGAZINE**

JOURNEYS' is a customized consumer publication published three times each year featuring exciting destinations and vacation inspiration.

**Half page ad in Issue 2 of Journeys Magazine \$6,000**

**CONSUMER EMAIL**

These HTML emails feature preferred supplier offers that are redeemable exclusively through a NEST agency. Each email will be queried based on key demographics and customized with the agency's contact information as the call to action.

**1 Consumer Emails \$2,500**

**Total TRAVELSAVERS US Investment \$15,000**



*NEST supports the changing needs of our preferred destinations, helping you to successfully reach the rapidly growing, home-based distribution channel. Today NEST is comprised of the finest home-based travel professionals in the industry. Our goal remains steadfast – to create opportunities, intensify partnerships, and increase profits for our industry partners.*

**AGENT COMMUNICATION** – E-mail Alerts / IntheNEST E-Newsletter

Short, Precise, Effective. NEST agencies receive "qualified" messages via email. These vehicles are restricted to exclusive NEST promotions ONLY, which have proven to be the most effective.

**4 Exclusive Agent E-mails**

Exclusive e-mails with your qualified message to the agents **\$2,600**

**6 IntheNEST E-Newsletters**

Feature Listing – one Exclusive listing with premium placement **\$1,650**

Currently we have a 40% open rate on these and a 21% click rate on the articles.

**JOURNEYS MAGAZINE**

JOURNEYS' is a customized consumer publication published three times each year featuring exciting destinations and vacation inspiration.

**Half page ad in Issue 2 of Journeys Magazine \$4,000**

**CONSUMER EMAIL**

These HTML emails feature preferred supplier offers that are redeemable exclusively through a NEST agency. Each email will be queried based on key demographics and customized with the agency's contact information as the call to action.

**1 Consumer Email \$1,750**

**Total NEST Investment \$10,000**

**ONE AGENT WEBINAR ON SWITZERLAND COMPLIMENTARY**

Switzerland Tourism will receive one webinar offered to all TRAVELSAVERS US and NEST agents  
Exact dates to be determined.

**HOLD THE DATE! TRAVEL MARKET 2014**

The Global Conference will be held June 5-8, 2014 in Boca Raton, Florida. Sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities are available, separate from the TRAVELSAVERS/NEST marketing plan budget. An expectation is that senior executive management from each participating supplier will attend.

**TOTAL Package Investment \$25,000**

With this marketing program in place, TRAVELSAVERS and NEST anticipate a mutually successful campaign and rewarding partnership. We agree to actively promote and distribute Switzerland Tourism's advertising message during the specified time frame shown in this Agreement to all agency locations. Any changes or revisions made to this Agreement shall be communicated between the parties and mutually agreed upon before implementation.

No cancellations are accepted after the space closing date. If cancelled after this date, supplier is fully responsible for the full ad cost.

Marketing will be billed monthly. All monies will be due upon receipt of invoice. Failure to pay within a reasonable time frame will result in late fees.

Read, Acknowledged, and Agreed to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fax copy of signed agreement to Debbie Press at (516) 624-8958

Contact: Debbie Press at (516) 624-0500 Ext 6000 or e-mail [dpress@acclaimmeetings.com](mailto:dpress@acclaimmeetings.com) for additional information or questions.





**Welcome to the World of the Affluent Traveler Collection. The industry's most exclusive marketing group for luxury travel advisors, preferred suppliers and destinations.**

The Affluent Traveler Collection allows you access to award winning marketing expertise and an elite group of luxury travel advisors who are part of one of the most knowledgeable networks of luxury travel

specialists in the world today.

Our team of experts has journeyed to every continent in search of the crème-de-la-crème in deluxe properties, cruise lines, tour itineraries and destinations. Those featured in our program have each met

a single criterion: to be the most luxurious, stand-alone experience that can be relied upon to fulfill the

sophisticated and discerning traveler's every wish, every time.

As a worldwide marketing organization with a 42 year history in travel marketing, The American Marketing Group, parent company to The Affluent Traveler Collection, has built an infrastructure that

not only has the marketing expertise to assist you in reaching your target audience but we have the vehicles to reach them in a variety of media.

**The Affluent Traveler Collection Advantage**

As a premier luxury travel marketing group, we offer over 42 years of expertise in sales and marketing.

Our mission at The Affluent Traveler Collection is to help you capture the business from our Affluent Traveler licensed agencies and the millions of their discerning travelers.

Our strict quality control system ensures that you are in communication with the best affluent travel advisors in the industry today. We offer a unique territory system based on population to provide The

Affluent Traveler Collection travel advisors with instant control over client relationships and prospective

leads in their designated area.

**What Sets Us Apart**

The Affluent Traveler Collection offers all of the essentials to successfully sell your product to our over

250 hand-picked luxury traveler sellers. The marketing solutions we offer include:

- Comprehensive direct mail marketing programs
- An award-winning newsstand magazine, *The Affluent Traveler*
- An interactive consumer website that draws in luxury travelers, guides them to your product and directs leads to our travel professionals
- A customized state-of-the-art booking engine that empowers our travel advisors to capture business for preferred suppliers around the clock
- Dedicated cruise booking engine
- Enriched amenity programs to provide travel professionals with a competitive advantage to help boost sales for YOU
- Personal marketing and support executives

- Networking opportunities
- Weekly agent communication vehicles
- Monthly consumer communication vehicles
- Promotional opportunities on The Affluent Traveler Collection extranet

### **SWITZERLAND SPONSORSHIP**

Switzerland welcomes The Affluent Traveler Collection travel advisors to an Insider View of Switzerland.

This marketing campaign takes agents and their consumers inside Switzerland to the best of the best in outdoor adventures, golf, spa, cuisine and 5 star lodging.

### **THE AFFLUENT TRAVELER CONSUMER MAGAZINE**

The Affluent Traveler is distributed within the US and Canada, gaining Switzerland exposure in all 50 states and all English speaking territories within Canada. We are also sold direct to consumers thru our website, within national bookstores and newsstands; in select first-class airport lounges of Delta Air Lines, Continental Airlines and United Airlines and on international air carriers.

Year program beginning January 2014 with inclusion in 2 issue dates to be included:

Closing Date Issue Date

Winter / Spring 2014 November 15 January 15

Summer/ Fall 2014 March 15 July 15

Each issue would be a 2-page spread advertorial plus one complimentary page to be directed to culinary or "special interest" of Switzerland's choosing (Total pages per year -6)

(Value: \$5,000 per page x 6 = \$30,000 Value)

1. Double Page advertorial on Switzerland
2. **Bonus Page** in Culinary section
3. **Bonus Page** in either Golf/Tennis or Well Being
4. Mobi tag
5. All content live in Destination section of consumer website

Summer/Fall 2014 Issue

1. Double Page advertorial on Switzerland
2. **Bonus Page** in Culinary section
3. **Bonus Page** in either Golf/Tennis or Well Being
4. All content live in Destination section of consumer website

Mobitag inclusion for each issue to be placed on spread unit for 4 units-

(Value: \$1,500 per tag x 4 = \$6,000)

**Value Add** - Switzerland Tourism would be included in editorial throughout the year based on strength of their editorial submission –our option would be to include a famous chef, etc in one of our departments such or a Switzerland leading personality in the Last But Not Least Section As an Affluent Traveler preferred advertiser, your editorial content will be featured on [www.theaffluenttraveler.com](http://www.theaffluenttraveler.com) for the duration of the commitment.

The Affluent Traveler production team handles all edit and creative for the advertorial and web content. All production on the mobi tag is handled as well, video to be provided by Switzerland.

### **WEBSITE ADVERTISING**

The Affluent Traveler Collection uses the latest internet technology to rapidly deploy information from our preferred suppliers to advisors and consumers. We advertise special offers and destination information on both the agent extranet and consumer site through ad boxes and splash pages.

Switzerland Tourism will receive a web ad on BOTH the consumer site as well as the Agent Extranet of the Affluent Traveler Website. The consumer web ads will click through to a landing page with the Affluent Traveler advisor as the call to action. The agent extranet ad can link to

[www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

Participation: 3 months of web ads (Value: \$1,750 per month x3 = \$5,250)

### **TRAVEL ADVISOR E-NEWSLETTER**

Short and concise, this weekly travel advisor e-newsletter places your products front and center with our luxury sales force.

Content in 12 E-newsletters highlighting the Switzerland Specialist program (Full bundle = \$7,000 value).

**BEST IN CLASS TRAININGS** - Best In CLASS (Collaborative Learning And Sales Seminars) Virtual Seminars - "Breakfast with Switzerland's Leading Tourism Heads" . Two webinars conducted by Switzerland Tourism for Affluent Traveler Advisors. (\$300 per webinar x 2 =\$600)

**Guide to the Good Life Specialist FAM** – The Affluent Traveler Collection would like the opportunity to host a Specialist FAM for Affluent Traveler Collection advisors.

### **AFFLUENT TRAVELER SYMPOSIUM**

*The Affluent Traveler Symposium is a premier travel event that brings together the most highly motivated luxury travel advisors and top luxury travel suppliers in the industry today. Join us as we engage, motivate and educate, as well as have a little fun in the process! We will strengthen relationships and share goals, discuss relevant industry and network opportunities and issues.*

*The Symposium will be held on June 3-5 at the Boca Raton Resort and Club*

**Platinum Sponsorship Package \$10,000**

**15 minutes speaking time\***

**Sponsor of Breakfast or Lunch /Co-Sponsor of Gala Dinner**

**Sponsor of Welcome / Wake Up Message Broadcast to all delegate rooms**

**Networking tabletop, with premier location, within the supplier networking event**

- One draped table
- Two chairs
- One wastebasket
- One Listing sign

**Two (2) Trade Show Passes** - 2 day event pass with full access to the Symposium conference

**All meals** – 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner and 1 cocktail party

**Invitation to Elite Agency cocktail party at AMG Travel Market 2014, Thurs June 5th**

**On stage recognition of sponsorship during General Session**

**Marketing/Branding**

- Mention in all printed conference materials
- Logo on conference website
- Half page ad in Program of Events
- Logo displayed at sponsored event
- 1 piece of collateral inclusion in attendee bags
- 1 Post conference email to all attendees

\*Date and time of speaking presentation will be assigned by AT show management

### **Participation in Experience Workshop**

As part of the Affluent Traveler Symposium, we offer Experiential Workshops as a unique and exciting educational experience for our travel advisors. Each experience is 45 minutes in length and will be attended by approximately 50 agents. You will have the opportunity to conduct two experience workshops so each agent will have the opportunity to attend.

The objective of these workshops is to make the advisors feel as if they have just come back from

visiting Switzerland and have had an exciting learning experience that they can share with their clients.

Some ideas might be:

Take the Affluent Traveler Advisors on a trip to learn all about Swiss Chocolatiers or perhaps a trip to learn more about the great cheese regions in Switzerland. Participants could sample the local products while learning more about these great travel experiences!

**Affluent Traveler Collection Total Investment-\$50,000** (Total Plan Value - \$58,850)

2014 Ensemble Travel® Group Marketing Program				
Switzerland Tourism				
03.oct.13				
Tactic	Description	Product Due Date	Scheduled Drop	Cost
Ensemble Lifestyles	180,000 readers; format: 9" x 10 7/8"		Total Lifestyles Costs:	
Winter magazine-Feature editorial on Africa with celebrity profile on Geoffrey Kent	1-pg feature, plus 2 product offers (includes offer feed in online Vacation Therapy consumer microsite)	27.sept.13	January 17, 2014	
Winter Ensemble Lifestyles Ad	Consumer Image Advertising, 1 page	15.oct.13		\$10'000
Fall magazine	1-pg feature, plus 2 product offers (includes offer feed in online Vacation Therapy consumer microsite)	1-Jun-14	September 15, 2014	
Fall Ensemble Lifestyles Ad -fall	Consumer Image Advertising, 1 page	30-Jun-14		
Ensemble Vacation Therapy Catalog	180,000 readers; format: 6.25" x 10.875"		Vacation Therapy Catalog Costs:	
Winter Direct Mail Catalog	1-pg feature with up to 2 product offers PLUS 1 Bonus Offer in Family section (includes offer feed in online Vacation Therapy consumer microsite)	27-Sep-13	December 20, 2013	
Fall Direct Mail Catalog	2-pg feature with up to 4 product offers PLUS 1 Bonus Offer in Family section (includes offer feed in online Vacation Therapy consumer microsite)	1-Jun-14	August 25, 2014	
Ensemble Vacation Therapy Spring Campaign	Print: 75,000 readers; format: 6.25" x 10.875"; (4) cohort-specific versions of target mail and (4) target e-mails		Vacation Therapy Campaign Costs:	
Spring Opportunity	Offer showcase @\$5,500 per offer (includes offer feed in online Vacation Therapy consumer microsite)	15-Feb-14	May 15, 2014	
Themed Mailers				
Small Ship & River Cruising	2 pg spread, 80,000 targeted households (target < 500 guests /ship)	15-Jan-14	April 10, 2014	
Family Target Mail	2 pg spread, up to 2 offers, 100,000 targeted households	15-Aug-14	November 1, 2014	
Specialist Programs				
Destination Vows (Destination Weddings & Honeymoons): July 2014 - June 2015	Consumer advertising in a targeted print magazine or magalog with integrated consumer digital advertising on the Destination Vows microsite. Also includes direct access to dedicated Destination Weddings & Honeymoons Specialists, presence on customized Specialist microsites, Specialist training webinars and FAM. Suppliers have the ability to conduct webinars. Focused promotions will be distributed to the Specialists.		TBD dependent on print piece (Q4 '14 Magalog in <i>The Knot</i> magazine or Ensemble Destination Vows magazine); Trainings to be scheduled	
Direct Mail - Solo supplier	\$25,000 minimum investment			
	TBD by supplier			
Targeted Direct Mailer	TBD by supplier			
Target E-mail - Solo Supplier	Aprox. 50,000 email addresses (will vary based on customer segmentation for product/offer)			
Direct to consumer e-mail	Single supplier promotional e-mail, distributed directly to consumers based on database segmentation and posted on the Ensemble Extranet for additional distribution by Ensemble members. E-mail is created utilizing Ensemble's e-mail marketing template.		1 email	

Monthly Online Opportunities	Ensemble Member Website (Extranet), Agency Websites (ClientSites), Consumer E-zine			
Partner of the Month: Extranet, ClientSites, Consumer E-zine, Member Communication	Digital exposure across the Ensemble network reaching frontline travel agents, owner/managers and consumers, highlighting promotional offers/brand messaging. Materials provided are featured for one month across three channels for maximum reach - Ensemble Extranet, Ensemble Agency ClientSites and Ensemble Consumer E-zine.	7th of prior month	1 opportunity	
Video Spotlight: Extranet, ClientSites, Consumer E-Zine	Visual representation of brand and/or products/itineraries for member agencies & consumers. Materials provided are featured for one month on the Ensemble Extranet, Agency ClientSites and the Ensemble Consumer E-zine: <b>2 - 4 Minute Consumer Video.</b>	15th of prior month	1 opportunity	\$4'500
Consumer E-Zine Promotional Offer with Link to Landing Page	Multi-channel showcase of brand and/or product/offers to Ensemble member agents and their clients. Materials provided will be featured for one month on Ensemble Agency ClientSites and the Ensemble Consumer E-zine.	25th of prior month		
Consumer E-Zine-Banner Ads	Land promotion, exclusively for one Land supplier per issue, in visual banner format. Materials provided are featured throughout the Ensemble Consumer E-zine for the applicable month.	25th of prior month		
Extranet Ad Block: Agency Focus	Ad/Media block on the Ensemble Extranet Product Landing Page, exclusively for one supplier per month on applicable product page	25th of prior month	4 months	\$8'000
<b>Supplier to Member Communications</b>	<b>Mandatory for all Suppliers</b>			\$3'500
Preferred supplier guide	included			
Weekly member e-mail	included			
On line posting	included			
Print Advertising Opportunities				
<i>Ensemble Exchange</i> Member Newsletter	2 issues, approximately 3,000 agents	15-Mar-14 15-Sep-14	June and November	
Half Page	\$2,500 per issue			
Back Cover	\$5,000 per issue			
Ensemble Hotel & Resort Collection	Advertising Opportunities for 2015 book			
Sponsorship Opportunities				
2014 International Conference Sponsorship	Venue TBA			\$15'000
2014 Top Producer Event	Venue TBA		\$18'000	
2014 U.S. Executive Retreat	Venue TBA		\$14'000	
Training	Oasis in Canada-US (specifics still not known)			\$8'000
Other				
Canada Training				
APPROVAL DATE:			SUB-TOTAL PLAN w/o "OTHER"	\$49'000
Name:			"OTHER" ITEMS	\$0
Title:				
Signature:			TOTAL	\$49'000

**Switzerland Tourism**  
**2014 Preferred Destination Campaign**  
**Cooperative Marketing Agreement**

This agreement for cooperative marketing and preferred supplier status is between Travel Leaders Franchise Group, LLC ("TLFG"), and Switzerland Tourism (Switzerland), for the performance of the services described in the proposal below.

**Agreement Overview:**

<b>Term of Campaign</b>		January, 2014 – June, 2014
<b>Objectives of relationship</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute Switzerland brand and message throughout TLFG network</li> <li>• Increase agent and consumer awareness of Switzerland</li> <li>• Support Switzerland Advisor certified specialist program</li> <li>• Drive leads to qualified agents</li> <li>• Increase bookings and visitors to Switzerland</li> </ul>
	<b>Target Audience</b>	<p><b>Trade</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Leaders Franchise Group (TLFG) is made up of 1,100 travel agency locations in the Travel Leaders and Results! Travel network</li> <li>• 5,000+ full-time professional travel agents in the TLFG network</li> <li>• 3,500+ independent contractor outside agents in the TLFG network</li> </ul> <p><b>Consumer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.5M+ existing customers of agencies in the TLFG network</li> <li>• New customer acquisition</li> </ul>
	<b>Geo Markets</b>	Nationwide
	<b>Milestone Dates</b>	None
<b>Preferred Destination Status</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRONZE level Preferred Destination Status valid for January, 2014 – December, 2014</li> <li>• Details of benefits are provided on the attached marketing activity grid</li> </ul>
<b>Matching Funds</b>		TLFG will match total destination investment on a minimum 1:1 basis
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Party Participation</b>		None
<b>Measurement / Reporting</b>		<p><b>Key performance metrics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of certified Switzerland Advisor specialist agents</li> <li>• Number of agents attending webinars / fam trip</li> <li>• Preferred supplier booking trends – room nights, passengers, revenue</li> </ul> <p>A full recap will be provided following the completion of the campaign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collateral will be provided for proof of performance</li> <li>• Key performance metrics</li> </ul>
<b>Approvals</b>		TLFG will provide written confirmation of all tactic dates and proofs. Destination partner will be required to respond in writing via email or fax with approvals for all tactics prior to run date.
<b>Invoices / Payment</b>		<p>Standard payment terms:</p> <p>50% will be invoiced 60 days prior to campaign/event start date</p> <p>50% will be invoiced upon successful completion of campaign/event</p> <p>Invoices are due upon receipt. Any invoice over 30 days past due may result in the suspension of future activity.</p> <p>All funds listed in this agreement are in USD.</p>
<b>Total Switzerland Investment</b>		\$50,000
<b>Total Travel Leaders Investment</b>		\$110,000
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Party Investment</b>		\$120,000
<b>Total Campaign Value</b>		\$280,000

**Switzerland Cooperative Marketing Activity Grid**

Category	Marketing Activity (Tactics)	Travel Leaders	Results/Travel	Exposure	Placement	Switzerland Contribution	Travel Leaders Contribution	3rd Party Contribution	Total Value
<b>Agent Engagement</b>									
<b>Travel Leaders - Campaign Launch Announcement</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Live Travel Agent Webinar announcing campaign housed on LMS</li> <li>- Mercavia Intranet News Announcement</li> <li>- NetResults Intranet News Announcement</li> <li>- Network News - Agent Email - Announcement</li> <li>- Focus on Switzerland Advisor participation</li> </ul>	X		8,500 Agents Audience 25,000 visitors per month /70,000 page views per month Agency Intranet	January, 2014	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$0	\$5,000
<b>Switzerland Agent Toolkit</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- POS Desktop Standee Display - printed desktop insert distributed to 1,100 agencies through monthly network news mailing</li> <li>- E-postcard template with embedded slide show and/or video</li> <li>- Agent workstation PC/laptop/tablet screen background image rotation</li> <li>- Agent workstation PC/laptop/tablet screen saver image rotation</li> <li>- Social Media Toolbox - Facebook header, Facebook picture posts, Pinterest image library, Blog posts</li> <li>- Switzerland Flier Template PDF</li> <li>- Switzerland Ad Slick Template PDF</li> <li>- Image Gallery</li> <li>- Video Gallery</li> <li>- Sample Itinerary Library</li> </ul>	X		8,500+ Agents	January, 2014 - June, 2014	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$20,000
<b>Quarterly Awareness Campaign - focus on training, awareness and exposure to agents</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recorded Travel Agent Webinar housed on LMS</li> <li>- Mercavia Intranet Banner Ads Package - 30 days</li> <li>- NetResults Intranet Banner Ads Package - 30 days</li> <li>- eExclusive Agent Email x2 (exclusive email)</li> <li>- eSpecials Agent Email x5 (shared message email)</li> </ul>	X	X	8,500 Agents Audience 30-50 Webinar agent target 25,000 visitors per month /70,000 page views per month Intranet Banner Ads 65,000 E-mail impressions	January - March, 2014	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$0	\$15,000
<b>Quarterly Awareness Campaign - focus on training, awareness and exposure to agents</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recorded Travel Agent Webinar housed on LMS</li> <li>- Mercavia Intranet Banner Ads Package - 30 days</li> <li>- NetResults Intranet Banner Ads Package - 30 days</li> <li>- eExclusive Agent Email x2 (exclusive email)</li> <li>- eSpecials Agent Email x5 (shared message email)</li> </ul>	X	X	8,500 Agents Audience 30-50 Webinar agent target 25,000 visitors per month /70,000 page views per month Intranet Banner Ads 65,000 E-mail impressions	April - June, 2014	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$0	\$15,000
<b>Switzerland Fam Experience</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exclusive Fam Trip for Travel Leaders agents</li> <li>- Number of agents TBD based on Switzerland Tourism specs</li> <li>- Qualification - Must be Switzerland Advisor Specialist, participate in elements of Switzerland campaign, min number Switzerland bookings</li> <li>- Switzerland Tourism to provide in-destination hotel, transportation, activities/tours and/or meals as needed</li> <li>- Travel Leaders to provide solicitation and selection of qualified agents</li> <li>- Preferred Tour Operator and/or Airline Partner to provide air discount or comp</li> <li>- On Fam social media updates to the rest of the TLFG network</li> <li>- Post Fam agent incentive and/or consumer offer from Preferred Tour Operator</li> </ul>	X	X	# Agents TBD based on Switzerland Tourism specs	TBD, 2014	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000



**Switzerland Cooperative Marketing Activity Grid (continued)**

Category	Marketing Activity (Tactics)	Travel Leaders	Results / Travel	Exposure	Placement	Switzerland Contribution	Travel Leaders Contribution	3rd Party Contribution	Total Value
<b>Agent Engagement</b>									
<b>Agent Profiler - intersection between destination specialist training and TLFG lead generation</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agent Profiler technology connects qualified customers to qualified agents in the TLFG network</li> <li>- Agents must be certified destination specialists before they qualify for Agent Profiler designation for your destination</li> <li>- All digital marketing tactics drive customers to 'best match' agent based on qualifications</li> <li>- Increases conversion for participating destinations</li> </ul>	X		5,000+ agents participate in Agent Profiler	January - December, 2014	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
<b>Training Opportunities - Local Seminar / IC Forum / Agent Boot Camp / Agent Retreat / Leaders Meeting / Regional Meeting / National Meeting</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In-person training opportunities to the TLFG network of agents</li> <li>- 2014 dates are TBD</li> <li>- Training opportunities will be offered on an ad-hoc basis as they are announced</li> </ul>	X	X	TBD	2014 Live Training dates TBD	TBD	TBD	\$0	TBD
<b>Consumer Transactional</b>									
<b>SCORE e-Campaign - targeting segmented new + existing customers of Travel Leaders</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumer on-line campaign with Preferred Tour Operator</li> <li>- Consumer Travel Flash Email (x2)</li> <li>- Targeted consumer demographics based on Switzerland Tourism customer profile</li> <li>- Promotional web page on travelleaders.com + 150 associate web sites</li> <li>- Campaign banner ads</li> <li>- Social media - Facebook, Twitter, Pintrest, Instagram, YouTube</li> <li>- Campaign announcement and promotion page on agent Intranet</li> <li>- Utilize agent profiler technology to connect qualified customer leads to qualified Switzerland agents</li> </ul>	X		100,000 targeted segmented email to Travel Leaders customers 200,000 email impressions SEO/SEM optimization 50,000 Facebook Fans	March, 2014	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$20,000
<b>Luxury Campaign - Multi-Generational Theme - Switzerland Tourism one page feature in multi-supplier campaign</b>									
	A Luxury focused B2C multi-channel campaign leveraging the scope of our Luxury agent network and Preferred Suppliers. Multiple touches to a selectively targeted clientele with experiential visual, copy and product. Creative and mailer style will determine exact distribution.								
	Direct Mail Theme Book - one page, four color feature in a 16 page, long shelf life booklet featuring inspirational experiences	X	X	30,000 targeted segmented Luxury customer direct mail	March, 2014	\$10,000	\$25,000	\$120,000	\$155,000
	Direct Mail Theme Mailer - follow up mailing utilizing similar creative in a smaller compact format	X	X	30,000 targeted segmented Luxury customer direct mail	March, 2014				
	eSpecial Consumer Email - mid-campaign email targeted to Luxury customer	X		50,000 targeted segmented Luxury customer email	March, 2014				
	Web microsite or niche landing page	X			March-April, 2014				
	e-Special agent email promoting Luxury campaign to 1,100 agencies in network	X	X	1,100 agencies 8,500+ agents	March, 2014				
	e-Exclusive agent email to 200+ select luxury agencies introducing campaign and inviting participation on webinar	X	X	2x emails 200+ targeted luxury agencies	March, 2014				
	Campaign introduction / launch webinar to 200+ select luxury agencies	X	X	200+ targeted luxury agencies	March, 2014				
	Agent Web eTemplate - Consumer Flyer - B&W and Color	X			March-April, 2014				
	Agent Web eTemplate - Consumer Ad Slick - B&W and Color	X			March-April, 2014				
	Agent Web eTemplate - Social Media assets	X			March-April, 2014				

## Switzerland Cooperative Marketing Activity Grid (continued)

Category	Marketing Activity (Tactics)	Travel Leaders	Results! Travel	Exposure	Placement	Switzerland Contribution	Travel Leaders Contribution	3rd Party Contribution	Total Value
<b>Consumer Transactional</b>									
<b>Social Media campaign - targeting friends of TLFG plus 'friends of friends'</b>									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media acquisition and engagement campaign</li> <li>- Paid social media Facebook advertising and re-targeting campaign</li> <li>- Social keyword, demo/geographic targets TBD based on primary Switzerland customer profile</li> <li>- Provide inspiration for Switzerland purchase</li> <li>- Trivia/engagement pieces to drive participation and likes/shares</li> <li>- Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube</li> <li>- Utilize agent profiler technology to connect qualified customer leads to qualified Switzerland agents</li> </ul>	X		50,000 Facebook fans 750K Facebook paid impressions 15,000 Twitter followers	February - April, 2014	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$0	\$5,000
<b>Preferred Destination Benefits - BRONZE</b>									
<b>Brand Advocate</b>									
	Preferred Destination Designation	X	X		Annual				
	Limited release use of Travel Leaders Preferred Destination Partner name and logo	X	X		Annual				
	Network Announcements regarding destination seminars, events, programs, promotions	X	X		Annual				
	Active support of destination specialist programs to our agency network associates	X	X		Annual				
	Support of RFC and BDM networks	X	X		Annual				
	Provide destination with Network Agency Roster (quarterly updates)	X	X		4x Annual				
<b>Agent Engagement</b>									
	Preferred Destination placement on Travel Leaders - Mercavia and Results! Travel - NetResults Agent Extranet sites	X	X		Annual				
	Listing in annual Preferred Supplier Agent Reference Guide (print and online editions)	X	X		Annual				
	Inclusion in Agent Extranet Destination Directory with links to destination 3rd party content	X	X		Annual	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
	President's weekly email message supporting Preferred Destination relationship	X	X		1x Annual				
	Recorded Webinar (up to 1 hour) posted on Agent Extranet sites and Learning Management System	X	X		1x Annual				
	Network News agency mailing featuring destination collateral insert	X	X		1x Annual				
	Invitation to attend, sponsor or host regional meetings, advisory boards and award trips (\$)	X	X		Cost, Dates & Location TBA				
	Invitation to participate in the trade show at the National Meeting (\$)	X	X		Cost, Dates & Location TBA				
<b>Transactional</b>									
	Destination micro-site on Travellers.com and 120+ local agency sites	X			Annual				
	SEO/SEM focused on destination micro-site vanity URL	X			Annual				
	Agent Profiler with live chat to connect qualified customers to certified destination specialists	X			Annual				
	Social Media annual ongoing exposure to support new destination developments	X			Annual				
<b>TOTAL PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT</b>						<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$280,000</b>

### **Author's declaration**

I hereby declare that I have carried out this final research project on my own without any help other than the references listed in the list of references and that I have only used the sources mentioned. I will not provide a copy of this paper to a third party without the permission of the department head and of my advisor, including the partner company with which I collaborated on this project, with the exception of those who provided me with information needed to write this paper and whose names follow:

- Alex Herrmann, Director of Americas at Switzerland Tourism
- Alexandra Imhof, District Manager Western USA at Switzerland Tourism

Charlotte Bourquin

