

# Canada-@-Connect Connexions-@-Canada

A collection of thoughts,  
musings, quotes, and recommendations  
from the most influential  
travel & tourism bloggers.

## Tips from the T-List

Editor-in-chief **Jens Thraenhart**

with Foreword by **Stephen Joyce** / Publisher

### Copyright (c) 2007 Rezgo.com

---

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system without written permission from Rezgo.com except for the inclusion of brief quotation in a review.

The posts assembled in Tips from the T-List have been collected with the consent of the original authors and have been duly acknowledged. The publisher claims no copyright over individual posts and permission to use specific content must be obtained directly from the author.

Rezgo.com

A Division of Sentias Software Corp.  
2nd Floor, 92 Lonsdale Avenue  
North Vancouver, British Columbia, V7M 2E6 Canada  
Tel: (604) 983-0083  
Fax: (604) 648-9651  
Email: [tlist@rezgo.com](mailto:tlist@rezgo.com)

### Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication Data

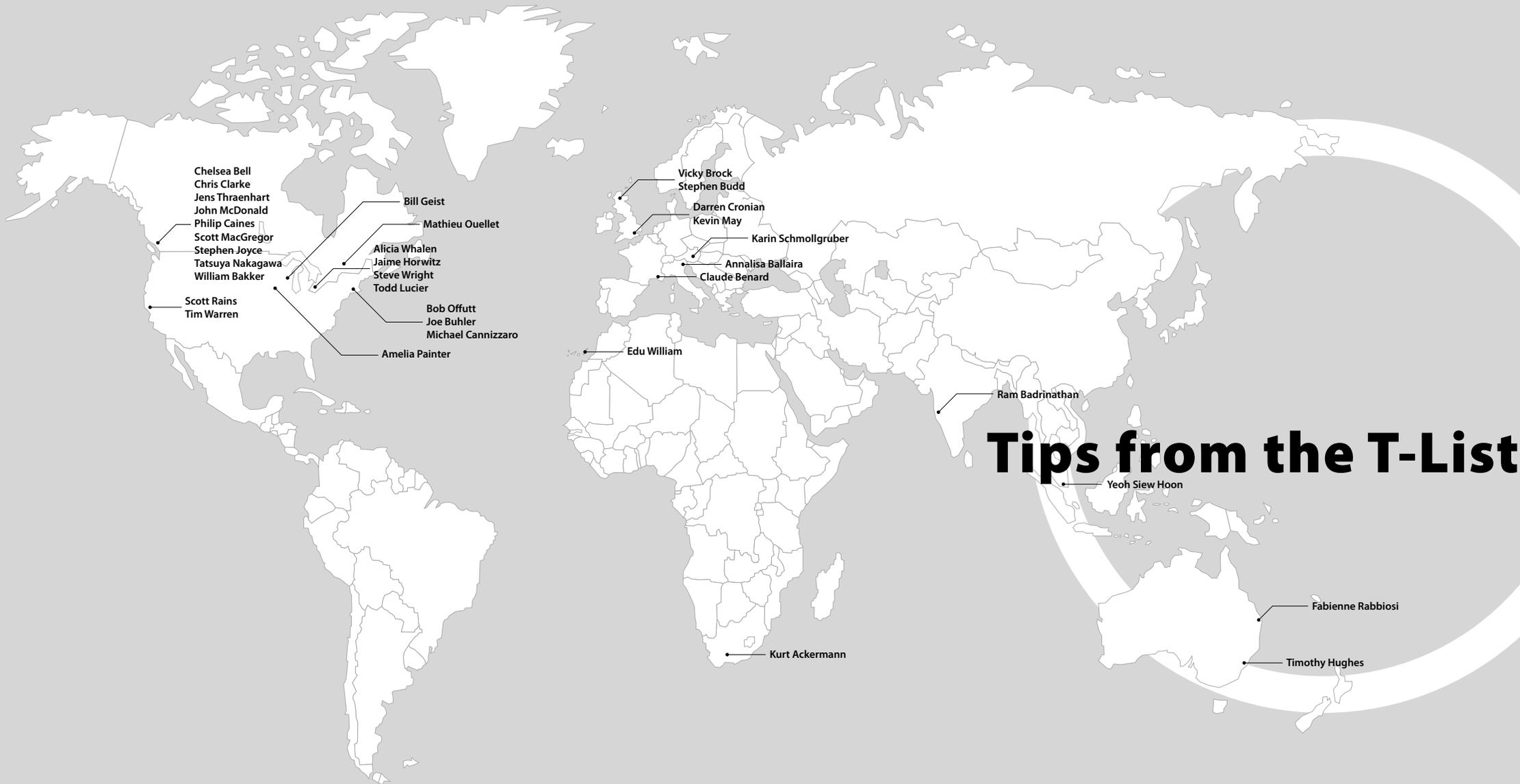
ISBN 978-0-9784651-0-0

Production managed by June Ohashi  
Cover Design by Hizuru Miyagawa  
Managing Editor by Phil Caines  
Assistant Editor by Kaori Yamano  
Cover Photo from iStockPhoto

Publisher: Stephen Joyce  
Editor-in-chief: Jens Thraenhart  
Editor, North America: Mathieu Ouellet  
Editor, Europe & Middle East: Kevin May  
Editor, Asia Pacific: Yeoh Siew Hoon

---

Published by  
powerfully simple  
**rezgo**  
rezgo.com



# Tips from the T-List

## Contents

Publisher's Introduction	Stephen Joyce	6
Letter From the Editors		7

## Marketing

<b>10 Ways Small Tourism Businesses Can Succeed in a Competitive Market</b>	Stephen Joyce	12
<b>Destination Blogging Can Create a Richer Experience for Visitors</b>	Amelia Painter	16
<b>The E-Marketer of Today is the CMO of Tomorrow</b>	Jens Thraenhart	17
<b>Hotel Marketing Through Social Media</b>	Chris Clarke	18
<b>Some thoughts around Media Convergence...</b>	Jens Thraenhart	20
<b>A Quick Guide to Know What They Say About You</b>	Mathieu Ouellet	22
<b>Marketing Travel to the Boomer Generation: Anatomy is not Destiny!</b>	Scott Rains	24
<b>Shift is not enough. - Destination Marketers Shift Their Digital Spend</b>	Joe Buhler	27
<b>When tourists make their plans depends on what they like to do</b>	Steve Wright	28
<b>It doesn't need to be difficult</b>		
- market research for small tourism businesses (part 1)	Stephen Budd	30
<b>Why spend millions on TV advertising?</b>	Kevin May	32
<b>Helping airlines stay on top</b>	Timothy Hughes	34
<b>Stamping your Footprint on Travel</b>	Darren Cronian	36
<b>Rocky Mountaineer Vacations dives in with its new Online Guest Lounge</b>	Alicia Whalen	38
<b>Key Marketing Ingredients for Successful Small Tour Operators</b>	Tatsuya Nakagawa	40
<b>Marketing manifesto by Jeff Jarvis</b>	Karin Schmollgruber	42
<b>Top 11 Travel E-Mail Marketing Tips and Tools</b>	Tim Warren	45
<b>The Two Most Important Questions in Evaluating a Tourism Experience</b>	Steve Wright	48

## Technology

<b>Apple iPhone to Change the Tourism and Travel Industry</b>	Mathieu Ouellet	52
<b>Facing Facts on Facebook: Hotel Employees are Using Social Networks</b>	Chris Clarke	54
<b>Do you care about usability?</b>	Mathieu Ouellet	57
<b>Facebook polls</b>	Ram Badrinathan	58
<b>Chasing the Tail... the Long Tail</b>	Stephen Joyce	62
<b>You don't have to be big to do bookings online</b>	John McDonald	64
<b>Independent Tour Operators Have BIG Advantages</b>	Chelsea Bell	66
<b>Overcoming the Three Big Tour Operator Booking Challenges</b>	Stephen Joyce	68

## Travel 2.0

<b>Click Here to go straight to Online Hell</b>	Kevin May	72
<b>The abundance in tourism</b>	Edu William	74
<b>VibeAgent Starts Even Smarter</b>	Bill Geist	77
<b>Tourism Destinations are going Web 2.0</b>	Jens Thraenhart	78
<b>Amazing Online Reservation Statistics</b>	Philip Caines	81
<b>CRM the 'Must Have' for all Tourism Companies</b>	Philip Caines	84
<b>Commerce or Advertising for Travel 2.0</b>	Bob Offutt	86
<b>Travel Agencies: Depends on Your Definition of "Comeback"</b>	Michael Cannizzaro	88
<b>UGC vs Editorial. What's better? What's the balance? What's more 2.0?</b>	Timothy Hughes	90
<b>When is there too much choice for consumers?</b>	Timothy Hughes	93

## SEO

<b>Top 10 reasons why you shouldn't choose THAT SEO agency</b>	Annalisa Ballaira	96
<b>Top 10 Search Engine Marketing Strategies for Travel Marketers</b>	Scott MacGregor	99
<b>Social Media and SEO are no substitute for Advertising and PR</b>	Jaime Horwitz	102
<b>Tracking Tourism Why counting hits and page views leaves you completely in the dark about your website's success</b>	Vicky Brock	104
<b>How one tourism business is pioneering information sharing to improve a whole destination's performance</b>	Vicky Brock	108
<b>Tourism Website Optimization</b>	Fabienne Rabbiosi	112
<b>Mining Keyword Gold</b>	Todd Lucier	115

## Interviews & Rants

<b>Tripsbytips, future leading German speaking travel community</b>		
Interview with Uwe Frers, General Manager	Claude Benard	120
<b>Interview of Karin Schmollgruber from Passion PR and blog FastenYourSeatbelts.at</b>	Claude Benard	124
<b>71Miles : The definitive guide to weekend trips around major cities</b>		
Interview with John A. Vlahides - Executive Editor and Co-founder	Claude Benard	128
<b>Anecdotal learning through personal experiences - Part 1, pre-trip planning</b>	William Bakker	132
<b>Anecdotal learning through my own trip planning experience - Part 2, during the trip</b>	William Bakker	135
<b>What are the Rules of Blogging?</b>	Yeoh Siew Hoon	138
<b>Own a Word, Own the World</b>	Yeoh Siew Hoon	141
<b>Responsible Travel Resources</b>	Kurt Ackermann	144
Biographies		146



## Stephen Joyce

Publisher

President of Rezgo.com (A Division of Sentias Software Corp.)

President of IFITT North America

<http://tourismtechnology.rezgo.com>

The world of online travel has changed dramatically over the years. Suppliers have moved away from traditional distribution in order to sell directly to consumers. Distribution companies have purchased online travel agencies in order to control sales and distribution. Traditional travel agencies have lost out to consolidation and the seemingly endless marketing budgets of the large OTAs. But now we are beginning to see some new phenomena appear. Travelers are asking more questions, doing more research, and taking their time as they find products and destinations that meet their specific needs.

One of the largest and most influential spheres of online research is the blogging community. As a travel technologist and a proponent of non-traditional product distribution, I am intrigued by the power of user generated content. Recent research shows that peer reviews have a dramatic effect on how travelers make travel buying decisions. More than ever, travelers are relying on the opinions of peers, non-commercial writers, and the average passenger, rather than relying on the recommendations of agents, commercial writers, or corporate marketers. By examining these travel & tourism technology trends we can better understand how user generated content, social media, and peer reviews impact e-tourism globally and how to use these emerging trends to the benefit of our organizations.

Tips from the T-List brings together the collective intelligence of dozens of influential travel industry bloggers from around the World. The blogs and the authors that are represented in this book are recognized online resources; they are the people the industry turns to for advice, recommendations, tips, and insider knowledge. By sharing their experience with you, these authors are providing you with an opportunity to embrace e-tourism in a new way. My hope is that this book will provide you with inspiration and insights that help your e-tourism efforts flourish.

## Letter From the Editors

### Why a book comprised of the best travel blogs?

Well, quite frankly, there is a lot of information about internet marketing and e-strategies in travel and tourism online, however it is very hard to find, especially when it comes to evaluating the source. Lots of great information is published by practitioners that write about their experiences on their own blogs - instead of academics writing about internet marketing concepts in textbooks that are very quickly outdated. Not to discount the value of textbooks and whitepapers, we felt a compilation of the best travel blogs and their best marketing-related posts would bring another dimension to this fast moving subject. In the end, we want this book to add some value to the global hotel and travel industry, but it should also be just a little bit of fun. Bottom line: it's an experiment. Anthony Williams, the author of the bestselling book "Wikinomics" (<http://www.wikinomics.com/>), preaches the concept of mass collaboration, and is the opening keynote speaker at Canada-e-Connect. We thought we'd put this concept into action and leverage the T-List community to collaborate on this exciting project.

### What is the T-List?

The T-List (T standing for Travel) is basically a collection of travel blogs on the Internet that was first compiled by Mathieu Oullet in March 2006 (<http://www.radaron.com/>) with just a handful of blogs. It was born out of the desire to see what other travel blogs are out there. The list grew very rapidly, as it was a way for bloggers to get exposure and increase traffic, and also a first step to get connected with each other. In July 2006, Jens Thraenhart decided to leverage Facebook as a potential platform to build a community of travel-related bloggers (<http://jensthraenhart.com/cblog/>). The list grew and became almost too big. Then Kevin May finally decided to publish the Recommended T-List (<http://travolution.blogspot.com/>), which included travel blogs that seemed to consistently output valuable content.

### How was this idea born?

The mandate of the first Canadian e-Tourism Strategy Conference, Canada-e-Connect, is to create a platform for the Canadian travel and tourism industry to embrace and leverage emerging technologies and new media channels. It is not enough for the Canadian Tourism Commission, progressive Provincial and Destination Marketing Organizations, strong travel, hotel, and airline brands to build engaging websites and execute innovative campaigns; the entire industry should leverage this new medium and understand changing consumer research and purchasing behaviors. So basically taking the concept of the power of the weakest link into consideration when it comes to the success of marketing an entire country such as Canada as a tourism destination.

When Stephen Joyce contacted Jens Thraenhart to express his excitement at having Canada-e-Connect in Vancouver (<http://tourismtechnology.rezgo.com/>), and wanted to show his appreciation in supporting the conference, he proposed the idea of giving something back to the attendees that leveraged all of the communities voices and provided value. These discussions led to the birth of the "[Tips from the T-List Book](#)".

### Just in Canada?

Being a global tourism industry, and having T-List bloggers from all over the world, we quickly decided to make the book a "global blogger collaboration project" as well. Wired-in-Travel (November 29-30 in Singapore), and Travolution (November 1 in London, UK), joined forces with Canada-e-Connect (November 7-9 in Vancouver, Canada), to launch this innovative initiative. Phocuswright (November 12-15 in Orlando, Florida) also decided to join the group, recognizing the value and the timeliness of the project. Every event will launch the book slightly differently, but one thing is for sure: we are not just talking Web 2.0, Mass Collaboration, and Convergence - we are actually putting it into action and living it!

Please enjoy the book, and have fun with it. When you flip through the pages, remember the medium this content was published in originally, and that blogs are conversations, anecdotes, and come alive through links and reader comments. So this is not designed to be an Internet Marketing Textbook, but a collection

of self-submitted posts by travel bloggers. We did not take content from blogs without permission - only bloggers are included that saw the value and had fun with the book concept and collaborated with us on very short notice. So if you are missing a blog, or if you think there are better posts on certain blogs than what was submitted, don't blame us, but thank all the authors for contributing and generously submitted their posts for this book. :)

### "Tips from the T-List" Editorial Team:

#### Editor in Chief: Jens Thraenhart

Chair, Canada-e-Connect (Vancouver, Canada) : <http://tourisminternetmarketing.com>

#### Editor, North America: Mathieu Ouellet

Creator, First T-List (Quebec City, Canada) : <http://radaron.com>

#### Editor, Europe: Kevin May

Publisher, Travolution (London, UK) : <http://travolution.blogspot.com>

#### Editor, Asia Pacific: Yeoh Siew Hoon

Producer, Wired-in-Travel (Singapore) : <http://thetransitcafe.com>

### Distributed at the following international conferences:

#### Canada-e-Connect Conference

[www.canadaeconnect.com](http://www.canadaeconnect.com) and [www.canadaeconnectblog.com](http://www.canadaeconnectblog.com) : Vancouver, November 7-9, 2007

#### Canadian e-Tourism Awards

[www.canadianetourismawards.com](http://www.canadianetourismawards.com) : Vancouver, November 8, 2007

#### Wired-In-Travel Conference

[www.wiredintravel.com](http://www.wiredintravel.com) : Singapore, November 29-30, 2007

#### Travolution Conference

[www.travolutionconference.co.uk](http://www.travolutionconference.co.uk) : London, November 1, 2007

#### Phocuswright

[www.Phocuswright.com](http://www.Phocuswright.com) : Orlando, November 12-15, 2007

First launched at:  



**Marketing**

Small businesses are some of the most creative marketers in the world. Celebrate being small by focusing on the inherent advantages of small business—such as quick decision making, grassroots marketing, and a personal sales approach. By using these attributes to your advantage, your business can thrive when competing with a much larger organization.

Here are a few recommendations that small businesses should follow to make their marketing efforts more effective:

**1. Know what you do and do it well.**

The days of the general store have long since gone. Even large travel agencies have learned that you cannot be everything to everyone. Every business has a

company that targets cruise ship passengers might consider hiring someone to wait outside the cruise ship port with brochures, handing them out to passengers as they disembark. A small retailer that sells vitamins and other supplements might offer a discount to members of the community center. Guerrilla marketing—as it is often called—is one of the most effective grassroots marketing techniques and can have a positive impact on a small business' bottom line.

**3. Give your customers an experience to remember.**

The common conception is that the larger businesses don't really care about their customers. Big banks, big retailers, and airlines are often viewed as profit driven entities that only care about their bottom line. Small businesses can use this to their advantage by providing exceptional customer service and focusing on providing personal service. Take the time to learn your customers' names and make them feel welcome whenever they do business with you. For tour operators, this personal focus needs to extend beyond the delivery of the service. Follow up with customers, solicit their feedback, and get a testimonial.

**4. Keep customers happy and they'll come back for more.**

Once you have attracted your customer to your tour business, consider the cost of keeping them versus the cost of attracting a new customer. In most cases attracting a new customer can cost three times more than the cost of keeping an existing one. Communicate with your customers through a newsletter or regular mailing. If you have the ability to target your customer's particular needs, then a personalized message can be even more effective. Recent studies have shown that 70% of online travelers use recommendations from friends as a key decision making tool. Consider each of your customers as a potential advocate for your business.

**5. Mixing businesses is a recipe for success.**

Look for other local businesses that offer complimentary but non-competing products or services. A tour company that provides city tours, for example, might consider partnering with some select local restaurants to provide a meal option to their daily tours. The restaurant may negotiate a commission in exchange for the regular business, and the tour company can provide a service that is different from their competitors.



Marketing

# 1

## 10 Ways Small Tourism Businesses Can Succeed in a Competitive Market

Stephen Joyce

specialty, the challenge is finding that specialty or unique aspect and building your business around it.

When a large travel retailer moves into town, small agencies often quiver at the thought of having to compete with these large companies. The reality is that smaller tour operators can thrive by offering goods and services that these companies simply do not provide.

**2. When it comes to marketing, think outside the box.**

Look for different ways to reach your target audience. Larger businesses often have the budget to market themselves using traditional means like TV, radio, and print. Smaller businesses often don't have the budget to advertise in these mediums, so they have to find other ways to reach their target audience. A tour

## **6. Will that be cash or plastic?**

Are you a cash only business? If you are, you may want to consider accepting credit cards or debit cards. Many small businesses believe that the process of accepting credit and debit cards is a difficult and expensive proposition. In most cases this is not true. There are many providers now who can provide solutions that are relatively inexpensive.

## **7. When it comes to business, first impressions count.**

Your brand and identity are your customers' first impression of you. Encourage a high level of professionalism and deportment in your business. Set standards of dress, and encourage a tidy, well organized work environment. A tour bus that is clean, comfortable, and inviting will give a passenger a sense of calm and comfort knowing that the business is well managed and professional.

## **8. Business relationships are based on trust.**

It seems that everywhere you turn there is a news story about corporate corruption, scandal, or fraud. Small companies are just as likely to fall victim to these types of ethical issues as large companies. The reason why we don't hear about it is because small businesses generally don't make the news the way large businesses do. Consider creating a code of ethics for your company, and promote it both internally and externally. Put your ethical beliefs in writing and post them on the wall. Remember that ethical business is good business.

## **9. Everyone loves a party.**

Like you, your company is unique. If your company provides a unique experience or product, you have the opportunity to provide your customers with a sense of community. Consider setting up a program where your customers can learn more about your industry or products. If possible, hold an open house or an information session. The more your customers identify you as a source of truthful information, the more trust they will have for you and the products you sell.

## **10. Be good to your community and the community will be good to you.**

All small businesses are an important part of their community. Small businesses hire, buy, and sell locally. In many cases, especially in smaller communities, family owned businesses are the life blood and economic drivers in their towns and villages. As more and more people move to urban centres, the convenience of local shopping is becoming more important. This shift from suburban to urban living

is revitalizing the growth of specialty small businesses. Look to your community for inspiration and growth opportunities. As your community grows, its needs will change and so too will your business.

In many regions small businesses, especially those that drive tourism, make up a large majority—in some cases over 90 percent of the total number of businesses. Small businesses have a huge impact on the economy and employ more people than big businesses. Take a moment to celebrate the impact your business has on the economy and keep working on making your small business the best business it can be.

<http://tourismtechnology.rezgo.com>

The very first bed and breakfast “inn traveler” blog in the nation was uploaded to the Iowa Bed and Breakfast Innkeepers Association in February of 2006 at <http://iabedandbreakfast.com/blog>. It was introduced by the association’s executive board at their annual conference held in Iowa City that year. Today there are a growing number of bed and breakfast “inn traveler” blogs found on the Internet. Some do an excellent job of portraying their destination as a mecca to the inn traveler, while many others contain out-of-date material or are filled with sales pitch content that tends to waste the time of the visitor.

But the innkeeper that can virtually help readers truly understand a destination can use blogging to connect with potential guests, promote their destination, and create a richer experience for visitors which ultimately results in increased customer loyalty.

Marketing

2

## Destination Blogging Can Create a Richer Experience for Visitors

*Amelia Painter*

Most innkeepers live in the local area and they know the destination in-depth. This sense of place enables the innkeeper to infuse each blog post with an insider’s perspective. They can take a blog visitor off the beaten track to obscure little places that delight the seasoned traveler looking for a getaway with a difference. The end result of destination blogging can be expansive, and supplement essential travel information with blog categories on local culture, events, sports, and sightseeing adventures prominently displayed on the Internet.

<http://iabedandbreakfast.com/blog>

The E-Marketer of Today is the CMO (Chief Marketing Officer) of Tomorrow...? Well, I said it 10 years ago, and people thought I was crazy! In fact when I was experimenting with my first little Internet venture back in 1995, people told me: “Why are you doing this - nobody will ever use the Internet...”. Three years later, when I started my MBA/MMH at Cornell University, and told people that I wanted to look at E-Commerce as my focus, I got a similar response: “Hmmm, I thought you were in marketing and not technology...”. Luckily, when I had my first internship with Mike Pusateri at Marriott International (who launched Marriott.com, and was one of the pioneers in hospitality e-commerce and online distribution), I met a mentor, who showed me the possibilities of hotel marketing of the future and guided me in the right direction.

Anyhow, this post is about an article (published in Advertising Age) from the recognized executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles about exactly this topic.

## The E-Marketer of Today is the CMO of Tomorrow

*Jens Thraenhart*

I am sure they know what they are talking about. (<http://www.heidrick.com> look for AA\_TomorrowsCMO.pdf). It talks about that the CMO of tomorrow will play the role of the Digital Catalyst, Customer Advocate, Global Translator, Legacy Builder, Business Driver, and Humble Luminary. What I always hear when talking to my colleagues at the HSMIAI Travel Internet Marketing Organization (<http://www.hsmiaior.org/>) is that our jobs are not about building websites and executing search engine marketing programs, but about creating and executing strategies, building new businesses inside organizations, building and articulating brands, analyzing metrics and understanding consumer intelligence, and acting as collaborative change management agents and internal evangelists. This “e-commerce thing” has been an exciting ride, and I believe it will get even more exciting in the years to come.

<http://www.TourismInternetMarketing.com>

Marketing

3

The other day during my podcast interview with Michael Chaffin, we spoke at length about the use of social media in the hotel industry. Michael asked what I felt were a few things that hotels could be doing right now to leverage social media communities to strengthen brand marketing efforts. That's a tough question to answer on a dime, but my answer was quite simple.

My response (if I remember correctly) was to suggest that participation is the key to using social media to advantage. It seems obvious, but I'm not convinced that the hotel industry is "getting it".

Many major hotel companies are developing online spaces around their brands in a effort to create a sense of brand community. Those brands that are able to generate lots and lots of visitor traffic to their new online social media spaces

simply not as compelling as pictures and videos when researching or marketing hotel experiences.

Users of photography communities like flickr and video communities like YouTube are telling brand stories about their travel experiences every day. These are some of the most honest and forthright stories about customer perceptions of brands. Remember the adage "a picture is worth a thousand words"?

Written reviews on Tripadvisor, for example, may be relevant and accurate but they are read often out of context, and without necessarily having any trust (i.e. relationship) in the reviewer. Guest-generated pictures and videos of travel experiences on the other hand, are pretty hard to ignore. These types of media are more revealing and "honest" than the written word alone (when the writer is more or less anonymous).

Hotelier participation in social media spaces can be as simple as uploading images to a free flickr account, or uploading simple videos of a hotel property. Both of these resources allow the user to tag their media (add relevant keywords), which will allow viewers to easily find these images through a keyword search. Sound simple? It is!

If your hotel property currently has no images tagged under your brand or property name, that's even better. You'll own that keyword, and can literally control the images that viewers are seeing. If you do find videos or pictures of your property, try adding a comment about what you saw. It's easy to do, and would leave a lasting impression on the photographer or videographer. Remember, other viewers are reading these comments as well so these positive impressions will extend beyond the owner of the media.

Check out these websites and search for your hotel name or brand. You might be surprised what you find...or don't find!

<http://www.VacantReady.com>

Marketing

4

## Hotel Marketing Through Social Media

Chris Clarke

might have a plausible chance of engaging some of their guests. However, with customer loyalty diminishing and mis-trust of corporate brand messaging at an all time high, it will be a tough slog to create a truly committed social media space for a single brand.

I believe that the key for smaller brands (or individual hotels) to benefit through social media interaction is not to create proprietary spaces but rather to participate in existing ones. Not just any old community or network of course, but rather those online spaces where community members are talking about their brands.

"Talking" about brands happens in all kinds of ways. Sure there are some true conversations occurring online but written dialogue, however important it may be, is

I think we are really in an interesting period where we need to realize that it is not about the Internet, but about customer touchpoints. Convergence ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media\\_convergence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_convergence)) being one of the hot buzz words, it is about leveraging media in order to break through the clutter. When I talk to people about the convergence of online and offline media, many times I get a response: "Oh, yeah, you are talking about integrated marketing!" Maybe yes, maybe no...I just haven't seen too many good integrated marketing executions in the travel and hotel industry. I would say true media convergence happens when you create a flow of content pieces by leveraging different media channels - some people refer to it as Tripleplay (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tripleplay>). For example - what about an ad or article in an inflight magazine that encourages the interaction with the brand via mobile devices; the first gadget that most people grab after landing is the mobile phone or blackberry..and then from the

Anyhow...just a few of my thoughts I wanted to share. I believe we are entering a very exciting time where leveraging the Internet will lead to valuable customer relationships resulting in sales.

<http://www.TourismInternetMarketing.com>

Marketing

5

## Some thoughts around Media Convergence...

*Jens Thraenhart*

mobile interaction an email is triggered with a link to the website, and so on - you get the point. What I am trying to say is, we as marketers have to learn how to leverage media channels based on content consumption without duplication of content. I see it almost like a story that sucks you in, resulting (not ending) with a call to action. Once the experience is consumed (i.e. hotel stay), the brand would encourage to further cultivate the relationship by creating value - this could lead to data capture and personalized messaging or social networking by sharing the experience with other potential travelers.

And then we have the entire phenomenon of Virtual Worlds, such as Second Life...how are these channels playing into the media mix, especially when it comes to marketing travel and tourism experiences.

You are running your own bed & breakfast? A little hotel? A tour company? You are the communication director of an important hotel chain?

You probably care about customer satisfaction. If so, I'm sure that you read travel magazines and newspapers searching for reviews and comments about your company. Who's saying what will help you fix what goes wrong and focus on what makes your company what you want it to be.

You already know that the Internet is the largest source of information on earth. People already write about your company. Do you know what they are saying? On what sites could they be talking about you? How can you track this information? What should you do with it?

# Marketing **6** **A Quick Guide to Know What They Say About You**

*Mathieu Ouellet*

## Where do people talk about my company?

- Blogs
- Forums
- Hotel/Tour/etc. reviews sites
- Travel websites (Wikitravel, World66)
- Travel agency websites

## How can I find people talking about my company?

- When people make links to your website, Google knows it (most of the time). You just have to ask Google by searching for link: <http://www.yourwebsite.com>.
- Technorati (<http://technorati.com>) helps you track the content you want in the blogosphere. Search for your company name, you'll have an idea of

who's talking about you via blogs. Make sure to add the RSS feed of this search to your aggregator.

- Google news (<http://news.google.com>) gathers news from 4500 different "official" sources. Just like technorati, you can search for your company and add the RSS feed to your aggregator.
- Website stats. With your own stats you could track who's referring to your website. You'll get almost the same results as with "link:" on Google.

With these 4 easy tricks, you will have a good overview of who said what. By subscribing to strategic RSS feeds, it will keep you up to date.

## What should you do with this information?

- Understand what people dislike and improve your services/products consequently.
- Add comments on blog posts and answers on forums when people are expressing their disappointment about your services/products or when the info they write is wrong.
- Take the time to thank those who "support" you and give you free publicity.

Simple and effective.

<http://www.radaron.com>

How do we market to the Baby Boomer generation as it moves into its prime leisure travel years? The first step is to know the generation intimately enough to craft a message that speaks to them uniquely.

Even with my own participant-observer status from inside the generation I find myself drawn to writers exploring the topic.

Leonard Steinhorn writes a history of the cohort in "The Greater Generation: In Defense of the Baby Boom Legacy." He writes about the distinguishing characteristics of Boomers and the preceding Greatest Generation:

Greatness can be measured not only by the decisions we must make, but by the decisions we choose to make. The Greatest generation deserves every bit of credit

While from inside, as a person with a disability, the characterization of disability culture as "noble" rankles as observation from a patronizing distance uninformed by immersion in it or conviviality with its "natives." Still, Steinhorn is correct to imply that people with disabilities enrich democratic society by inextricably - and literally - embodying a different perspective.

What Susan Wendell, author of *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*, has said about insight into the body can just as easily be applied to insight about the collective body known as society:

Not only do physically disabled people have experiences which are not available to the able-bodied, they are in a better position to transcend cultural mythologies about the body, because they cannot do things the able-bodied feel they must do in order to be happy, 'normal,' and sane...If disabled people were truly heard, an explosion of knowledge of the human body and psyche would take place.

For the past two years I have had the privilege of working in Mary Furlong's first entrepreneurial venture, SeniorNet. There I directed curriculum development and assisted in the opening of new centers designed to allow seniors to master technology skills in a peer-educator environment. As we all watched firsthand the emerging cross-fertilization between Greatest and Boomer generations it was not until this year when she published her book on marketing to Boomers, "Turning Silver into Gold," that I learned we had another common interest - the transformation of the travel industry and its unique meaning for Boomers:

Travel is the one business category that covers all the themes outlined in this book. It is a global business; it benefits from increases in longevity, health, and wellness; it caters to the Boomer's hunger for family and community; it is being transformed by online services and other technology; it is a purchase that often accompanies life transitions; it offers learning and enhances creativity, and it feeds a hunger for spirituality and service.

You will need to read the book yourself to unpack her insights but I want to tie all these quotes together with an observation about Boomers and the Disability Rights Movement.



## Marketing 7 Marketing Travel to the Boomer Generation: Anatomy is not Destiny!

*Scott Rains*

for protecting democracy when it was threatened; but Baby Boomers deserve even more credit for enriching democracy and fulfilling its promise when neither war nor catastrophe nor necessity compelled them to do it.

Later, discussing the generational principles of asserting diversity as a moral value, he adds,

Perhaps the most noble example of diversity in action is the disability rights movement, which is based on the idea that even those with the most crippling handicap can contribute equally to society if given the chance, and that because of their disability they have a unique perspective from which we all can learn.

The modern Disability Rights Movement was born in the 1950's. It came of age in the 1970's. It exerted mature influence on society in the 1980's, 1990's, and continues to do so today.

The Disability Rights Movement is a Boomer phenomenon. Its founding leadership is Boomers. They fought for - and won - the social recognition, political influence, and consumer clout that are now taken for granted by an entire feisty generation now moving into the even feistier stage known as old age.

To market travel successfully to Boomers it is necessary to know Disability Rights Movement values, history, and culture intimately enough to craft a message that speaks to them uniquely. They are not two entities. We, with our disabilities earned earlier in life, have just been running beta tests on aging day in and day out for a generation while we waited for our Boomer peers to catch up.

Now we're ready to travel in style!

<http://www.RollingRains.com>

It seems that DMOs are blaming online media for not working effectively. I would argue that the reasons this can be the case is that a lot of online advertising is placed on the wrong sites or probably even more likely what happens when an interested traveler clicks is not the expected result. How many DMOs are doing research on the importance of landing pages to convert? Where do they send the click? To the home page or a truly convincing and effective landing page that takes the clicker to the next logical step in the travel decision making process?

I've long been an advocate of campaign specific, branded micro-sites that would increase the effectiveness of the online ad spend. Other industries do this successfully. The main reason for this is that too many DMO sites are overloaded with information that often is there because every possible constituent has to be kept

## Shift is not enough. - Destination Marketers Shift Their Digital Spend

*Joe Buhler*

satisfied. It's like wading through an information jungle, rather than a walk along a well kept path to the reservation.

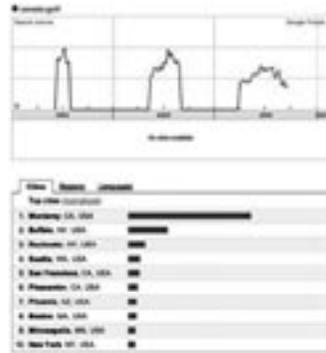
But, what seems to me the most basic requirement for DMOs is a total review of their marketing budgets and prioritizing expenditures, before allocating some funds from often shrinking budgets to online media. It can't be considered an "add-on" but the entire marketing effort today should revolve around the website as the core asset of the organization. I doubt many DMOs are taking that approach.

<http://buhlerworks.typepad.com>

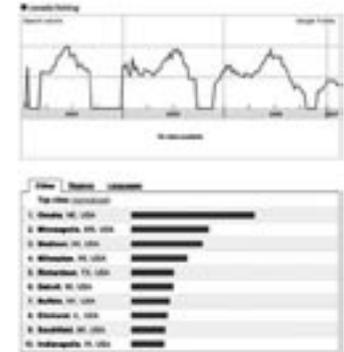


Playing around a bit more with Google Trends (<http://www.google.com/trends>), a few interesting patterns emerge in terms of the link between a traveler's preferred activities and their online planning habits.

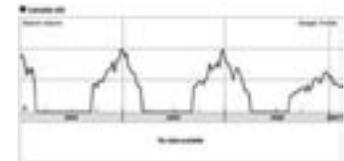
For example, US visitors planning a golf vacation to Canada appear to only get serious about their plans once the golf season begins. Take a look at this chart showing search volume for "Canada golf" originating out of the US over a three-year period:



Avid American fishermen, on the other hand, don't necessarily plan earlier but their interest in fishing in Canada is sustained over a longer period owing to the Spring fishing season and the relative popularity of ice fishing:



Interest begins to wane in July and doesn't pick up again until mid-November. Interest tends to be centered on the border states, though Texas does appear on the top 10 list.



American skiers heading North for better snow tend to begin their search in early September with very little travel planning done through the summer months when their minds are on anything but snow. Interest peaks at Christmas time, perhaps due to both Christmas and Spring Break travel planning.



Washington state, the Boston area, Washington and New York City display the most interest in a Canadian ski vacation.

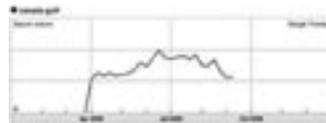
It stands to reason that there are a lot more Americans planning and searching for these same activities during the same periods. If we can reach them online with a compelling and relevant message about Canada as they begin to explore their options, we should see some spikes in these same charts next year.

<http://cblog.brandcanadablog.com>

# Marketing 9 When tourists make their plans depends on what they like to do

Steve Wright

The majority of golfers appear to make golfing vacation plans only after they've swung the clubs a few times at home. California and the border states dominate the top 10. In this 1-year snapshot from 2006, you can see that search engine volumes only pick up at the beginning of April:



Market research can often be seen as a luxury or too complicated for smaller tourism businesses and, as such, it can be low down their list of priorities. However, the term 'market research' covers a multitude of areas, some of which might be more achievable than others for smaller operators. This article will outline methods and approaches to market research that a tourism business can use and help them identify where a little effort might mean a big reward.

Before we deal with the detail though, it is perhaps worthwhile reminding ourselves of some really basic rules:

### **1. Seek only information you can act on.**

It might be interesting to learn that the majority of your guests are Hungarians who wear size 9 shoes and think your local area is beautiful. But how much of

### **3. Always measure marketing activity.**

If you don't know whether the marketing is working, why are you doing it? The chances are that some of your marketing works and some doesn't. Do you know which is which?

### **4. You are a big influence on how people will respond to market research questions.**

It's human nature to a) give the response required by the person asking the questions and b) it is human for the person doing the asking to phrase the question in such a way as to get the answer they are looking for. This is nice in the short-term because you'll think everything is rosy but it simply means that people are sparing you their true judgment if things aren't so good. This is also known as 'lying through their teeth.' As such, questions need to be put in such an environment that allows customers to feel they can be honest without reprisals. This means, for example, that standing over them as they fill out a questionnaire is probably not the best way to get honest views.

### **5. Market Research doesn't need to be expensive.**

The more you pay, the more reliable and accurate the results will be but sometimes a 'quick, dirty and often' approach is going to be far more valuable to the time-stretched B&B owner than a thorough market segmentation exercise of their guests. Market Research isn't just about gathering huge amounts of numbers and ticks in boxes – it's about finding out how people respond to certain offers, it's about how 'usable' people find your offering and it's about managing your band, for example.

<http://blog.highlandbusinessresearch.com>



## **I t doesn't need to be difficult**

### **- market research for small tourism businesses (part 1)**

*Stephen Budd*

that information is useful to you? In the (flippant) example above, the fact that the visitors are Hungarian is important (it helps you target marketing or deliver service in the right language) but the rest of the information serves little purpose – it is either irrelevant or its not an area about which you can do nothing.

### **2. If you don't listen to the answer, don't ask the question.**

If customers are telling you that they think your decor is naff, don't ignore them because you don't like what they're saying. If the evidence suggests that your customers want a change, it's probably in your interest to listen to them and act on their advice.

In some respects you've got to hand it to Travelsupermarket as it continues its relentless strategy of brand building via the offline media.

As reported here, Travelsupermarket will be splashing out £11 million in 2007 on a huge marketing campaign, with £8 million going just on TV.

The interesting point to all this is the absolute faith the Cheshire-based company has in the strategy.

In fact the unflappable Chris Nixon, Travelsupermarket's general manager, more often than not casually brushes aside any remarks about an apparent over-reliance on TV advertising.

In fact it would be fair to say that of the two, Sidestep has generated a fair amount of buzz in industry circles, primarily for its functionality and content.

And if leading industry figures are a decent enough benchmark of what will also perhaps enthrall consumers, then Travelsupermarket's strategy is spot on.

Raise the traffic volume bar by getting in the minds of consumers, during the Christmas and New Year holiday break, and hope some of the traffic sticks in the long run by also improving its content and functionality.

Travolution is probably not alone in predicting 2007 could be the year that meta search/travel search truly comes to the fore.

<http://travolution.blogspot.com>

Marketing

11

## Why spend millions on TV advertising?

*Kevin May*

Many online-only brands have adopted this approach in the past, and it has often paid off, at least initially – ESure, Egg, Ebay.

But this is the first time that an online travel company has followed through an initial burst of TV advertising with a far bigger (the 2006 TV campaign totaled around £2.5 million) level of spend.

There are clearly many reasons for the ongoing marketing programme: despite the growing popularity of the vertical travel search engine sector, many industry figures suspect Travelsupermarket will feel a hit of some kind when the traction behind new players Sidestep and Kayak really kicks in during early-2007.

Airlines dominate online travel in many markets. In fact in Australia, Japan, Ireland, Spain and many others the number one airline carrier(s) are also the number one online travel player(s) regardless of what measure you use (traffic, sales, brand recognition). My story earlier this week of Qantas' efforts in online hotels (Ready-Rooms) turned me to thinking about what is it that airlines in this position of online market lead need to (and should) do to fight off the cashed up and hungry for expansion online agencies (Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz) and the scrappy, lean and very good at what they do "little guys" (Wotif, Venere, HRS, Flairview).

The simple answer and the one that most of the airlines seem to be following is simple, do more of the same. First, provide dirt cheap fares that are only available online and market the hell out of it. Second, partner with someone (either external or if you have a "holiday" division, internal) for complementary products

channel. Leaving it to someone else leaves you open to the expansion plans of someone else. Leaving it to your holiday division means that hotel contracting style and results mirrors the less flexible world of wholesale. Either way you do not end up with the inventory and pricing you need to beat the little guys. Just as important you need to match the big guys in putting cross sell in the purchase path through both dynamic packaging and shopping basket style. Both of these things mean investing seriously in the complementary product;

**2. Customer rewards beyond price:** Web only deals and lots of them drove customers to Airline websites but with the OTAs now using API connections and screen-scraping to provide customers with the same inventory, the airlines need to expand their offering to customers. Use content, loyalty concepts/miles, customer service and bonuses (all the stuff that OTAs do) to open up another front in retaining customers; and

**3. Channel management and structure:** Stop treating the online channel as...well...just another channel. Make it a separate business in itself. Put the person in charge, truly in charge such that they never have to enter into a debate over cannibalisation of other channels. Turn the site into a business that is independent of the airline's other sales activities.

Do none of these and these airlines might stay on top but do all of these and they definitely will.

<http://tims-boot.blogspot.com>

# Marketing

# 12

# Helping airlines stay on top

Timothy Hughes

(hotel, car) and point some traffic at those areas for some extra revenue. This is a good strategy but pursuing it unmodified will not guarantee success.

Here are three things that I recommend strong online distribution airline players do to sure up their position. The first for revenue, the second for loyalty and the third for focus:

**1. Cross Sell of Complementary Product:** But not through a third party (Ryanair and Expedia style) and not through the holiday or vacation division of the airline (Qantas and ReadyRooms style). Instead they need to invest in a true independent but in-house hotel business one that lives by the principles and processes that have made the "little guys" (see above) so successful - hotel flexibility in rates and availability, product focus and online product managers living and breathing their

Here are my tips to help promote your blog.

#### **Write Unique content**

When blogging about a news story, don't copy the content from the news site, i.e. BBC, instead re-write it completely, and add your opinions on the news. Ask for people's thoughts on the story and people will leave comments.

#### **Visit other related blogs**

Find other travel related blogs on sites like Google's Blog Search and leave comments. Don't promote your blog within comments instead write a useful reply giving your opinion. Promotion within comments is frowned upon [well it is with me].



## **S**tamping your Footprint on Travel

*Darren Cronian*

#### **Submit your blog to directories**

There are a ton of blog directories out there, so spend a few hours and submit your blog to these directories. Also keep a look out for RSS feed directories where you can submit your RSS feed and this attracts people who are interested in your content.

#### **Claim your blog on Technorati**

I've found Technorati to be a good referrer of visitors, even though I haven't promoted Technorati within my blog by using tagging etc. I do think people spend too much time on improving their Technorati ranking, but it's a popular place to promote your blog.

#### **Analyse your blog stats**

I've tried out all sorts of applications for analyzing my blog stats, and I have to say that the best application is Google Analytics. It's free, and provides tons of stats with graphs – you can easily find out where your traffic is coming from and what keywords people are using in the search engines to find your blog posts.

#### **Link Love**

Yes, the search engines love links - and if you write unique and interesting content then people will link to you without you having to offer anything in return. Most people link to your content or blog because they enjoy reading your content or because they think that their readers would be interested in what you have to say.

#### **Don't give in**

The hard work will pay off – only in the last month I have been featured on the Travel Guardian website, website of the day on the Breakfast show on Splash FM radio, interviewed by a freelance reporter for the Times about the impact of blogging on travel and featured on Rolf Potts Vagablogging.

You might be interested to know that I have finally launched my little secret - Blogged Out - yep, another blog [am I mad? - Yes!] which will help fellow bloggers promote their blog. Drop by and let me know what you think.

<http://www.travel-rants.com>

We keep hearing the buzz about “social media” and as marketers we are thinking – “but we just figured out the website!” Social media is not just the next thing, I really think that this way of interacting online will become the norm leaving the traditional website behind. I joined the Facebook online community back in May and already I have 130 friends and I am a very regular user. I use Facebook to stay connected with my friends and colleagues, and to share my experiences. There is the key to social media – shared experiences.

No longer can I simply just view a static website the same way I once did. I want to interact online – I want to hear from others like me that are shopping online for items that I am interested in purchasing, I want to interact with others that are talking about things that are of interest to me, and I no longer want the one way

share the “stories” of the brand. Brilliant! User generated content that is engaging and “real” instead of simply the marketing message.

They have brilliantly incorporated their product into the Lounge with a “Ride the Rails Referral Program” and a “Gourmet Moment” – and they have encouraged interaction by offering prizes for submitting content. They are really still “guiding” the conversation – but it is a great example of marketing within the social media space.

<http://www.ideahatching.com>

A graphic consisting of a large black circle containing the word "Marketing" in a smaller font at the top and the number "14" in a very large, bold font below it.

## Marketing 14

# Rocky Mountaineer Vacations dives in with its new Online Guest Lounge

*Alicia Whalen*

communication that the advertising message has traditionally been. This is what social media has done to change the way we use the online space.

On many levels a social media platform such as Facebook (and there are many others) can be a dream to a marketer. A social media space like this can allow advertisers to really join the conversation, talk directly to their target audience, encourage interaction between their customers and encourage feedback back to the brand.

A friend passed along a link to the new Rocky Mountaineer Guest Lounge (A Canadian train tour experience that takes guests by rail through the Canadian Rockies) – a true social media space where guests are invited to share photos, video's, connect with others that have had a Rocky Mountaineer vacation, and

There are numerous ways for small tour operators to achieve success. However, there are some basic ingredients that will help you do so cost effectively. The following ingredients can improve your business.

#### **Ingredient #1: THE COMPLETE PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE ONLINE**

Customers have great and increasing expectations of the types and amount of information on your product offering that they expect to be able to easily and quickly access online. The old approach of “leave a little information so they’ll call you” no longer works for most consumers.



# **Key Marketing Ingredients for Successful Small Tour Operators**

*Tatsuya Nakagawa*

The following information should be online wherever possible:

1. detailed tour descriptions including low resolution clickable to higher resolution images,
2. pricing information with the specialty pricing included as part of that,
3. anything that the company is asked often by customers or prospects is something you should likely have online,
4. Audio and video clips are a nice but not yet necessary option that can help sell packages.

Since there are so many competing options becoming available online, ease, simplicity and completeness of your online information can become a competitive advantage.

#### **Ingredient #2: A WELL-MANAGED ONLINE REPUTATION**

Operators are becoming much more aware of how quickly a reputation can become tarnished by dissatisfied users, disgruntled employees, competitors and others who can post information almost instantly online in any number of places including websites, trip review forums and chat rooms. Operators should be monitoring these by setting up Google alerts ([www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts)) using your company and tour names as keywords.

Tour operators should manage their online reputation carefully. They can be proactive by contributing to one or more recognized blogs before trying to create their own. This is because well established blogs have higher standards and very high rankings within the search engine system. Focus on credibility, then on search engine optimization (SEO) strategies to increase visibility. The idea is to show quality and not just quantity on the Google hit returns.

#### **Ingredient #3: A WELL EXECUTED PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM.**

Public Relations companies were traditionally used to broker media relationships. More operators are learning how to approach media directly. This is especially the case for web based businesses.

Most media people now include their email addresses in their contact information so it seems to be easier to contact media people. This is deceptive. Operators that do not understand public relations should hire agencies to help them become more media savvy and effective. They should learn how to do their own public relations work but be willing to spend some money on expertise to help them learn how to do it effectively.

With the increasing availability and access to media, there tends to be more noise. There is a premium on being or becoming the best. Media and consumers alike gravitate toward operators who are the best of the best in their class.

For the best results, all three of these ingredients need to be included as part of a well considered online marketing strategy. This will help you achieve greater success in your tour business.

<http://www.atomiccreative.com>

Media insider and professor Jeff Jarvis is as an evangelist for the new area of media communication. At last year's "Video on the Net Conference" he gave a presentation addressing the future of the TV industry. Jarvis ended his keynote with a mind boggling manifesto about the future of marketing communications in general. Since this manifesto is also inspiring for other industries, see my quick interpretation from a tourism angle:

The Internet is the ultimate choice machine.

Consumers have more choices than ever, if your offer is not compelling, the next one is only a click away. Add consumer-generated reviews to that and you might well have to rethink your quality standards and business model all together.



Marketing  
**16** **M**arketing manifesto  
by Jeff Jarvis  
*Karin Schmollgruber*

It has become a tool to control consumption AND the creation of media.

You are not in control of the creation of media anymore. Anybody with a cell phone becomes a multi media creator, regardless of your approval. Maybe starring your hotel, service or destination for the rest of the world to see on Flickr, YouTube and Tripadvisor.

The question no longer is: Who is King - Content or Distribution? Because the answer is: Trust & Consumption are.

Yes your content is still important, but you are not the only one creating or distributing it anymore. That is why building trust by offering valuable content and connecting with your potential customers as well as with each other is more

important than ever. Your hotel is not the best in town? Your destination is not as hot as others? Don't pretend they are. Be truthful and your customers will appreciate and trust you. Focus on what you are really good at. Let customers make a choice based on all the information necessary and available.

Control is futile: If you give people control they will use it. If you don't, you will lose it.

Give up control over content and marketing messages. With so many ways for customers to consume and connect, you cannot control it anymore. If you try to, delivering your message the way you were used to, will become increasingly difficult. Integrate content created by your customers into your marketing materials and message. British Columbia is a pioneer for this. Answer questions that arise regularly. Provide the orientation necessary for customers to plan their holiday. Partner with businesses that offer the best services for your customers, not the highest provision to you. Your customers and your staff are your greatest stakeholders. Try to keep politics outside of tourism.

People who love your product are your best friends in the world. The question is, how do you enable them. Not how do you get a message out with them, but how you let them speak.

Surrender control over the content created about your product, service or destination. Instead encourage your friendly customers to spread the message for you. Let that premise encourage you and your staff to deliver the best service you can. Create your own league of ambassadors for your company. Connect with them. Ask them where they want to post their future contents and for their process of information. Search Flickr, Google and Travel 2.0 sites for relevant content. Link to it from your website.

They market your product and create the message why to buy your product. And they will put the message out for you.

They know why your product is worth buying. Don't alienate costumers by pretending you are something you are not. Granted, some will love certain features, that others don't. But don't pretend your destination is a great shopping hot spot, when the stores are not open on Sundays (as is the case in Vienna). Focus on what

you really have to offer. Try to enable the happy costumers to spread the word, by telling the truth and attracting the right kind of people. Or by preparing those who are not, for the reality of their deliberate decision.

<http://www.FastenYourSeatbelts.at>

### **How to Automate Your Relationships and Sell More Travel with E-Mail Marketing**

Imagine if you were able to communicate with your best travel prospects and clients automatically with useful information that they wanted, that increased your sales conversion and profits, cost you next to nothing, and that you did not even have to be in the office to do...

That's what state of the art travel E-mail marketing communications can do for you when done right.

### **Automatic Permission-Based Relationship Building with E-mail**

Here's an example of automatic relationship and revenue building with E-mail marketing systems. I have a business and marketing mini-course for travel &

# **T**op 11 Travel E-Mail Marketing Tips and Tools

*Tim Warren*



hospitality professionals, called Tourism Business Success (TBS) that is delivered via a auto-responder e-mail system that people subscribe to at my online radio training podcast; [TravelBusinessSuccess.com](http://TravelBusinessSuccess.com).

The subscriber gets useful information automatically from me with their name merged into the content so it is more personalized. Because their name is merged in the content, they think I custom wrote the e-mail just for them. I get thank you E-mails regularly for the in-depth help they got from the course. Yet, I know in advance exactly what they will get from me for the first 91 days because I wrote all the E-mail training modules in 2006 with travel business, tourism marketing and hospitality industry content I knew travel professionals needed in order to succeed.

This mini-course that is helping over 7,000 global travel professionals, has increased my relationships, sales of my educational products and consulting projects automatically. As savvy marketers you can increase sales and save time via low cost and easy to use E-mail marketing systems too.

### **Profitable Travel E-mail Marketing**

Although 84% of all travel and vacations are researched online, do your prospects instantly make a booking the first time they come across your website? Probably not, especially if your travel offering is more than a small investment. Your prospects want to know that you are a good choice, you have what they seek, you are knowledgeable and that they feel good about the relationship they are starting with you. Nothing beats a well executed automatic E-mail system to build credibility, relationships and sales, especially when you know what your market wants.

### **Travel Marketing Can Be Easy**

Find out what your market wants and needs, and give it to them. The best way is to ask your clients and prospects with off and online surveys. When you know their top questions issues and concerns, then build an e-mail information campaign that meets the needs of your market. Another good E-mail campaign format is to answer frequently asked questions you get from prospects. Even though you may be giving the market what it wants in your E-mail campaign, getting and keeping subscribers is key to building a profitable list.

### **Top 11 Tips for Travel E-mail Marketing Success**

1. Use incentives to increase opt-in subscribers.
2. Make it easy for prospects to opt-in or opt-out of your e-mail broadcasts.
3. Merge the subscribers first name into the subject line of all e-mails to increase open rate.
4. Use a grabbing headline or question in the subject to get people to open it.
5. Mail merge subscribers name into content at least once.
6. Broadcast useful and helpful Evergreen ( not dated) content.
7. Broadcast special events.
8. Use E-mail marketing as an "Actionator", call to action tool with Limited space, time and Last minute deals offerings.
9. Integrate written and audio testimonials and photos of happy guests into your E-mails.

10. Ask your market what they want and need with survey's.
11. Keep your contact regular and ongoing, no less than 1 a month.

Always focus on helping your audience and you'll earn new customers guaranteed.

### **What to look for in a E-Mail Marketing System**

Working with an experienced e-marketing supplier is key to making this marketing tool as fast and easy for you to use. Two of the most widely used systems in the travel industry are Constant Contact and Aweber. I love technology to market travel, especially when suppliers provide proven tools and resources.

### **Here's a List of Features of Top E-mail Marketing Suppliers:**

- Live and recorded Training & tech support
- Text & HTML Templates
- Unlimited auto-responders so you can segment your mailings
- Ability to do unlimited broadcast announcements
- High deliverability rate
- Canned Spam compliant
- Easy opt in and opt out forms
- Tracking software to measure open rates
- Built in survey so you can better serve clients needs

E-mail marketing can be one of the fastest, lowest cost relationship and business building tools you will ever use.

<http://www.travelbusinesssuccess.com>

Short of conducting a full-fledged survey, how can you keep tabs on how your tourism experience is being received by customers?

The simple question “Would you recommend us to a friend?” is often cited as being an easy to gather and powerful indicator of consumer satisfaction. The question provides an important data point, but it’s not a great diagnostic tool, especially in the tourism industry.

If consumers buy a can of soup but say they wouldn’t recommend it to their friends, you can be pretty sure you have a product problem. It’s a comparatively one-dimensional experience. But if consumers say they wouldn’t recommend your travel experience to their friends, you’re going to have to do some further digging to figure out where the problem lies - and it might not be with your “product.”

Marketing  
**18**

# The Two Most Important Questions in Evaluating a Tourism Experience

Steve Wright

At its core, reaction to a tourism experience is based on two factors: what you expect the experience to be and your enjoyment of the actual experience.

What consumers expect an experience to be is shaped by everything they’ve heard about your product and their experience (if any) with similar products. Often, the image they’ve built up in their mind -- coloured by pop culture, history, the evening news and the opinions of friends and family -- may bear little resemblance to the reality of your product. But to the consumer, if that image isn’t matched by the actual experience, they may come away feeling your product was not “authentic.”

Authenticity is a big topic in tourism circles and the real experts are elsewhere, but the important thing to remember is that “tourists don’t visit the reality of a

destination - they visit the stereotype that exists in their head.”

If, for example, a tourist comes to Montreal expecting “Mountains, Mounties and Moose” they’re likely to go home feeling they didn’t have an “authentic” Canadian experience. The reality of their visit didn’t live up to their perception of the brand.

It’s why consumers will rate a good experience at a two-star hotel better than an only average experience at a 5-star hotel. The experience at the 5-star hotel may still have been better than that of the 2-star hotel, but the consumer’s expectations prior to staying at the 5-star hotel were much higher.

Which brings us to the first of our two most important questions in evaluating a tourism experience:

### Was it what you expected?

It’s that simple. The experience you provided either met the consumer’s expectations or it didn’t.

The second most important question in evaluation a tourism experience is just as simple:

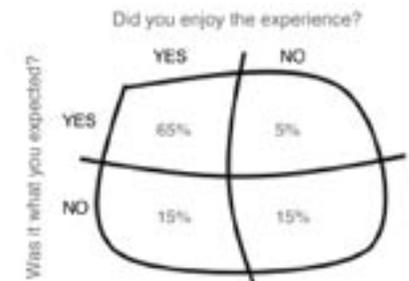
### Did you enjoy your experience?

Armed with only the answers to these two questions you can diagnose an awful lot about your marketing program and your product.

Here’s how it works:

- Consumers will respond in one of four ways:
  - The experience was what they expected and they enjoyed it;
  - The experience was what they expected but they didn’t enjoy it;
  - The experience wasn’t what they expected, and they didn’t enjoy it; or
  - The experience wasn’t what they expected, but they enjoyed it anyway.

Take the percentage of consumers who fit into each group and create a chart that looks like this:



Now you’ve got your diagnostic tool.

If most of your customers fall into the top left quadrant (the experience was what they expected and they enjoyed it), you're in great shape. Keep making improvements on what you're already doing to get more of your customers into the happy group.

If a large percentage of your customer fit into the lower right quadrant (wasn't what they expected and they didn't enjoy it), you've got a problem. Your brand is making a promise that your product can't deliver (and by "brand" we mean whatever the consumer believed to be true about you and the category of business in which you operate). You can either re-configure your marketing program to be true to your actual product or re-configure your product to be true to consumer expectations. Take a look at what Wales is doing for a great example of the former.

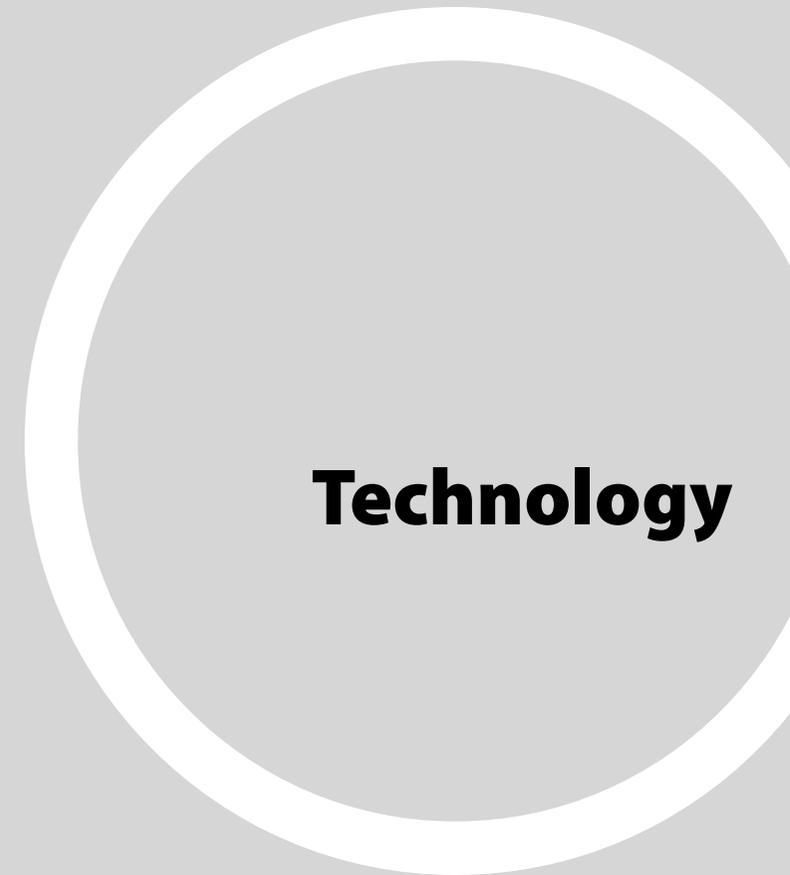
If the bulk of your customers fall into the lower left quadrant (it wasn't what they expected, but they enjoyed it anyway), your product is probably fine but your brand isn't correctly positioned or at the very least is under-leveraged -- and you may be sitting on an untapped marketing goldmine. These are the customers who have real potential to become advocates for your brand - the folks who will spread positive word of mouth - because they've been surprised by your experience in a positive way.

Customers who fall into the upper right quadrant (it was what they expected, but they didn't enjoy it) are the most difficult to figure out. Your immediate reaction might be "if you knew what you were getting into, what's your problem?" but the answer probably lies in one of three areas:

- They may have been traveling with someone else who was attracted to your experience and only came along reluctantly;
- Your overall experience may have delivered on what they expected but one or two "moments of truth" let them down and negatively affected their overall enjoyment; or
- They may have reluctantly picked you by default (e.g. yours was the last available hotel room or the restaurant they wanted to visit was closed).

Making a habit of asking these two simple questions won't solve all your challenges or give you all the answers, but in terms of providing an easy to administer and effective diagnostic tool, it's tough to beat.

<http://cblog.brandcanadablog.com>



Apple announced today its first all-in-one phone/iPod/PDA. Be prepared for tourists 2.0! Okay, I'm joking with the Web 2.0 / Travel 2.0 buzz but this new revolutionary cell phone (and all the upcoming ones) will have an incredible effect on tourists and on the industry.

#### What's the iPhone exactly?

The introduction on the iPhone website goes like this:

*"iPhone combines three products — a revolutionary mobile phone, a widescreen iPod with touch controls, and a breakthrough Internet communications device with desktop-class email, web browsing, maps, and searching — into one small and lightweight handheld*



The other thing is that it uses Safari - Apple standard browser -, it supports widgets, it plays Mp3 and videos as well as it can take pictures. You got it, it is much more than a cell phone. Maybe they should have named it iVerySmallComputer which also can be used as a cell phone. ;)

#### Now let's see what could we do with that...

There are so many things I'm thinking to actually, I'm going to give you some of them right away because the new phones (iPhone and some others) bring us an all-new bunch of opportunities.

A tourist will be able to:

- Easily search for hotels online while he's in town instead of going to each one of them to verify if they have a room available.
- Wait a bit longer to book his activities because it's now easier to book them online while traveling.
- Look for the bus schedule while waiting for it.
- Translate on Google Translate an English sentence into this foreign language you try to learn.
- More easily go on World66.com, for example, to get some suggestions of activities to do because "today it rains and I certainly won't go to the beach!"

What is the most interesting opportunity, in my opinion, is the possibility to get information on request. The tourist will be able to search on the Internet for information about the park/museum/church he is actually visiting, read info on Wikipedia, download historic videos or mp3 tours, look on a map what is the nearest restaurant, find reviews about this restaurant and so on. You want to know something, no problem! Internet is in your hand.

#### In a couple of years...

When the GPS functionality will be integrated in most of the cell phones, do you realize that, for example, you will be able to automatically send promotions and rebates to the tourists walking in front of your business door? This day will probably come sooner than you think. Imagine the possibilities they say!

<http://www.radaron.com>



# Apple iPhone to Change the Tourism and Travel Industry

Mathieu Ouellet

*device. iPhone also introduces an entirely new user interface based on a large multi-touch display and pioneering new software, letting you control everything with just your fingers. So it ushers in an era of software power and sophistication never before seen in a mobile device, completely redefining what you can do on a mobile phone."*

More on the iPhone on Apple website. (<http://www.apple.com/iphone/>)

#### Which features interest us the most as members of the travel and tourism industry?

Without any doubt the Wi-Fi (and Edge) support let the user connect easily to Wi-Fi networks no matter where he is. In a wireless city it is "oh so" a nice feature. Wherever you go, you can use Internet for free on your cell phone!



About a year ago I joined an online social networking site called Facebook. When I first joined the site, I thought I had stumbled upon a web application that was going to help me instantly connect with my former University classmates and hotel industry colleagues from around the world. I searched virtually every name I could think of on the site, and came up with a big fat zero. Not a single one of my friends or colleagues was to be found. I dumped Facebook from my 'favourites' list and forgot about it for many months.

A few weeks ago I was catching up on my friend Alicia Whalen's blog and found a post about her entertaining initiation to Facebook "groups". Alicia is an online hospitality search marketing specialist and a co-founder of the upcoming Online Revealed marketing conference in Toronto. After reading Alicia's blog I re-visited

The folks at Facebook have taken steps to ensure that people have control over how they share their information and who can see it. People can only view the profiles of confirmed friends and the people in their networks. You can change your privacy settings at any time to control who can see what on Facebook.

### **Hotel Industry Employees are Embracing Social Networking**

If you're thinking that Facebook has no application in the hotel industry, think again. Unlike MySpace, which is highly targeted to the music industry and has a culture of "more friends are better friends", Facebook promotes users to keep their personal networks personal. You probably won't get Random Celebrity Guy asking to be a member of your personal network, unless you know him personally.

Human resource professionals and recruiters would benefit from searching social networks like MySpace, LinkedIn and Facebook to learn more about potential job candidates. You might not care whether or not your candidate is a fan of Grey's Anatomy, but you would most certainly like to know if they brag about their drunken sexual conquests online, or if they have a particular penchant for the F-word.

No doubt these alternative sources of employee talent will be critical in moving forward. As the current labour pool crisis in the hotel industry gets even worse, baby boomers will be starting to retire en masse in the coming years.

What about sales people trying to find the go-to person at a potential client company, or a supplier looking for the decision maker at a hotel property? Sounds like opportunity brewing in the future for a hospitality-specific, professional online social networking space.

I've been back on Facebook for about a week, and have already connected with about fifteen former colleagues from the hotel industry. It is rewarding to see current pictures and to read daily life goings-on. This might not sound like high-value time spent, but I have also had some terrific conversations with colleagues who have been promoted to new hotel positions, and even some requests for me to assist in hotel job search. That's cool stuff for us here at Vacant Ready.

These re-introductions would never have happened if not for the technology of online social networking platforms. Realistically, would you pick up a phone and connect with hotel colleagues from three years ago? Would you even know where they are working? Probably not. Social networking platforms like Facebook allow low-risk communication in a fun environment. Communication occurs only when the user is actually on the site so there is little expectation of an immediate response, and users can proceed at their own pace.



## **F**acing Facts on Facebook: Hotel Employees are Using Social Networks

*Chris Clarke*

my old nemesis Facebook, and was truly overwhelmed with what I found. Friends, colleagues and countrymen were all to be found. Plus a whole lot more.

### **First Off, What the Heck is Facebook?**

Facebook is an online social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet. It's a networking thing, and it's a sophisticated little platform.

Signing up is quick and easy. All you need to do is type in your name, your email address and you're off to the races. Don't worry, you do not need to reveal any specific details about yourself during the registration process if you don't want to. All that good stuff can come later, if at all.

## Hotel Brands are On Facebook

Delta Hotels, Marriott, Starwood, Four Seasons, Fairmont, Ritz Carlton--ever heard of these brands? They all have public groups on Facebook, started by employees themselves. Much of the current conversation is light, fun...and complimentary of the hotel brands that group members work for. As the Facebook user-base gets more established and critical mass starts to appear, you can expect all kinds of honest dialogue about individual hotels and hotel brands. Some of that dialogue will not be very flattering.

Why? Because no workplace is perfect, and those employees who don't have a great experience will find their way to these public groups. When members ask for advice on working for a particular hotel brand, they'll get the real thing. No sugar coating. The good, the bad and the ugly. A hotel G.M. I knew was fond of saying that if we think things aren't going wrong everywhere every day in our hotel operations, we're totally crazy. That's true in my experience, and soon you'll be able to read all about it on Facebook and other networks coming up the pipe.

These conversations are happening without any input or "moderation" (so far) from senior management from the hotel brands. I've been through the membership group profiles of each of the hotel brand groups mentioned above, and of more than 1,000 hotel employees who belong to these hotel groups, I can count on two hands the number of hotel managers at the department head level or higher.

Hotelier activity on Facebook may not yet have achieved enough urgency for the industry to be able to see, but, in the months and years ahead, they had better sit up and take notice. In less than a year I have seen my own network grow on Facebook from zero to, well, about 18 people. And that's only in a week's time. Wait until a year passes!

I urge you to take a look at Facebook to see what its potential is (or isn't if that's your take). And you can help us grow our Vacant Ready group from two lonely members to, well, a whole bunch more. You can just click on "groups" on the top-left of your own Facebook profile, and type in "vacant ready" as a search query. Thanks Nassiba, for joining yesterday!

<http://www.vacantready.com>

As I always say, the 80-20 rule is what you should focus on. It applies perfectly to usability. I'm actually planning a trip to Spain (lucky me!). Since I'm trying to get the best price for my plane ticket, I'm going through a lot (and a lot!) of airfare websites. Some of them are well done but some others made me so frustrated! When tourists are looking for tickets, a car to rent, a hotel to book, they, most of the time, make a lot of searches on each website. You can imagine how frustrating and discouraging it is to be slowed down by usability problems. You want tourists to buy tickets from you, then be sure that it is easy for them to do so. Happy experiences will also make them come back next time!

Here is a list of usability problems that you should fix quickly in the case of an airfare search form:

- Customers should not always have to fill the form and change a date or a destination.

## Do you care about usability?

*Mathieu Ouellet*

- The most used item (for example : a dropdown list of years for a leaving date) should be selected as default. We are December 28th 2006. Why is "2006" the default date in the dropdown? Sure we are in 2006 but 99% of people are searching for 2007!
- Calendars are cool but please give alternatives. Calendars are good for some of the customers but for others it is simpler to write down the date directly.
- In the French version of your website you should use the french names of the countries/cities in your lists.
- If someone is accidentally searching for past dates do not launch the search process for nothing. Tell them right away that the entered dates are not valid.

In conclusion, I would suggest you to use your own forms from a customer perspective, you'll see that it is not always easy to use.

<http://www.radaron.com>

Technology

21

Now facebook is no more a kids, college phenomenon. In the past 4 weeks, I have been bombarded by more friends (30+ years) to get onto facebook and they are all going berserk. They have this really cool polls function which I used to conduct a survey on how would you book international travel. Paid \$0.10 per respondent for 24 hrs and with a respondent base of 500 and \$1 to Facebook. So the cost was \$51. If I had paid \$1 per respondent, I could have had the Poll completed in 30 minutes. I defined the screener as Interest in Travel.

See the results below to the survey. They give you breakup by age, gender and overall responses.

Technology  
**22** Facebook polls  
 Ram Badrinathan

**How would you book your international travel?**

Online travel agent	26%
Airline Web site	46%
Airline call center	3%
Local travel agent in person	21%
Other method	4%

Responses by Sex

Female	272
Male	225

Responses by age

13-17	19
18-24	223
25-34	208
35-49	45

Answer Breakdown by Sex

Online travel agent:

Female	22%
Male	31%

Airline Web site:

Female	46%
Male	47%

Airline call center:

Female	3%
Male	3%

Local travel agent in person: Other method:

Female	25%
Male	16%

Female	5%
Male	3%

Answer breakdown by Age

Online travel agent:

13-17	26%
18-24	22%
25-34	31%
35-49	24%

Airline Web site:

13-17	42%
18-24	49%
25-34	42%
35-49	56%

Airline call center:

13-17	26%
18-24	22%
25-34	31%
35-49	24%

Local travel agent in person: Other method:

13-17	26%
18-24	22%
25-34	21%
35-49	13%

13-17	NA
18-24	4%
25-34	3%
35-49	7%

**comments:**

On 26 July, 2007, Michael Cannizzaro wrote:

Extremely cool, but of course the sample is skewed to the too cool and wannabe cools. But utterly cool! We should send this chart to the NY Times to back their proclamation of the revival of the travel agent — 21%!! Now they need to set up a function that allows one to arrange an opt in panel to track trends!

*On 26 July, 2007, Brendan May wrote:*

As much as I have become a facebook addict on a personal level; we have to as Michael mentioned, remember that the sample is very skewed...Also never forget that Facebook is not always taken with the same seriousness as other systems – It is supposed to be fun after all. By the way – I agree with Ram that its not just school kids. I joined Facebook after my FATHER sent me an invite. While I was on vacation in Canada we had a group of 18 people evenly spread out between 24 – 48; all going camping. The most commonly heard phrase was “I’ll Facebook that tomorrow morning” (referring usually to pictures). I’ll remind you we were camping – my how camping has changed; and it’s not just Google that has become a verb!

*On 26 July, 2007, Philip Wolf wrote:*

Well it’s not skewed if you look at it for what it is: a poll of Facebook users!

*On 26 July, 2007, Brendan May wrote:*

Fair enough. But that answer begs the question: what do I need the opinion of a bunch of Facebook users for? J Good if you’re convinced that Facebook users fit your target market. There do seem to be parallels between Facebook and Google. Quite simply both of them do the same thing as other sites; just significantly better, and have a higher following. On the other hand, the Myspacers are getting bored and not logging in anymore...will the same thing occur to Facebook?

*On 26 July, 2007, Cathy Schetzina wrote:*

I think social networks, due to their social nature, are particularly prone to fads and many will go through phases of popularity with various demographics and then wane. I would propose that the MySpacers? who are getting bored may have moved on to other social networks ... just as many of them may have started out at a previous social network (my guess is Friendster) before moving on to MySpace? On the other hand, just as Google has become many people’s start point for navigating the Internet, it seems like there is an opening for a social network to snap up the same sort of spot. Facebook looks like the most probable candidate to date. It will be interesting to see how things play out....

*On 26 July, 2007, Lorraine Sileo wrote:*

According to this survey, 13-17 year olds are the most likely to use an in-person travel agent (is that because they don’t have credit cards yet and have to pay

cash? And 18-24 year olds are just as likely to use an offline agent as an online one. If this is “true” then that turns CTTS on its ear. Just shows you can’t fool around with research. On the other hand, is this something worth probing? Maybe the travel agent is making a comeback after all...

*On 26 July, 2007, Michael Cannizzaro wrote:*

Funny—but one of the first points made—that in this “fun” venue, this polling group may not be taking the poll that seriously (e.g., lots of 13-17 year olds telling us they like the old-fashioned travel agent) is relevant. Philip’s point covers it—we can track facebookers. And re the fad/Google element, I think one reason Facebook is so hot has less to do with fad and more to do with 1) a truly solid base of educated like-minded people who want to connect and 2) very cool differentiating tools.

<http://www.phocuswright.com>

As a technologist with a focus on tourism and travel technologies, I have had the opportunity to work with SME tour operators for some time. For most savvy operators, the opportunity to use new technologies to increase their exposure and bookings is ever present. For some, however, the perceived reality of implementing such a solution is simply too remote, too expensive, and too complex. In actuality there is an ever growing list of systems that can be used for this purpose.

There is a huge opportunity to move these disparate providers onto the Internet. The challenge is that many of them are not yet ready to take the leap. For many it is outside their area of expertise, and the perceived cost of making such a leap is too high for them to risk. The reality is that the costs are very small when compared to traditional marketing and sales initiatives. The difficulty is that there is a lack of knowledge amongst most tour operators. We experienced this in the last

brochures. Wouldn't it be a nice first step to allow these local tourism advocates to search for and book local tour products from their offices or kiosks? Getting tourists to purchase local tourism products should be the goal rather than just a side benefit of driving tourists to a region. It will undoubtedly take a longer time to convert the long tail than we first anticipated, but as the leading edge of the tail steadily grows, the pace at which the tail adopts a combination of marketing and booking technology will increase.

<http://tourismtechnology.rezgo.com>



## **C**hasing the Tail... the Long Tail

*Stephen Joyce*

six months as we targeted SME tour operators in our region. The concept of using a new technology to distribute their product was enticing, but the unknowns were simply too numerous for them to make a commitment.

So how do we reach the long tail? My feeling is that it is going to take a combination of increasing exposure to these new technologies and a systematic focus on educating SME operators about systems and benefits of these tools. Thanks in part to new hardware, infrastructure, and greater capacity, we don't have to worry about educating users on the benefits of the Internet, and we can focus strictly on the benefits of specific applications and tools. DMOs and regional tourism organizations can play an important role in the education of their stakeholders by leading by example. Many small tourism companies rely on their local tourist bureaus to drive traffic to their businesses by displaying rack cards or handing out

Offering online bookings can help to boost the number of reservations you receive by making it more convenient for your potential guests. You can expect to experience the same benefits that other businesses have had when they made the move to sell online. These include, but are not limited to: access to a global market, 24-hour business, receiving payments more quickly, and attracting customers who would not normally have found you. Depending on the solution you choose, it may also help you to manage your inventory, store your contact database, generate reports, and even support your marketing efforts.

There are a number of different options available for you to allow the booking of your products online.

prised to find that a hosted web service, especially one that was made specifically to sell travel inventory, may possibly have all the functionality you need and then some. A good hosted application should offer most of the following features...

- Detailed product management
- Real time inventory
- Support for multiple payment methods
- Bookings are made through a secure server
- Generate revenue and passenger reports
- Address book or contact database

It should also allow you to customize the look and feel of your booking pages so that any transitions between your site and the booking application are seamless.

When comparing hosted applications, make sure that you do the math. Figure out how many bookings you typically receive each month. Multiply the number of monthly bookings by the commission rate that one service may charge. Then, compare this projected monthly commission against the services that charge monthly fees. You may want to estimate a higher number of monthly bookings when doing these calculations. After all, the whole point of offering bookings online is to increase the actual number you receive.

<http://thetechnologyofbusiness.blogspot.com>



## **You don't have to be big to do bookings online**

### **What to look for in a SME Booking Solution**

*John McDonald*

The first, and perhaps most common, approach would be to hire a web design and development company to add the functionality to your website. The main advantage to this approach is that you can build the system to suit your specific needs. The major drawback of a customized application is that it can be quite expensive. You should expect to pay from \$10K - \$20K for your own web based booking system. Add another \$5K if you don't already have a website.

Another option and less costly solution would be to sell your tours or packages through a hosted web application. With this solution, you can spread your costs over time. For instance you may pay a monthly fee, a commission on the items you sell, or a combination of both. You might think that the pros and cons of a system like this would be the opposite of those I described for the custom approach. That is, what you save in cost is offset by less functionality. However, you may be sur-

Online travel is a huge, multi-billion dollar industry, and is composed of tens of thousands of travel agencies, with hundreds of thousands of small tour operators selling their tours through these agencies and independently. As a small tour provider, you have the opportunity to sell direct to your customers over the internet, taking the middle man out of the equation, and increasing your profits. You are also considerably more nimble than your average travel agency.

You can market directly to your target market. Do you provide mountain bike tours? By marketing directly to mountain bikers through community involvement, blogging about the sport, and participating in your local community, you raise awareness of your business. Network with the local bike shops. Provide the opportunity to book your tours online, and become the destination for your demographic.



## Independent Tour Operators Have BIG Advantages

*Chelsea Bell*

You can dictate your reseller terms. Most travel agencies rely on a collection of Global Distribution Systems (GDS) to gain access to flights and accommodations, which they then resell. In order to be resold by the GDS, you must comply with their terms. This can mean waiting months to be paid, and having refunds applied against you without your input.

One of the biggest advantages that you have over Travel Resellers is this: you can accept payments online without outlaying large cash bonds to secure a merchant account. This makes your overhead that much lower. You can provide quality tours for reasonable prices, and make a tidy profit.

You will need the following to accept your bookings online, and be approved for a Virtual Terminal (your online credit card processing account):

- 1) A decently designed website.
- 2) A booking engine that is designed to accept credit card payments, and supports 256 bit security.
- 3) A section on your website that addresses your terms of service, refund policy, and website usage terms.

Once you have these in place, you can apply for your online merchant account.

The next step will be setting up your online tour inventory, and marketing your site with the same zeal that you bring to your offline marketing. Get out there and get blogging! Your customers are online; go and get them. Setup a Facebook account for your tours, and connect to your current and future customers.

Now you have the opportunity to sell direct, keeping your costs low so that you can pass those savings onto your customers, while providing more comprehensive services for less than your resold counterparts. You have also just increased your online respectability by accepting the most widely used online payment method, and pre-qualified your customers by accepting payment in advance for your tours.

And that makes you 3 large steps ahead of your average travel agency.

<http://thetechnologyofbusiness.blogspot.com>

For a long time now, prospective travelers have had the ability to search, find, and make their flight and hotel reservations on-line. Only recently has it been possible for these same travelers to book their destination products, such as sightseeing tours and attraction tickets online as well. Despite this trend, there is still no primary distribution system; which means that most travelers have to visit many different individual websites in order to purchase their destination products.

For a tour operator, one of the most important goals is to sell seats. The challenge is how to sell more seats and what systems to use to manage those sales. There are several challenges facing individual tour providers when choosing to sell their products through their website or through a booking portal. The first challenge is deciding what kind of solution to use. There are primarily two types of on line booking systems available. One is stand-alone, which means that it is installed

distribution of products through a branded portal website, very few actually allow for the open distribution of destination products through some kind of global distribution system.

The second major challenge for tour operators is deciding whether to use a system that charges a flat fee or a commission. This can be a tougher challenge to overcome because both hosted and stand-alone systems charge both flat fees and commissions. So once the tour operator has chosen a technology, they must decide if the cost of the system is appropriate. The benefit of a commission based system is that there is generally very little cost to the tour operator until a sale is made and then the tour operator pays on average about a five percent commission on the sale of their products through the system. In some cases, the commission can be as low as one percent or as high as twenty-five percent. This may seem attractive because there are no upfront or ongoing costs, but the costs of a commission based system can quickly add up. Flat fee systems charge a regular monthly fee and a flat booking fee, on average about one dollar per booking. When compared with a commission based system, one might see why the flat fee system is so attractive. A tour operator selling ten bookings a week with a retail value of a \$350 per booking using a commission system which charges 10%, would cost the tour operator \$1,400 per month, compared to a flat fee system charging forty dollars per month and one dollar per booking.

The third and perhaps most important challenge is how to distribute products through multiple on line and off line sales channels while managing inventory. This challenge is surprisingly not that difficult to overcome, primarily because there are so few choices for tour distribution systems. The major GDSs do not currently support destination products and are focused almost exclusively on the distribution of major airlines, hotels, and cruises. There are other consumer based tour product websites that will sell products on behalf of tour operators, however, in almost all cases, these tour booking websites are simply travel agencies that charge a hefty commission or require exclusive net pricing. The best option for the tour operator is to find a system that allows them to manage their inventory, streamline their sales process, gives them the ability to sell through their own website, and provides an underlying distribution network that allows them to resell their products both online and through off-line sales channels.

In summary, there is an immense number of tour operators who have not yet



## Overcoming the Three Big Tour Operator Booking Challenges

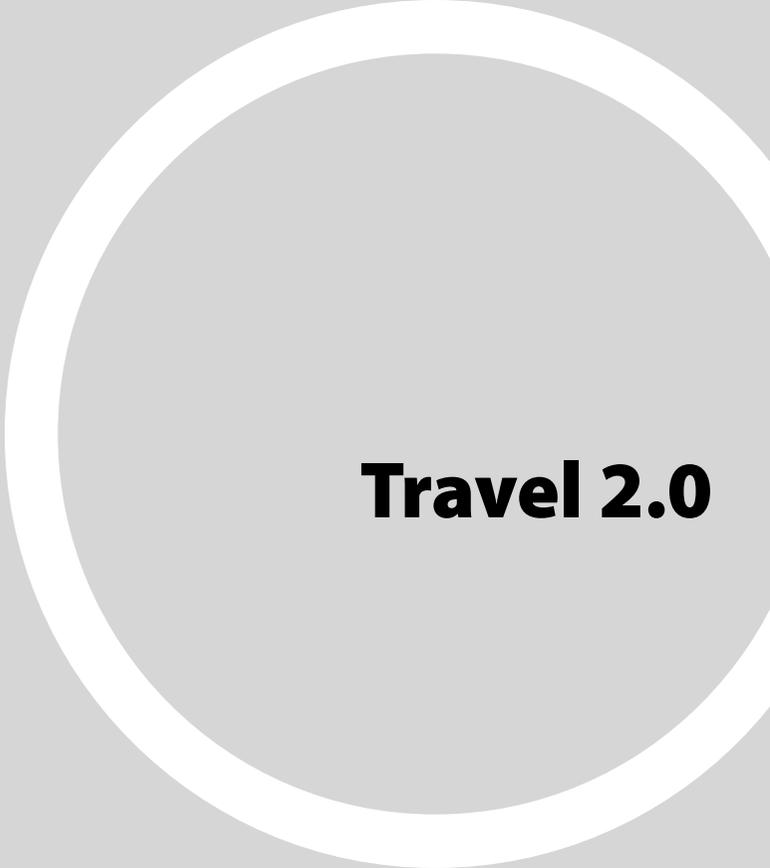
*Stephen Joyce*

directly on a website. The other is hosted, which means it is installed and managed by another company. Generally speaking, stand-a-lone booking engines require an upfront license fee and require the tour operator to have access to a hosting facility, IT expertise, and the ability to install and manage the software. The key benefit to a stand-alone solution is that the tour operator has complete control of their system and can customize it to fit their specific needs, if they pay for the source code. The biggest disadvantage of a stand-a-lone system is that the tour operator's products are only available from their website and cannot be distributed openly. Stand-alone systems can also be very costly, requiring both software and specialized hardware. Hosted solutions are sometimes referred to as "software as a service" solutions and are rented on a monthly basis. Because hosted solutions are shared by many users, they are generally lower cost, although not always, and cannot be customized. Although some solutions support

taken the leap to software based solutions for inventory, sales, and customer management. Although the number of solutions that provide some or all of these requirements is growing, they all present their own strengths and weaknesses.

The best and most flexible solution would present itself as a hosted solution with an integrated distribution system. The solution would allow tour operators to manage their inventory, bookings, customer information, and provide lots of reporting. Ideally it would be a flat fee system that charges a monthly fee based on the operator's volume of bookings rather than charging a commission. The system would, however, still allow the operator to set commissions on products that are sold through third party resellers, so that they can compensate their sales people appropriately. It would have an integrated consumer booking engine that would give the tour operator options for customizing the look of their website and lastly, the system would also have an open application interface that would allow more technologically savvy operators to totally customize their consumer booking experience and integrate products in unique and interesting ways.

<http://tourismtechnology.rezgo.com>



# Travel 2.0

Here is the summary of a post straight out of the top drawer from Alex Bainbridge at Tour CMS. Reproduced with his kind permission.

Alex has analysed how many times Click Here appears on a string of top travel websites.

Why has he done this? Well, it is (supposed to be) standard practice these days for websites NOT to use the term Click Here to guide users around a site.

Using Click Here 1) goes against Web Accessibility Guidelines blind users will only hear "click here" when their mouse pointer goes over the text and 2) it is also the quickest route to a search engine knowing nothing about what else is on a site. In other words: bad.



# Click Here to go straight to Online Hell

Kevin May

Travel websites, of course, would know all about these bad habits. Well, perhaps not:

List shows website, number of pages with Click Here, total web pages and percentage of total.

LateRooms	43	819,000	0.01%
TravelRepublic	33	1,000	0.01%
OnTheBeach - pledged to remove remaining soon - see Comments	2	16,900	0.01%
Kayak	137	206,000	0.07%
Wayn.com	260	308,000	0.08%

Ebookers	100	56,000	0.18%
Priceline	2,790	651,000	0.43%
Expedia	1,300	274,000	0.47%
Thomson	62	12,400	0.50%
Boo.com - has pledged in the comments section to remove 'Click Here's	1,840	302,000	0.61%
Easyjet.com	23	3,610	0.64%
Thomas Cook	159	19,900	0.80%
Lastminute.com	13,500	1,620,000	0.83%
VisitBritain.com	3,860	376,000	1.03%
Opodo	449	19,700	2.28%
Travelocity.com	10,400	346,000	3.01%
TravelSupermarket?	294	9,000	3.27%
FlyBmi.com	149	2,640	5.64%
Virgin Atlantic	61	1,060	5.75%
XL.com	58	859	6.75%
Hilton.com	18,600	172,000	10.81%
Orbitz.com	21,800	110,000	19.82%
MyTravel	2,980	10,500	28.38%
NationalRail	3,180	10,200	31.18%
First Choice	408	1,240	32.90%
Ryanair.com	9,720	15,500	62.71%

So a glass of champers to Laterooms, TravelRepublic and OnTheBeach. Soda stream lemonade to Ryanair and First Choice.

Click here for Alex's analysis and methodology. Well worth a read...

Before the emails roll in: we are no angels. The current incarnation of the main Travolution website has a few. Let's leave it at that for a few more weeks at least.....

<http://travolution.blogspot.com>

Jesús Álvarez makes us think about Tourism 2.0 in an article published by Hosteltur. This article is about the return of Americans to the traditional travel agencies, because there is so much information on the Internet that they cannot assimilate it.

I would like to think about it. In my opinion, this concept is strongly related to the tourism “long tail” and its effect on the tourism 2.0 ecosystem or open tourism (I believe that both concepts are the same.) When services are digitalized, the Internet allows ignoring the system limitations and this makes the abundance limitless.

Is this abundance good? From my point of view, yes it is. It allows accessing to business and services that up to now have been relegated to a passive attitude in the economy and tourism system due to their disadvantages in both strength and

I believe that the 2.0 phenomenon, this is developing sectors based on networks and their collective intelligence, has just begun and it is more complex and wide than just valuing current tools.

In an abundant system, in which attention economy prevails, recommendation systems must be one of the most important figure of the new economy. But, in contrast with the previous model, now there are more recommendation systems involved, and many of them are based on collective intelligence.

In my opinion, the most important thing is to emphasize that the new model offers us more freedom, more transparency and more choice capacity. The agents of the previous model have their place in the current model, but only if they are able to provide added value.

I would like to enumerate some recommendation systems and also say which of them should be strengthened in order to develop a model based on knowledge:

- Recommendation systems based on common algorithms, (e.g.: google, etc.)
- Recommendation systems based on collective intelligence:
  - With one and only common solution for all (e.g.: digg, tripadvisor, etc.)
  - With personalized solutions ( e.g.: corank)
- Recommendation systems based on indications (such us travel agencies, traditional intermediaries, etc.):
  - With solutions based on the interests of the recommender (more leeway)
  - With solutions based on the interests of the consumer (e.g.: CRM, BI, such as Amazon)

From my point of view, in order to achieve an economy model based on the knowledge, personalized recommendation systems based on collective intelligence (in order not to break the “long tail” advantages) and models based on indications or the consumer’s interests must be developed.

Because of this, I emphasize both recommendation systems, which should be part of the model’s ecosystem:

- A distributed network structure based on collective intelligence. Here, social recommendations are achieved thanks to flexible authority models.



## The abundance in tourism

*Edu William (Translated from Spanish)*

power market. This fact affects the destinations and business competitiveness and the client’s satisfaction.

But once an “abundant tourism market” has been developed, how will it affect the system? How will the users act now? Will new knowledge brokers arise? Will the current abundance (or future abundance, especially in tourism, in which many SMEs offering complementary services are still unconnected) generate shortage in the future?

David de Ugarte has spoken about this topic many times and this has given place to what he calls Web 2.1. I do not give my personal opinion about the terms used by de Ugarte, but I totally agree with the development of the distributed model (that which was called 2.1) as the appropriate for the knowledge economy.

- An intelligent recommendation system based on the user's knowledge (e.g.: cross-selling in Amazon, MyStrand, etc.)
- A "human" recommendation system based on the user's knowledge: the ecosystem's travel agencies.

<http://www.eduwilliam.com>

TripAdvisor has recently moved to make its reviews more believable by offering users the chance to create social networks among friends. The bottom line is that consumers should believe their friends more than the complete and utter strangers they have been depending on.

No sooner had I completed (but not yet uploaded) that post than Adam Healey, CEO of VibeAgent touched base to invite me to check out their peer review travel site that has just gone into beta-testing.

If TripAdvisor is an example of Web 2.0, VibeAgent is Web 2.1. The limitation we noted with the TripAdvisor format is that, while it helps you create groups of people you trust, if you don't know their screen name, you're SOL. With VibeAgent,

## VibeAgent Starts Even Smarter

*Bill Geist*



you can invite your friends AND create social networks with fellow travelers that share your interests and/or tastes.

Not that my friends aren't well traveled...but, what if they weren't? AgentVibe provides the solution by creating a true social network that brings me a world of expertise that my friends might not.

And then, based on these reviews, VibeAgent offers up the opportunity to book the hotels that match up best with your desires.

Very, very Smart.

<http://billgeist.typepad.com>



More and more Tourism Destinations, especially at the national level are now looking to go Web 2.0. The Austrian National Tourist Board launched phase one of their initiative, Cool Austria (<http://www.coolaustria.com/>) (I do have to say though that I love their cheesy and tacky tag line: "My land is your land"), and VisitSweden ([<http://www.myaussievacation.com/>\). The site features mobile applications, Google Earth, and the Australia Travel Wiki \(<http://www.australiatravelwiki.com/>\). Now, I do have to admit, the Australia Travel Wiki is cool, should be interesting to see if they can generate content, or if it is done with help via feeds...](http://devblog.</a></p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

It seems like everybody is taking a slightly different approach, which is exciting to see. Both William Bakker and Karin Schmolgruber blogged about the new US version of Holland.com. You can read their analysis, which I completely agree with.



The only thing to point out is that while I have to agree that from a website design standpoint, the site is clever (maybe a bit too much flash for my taste) and makes probably the best use of new social media web technologies, in my opinion it does not do a great job in stimulating a conversation with travelers. Now, I noticed a button on the side, promoting Holland's planned presence in Second Life (<http://us.holland.com/secondlife.php>), but would be interesting to see the connection. Clever nevertheless, but even though the site includes tag clouds, and bookmarking tools, I am not sure if this is the future of destination websites, and since designing a stylish site does not necessarily create value for consumers as well. But in any event, a huge step ahead of most destination websites, especially at the national level. So well done Holland, for taking that step!

I also support Holland's direction to test this approach in one market first, in this case the US market. I am not sure though if this really a test managed by the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions' Headquarter back in Leidschendam, or if this initiative was driven by the US office.

I can say that many in our global market office at the Canadian Tourism Commission are extremely creative, and always looking to leverage the web and emerging technologies. One of these examples is our German office, that a couple of years

Travel 2.0  
30

# Tourism Destinations are going Web 2.0

Jens Thraenhart

[visitsweden.com/](http://visitsweden.com/)) is developing theirs. And we at the CTC just launched a few initiatives ourselves; phase one of our community site on <http://Canada.travel>, our "We are more" contest, and our community on Yahoo! Canada.

Austria's site is a full fledged community site, where you can connect with fellow travellers, including maps mash-ups, and message boards. It seems though that CoolAustria has challenges generating content - one thing we anticipated early on, and solved through our partnership with Realtravel.

Sweden is looking to incorporate Personas, which should be interesting. But what Sweden did launch is a fun interactive map, leveraging Google Maps.

And then there are our friends from Australia (<http://www.australia.com/>) who

ago launched a very innovative web initiative targeting women interested traveling to Canada. This site, CleverWomen.de, not only makes use of blogs, newsletters, a guestbook, an online shop, forums, and podcasts, but it even has its own video site at CleverWomen.tv (including the new video magazine CANASTASIA). I think this is a very clever site (and I can say that as I was not involved in the conception of the idea), without lots of flash but some real conversations. Women can even look for their Canadian Dream Man.



<http://jensthraenhart.com/cblog>

There are a lot of interesting statistics relating to online reservations and sales through the Internet for the travel industry available out there. Here is a quick run down of some that are really worth looking at with commentary to follow:

#### **Forrester Research:**

- In 2007, nearly 40 million U.S. households will book travel online, spending \$86 billion Web travelers now make up 79% of the U.S. travel population and 55% of them buy leisure travel online.
- High-income travelers, households with annual incomes of \$100,000 or more a year, account for just 16% of the U.S. online leisure travel population – a market that represents 10.9 million households and spends \$60 billion on leisure travel.

## **A** mazing Online Reservation Statistics

*Philip Caines*



#### **TIA.org**

- In November 2005, reports that 79 million American adults are now using the Internet to plan their trips. Also growing rapidly is a propensity to book online, with nearly 65 million U.S. adults now booking this way.

#### **Webtrends: Passport To Success**

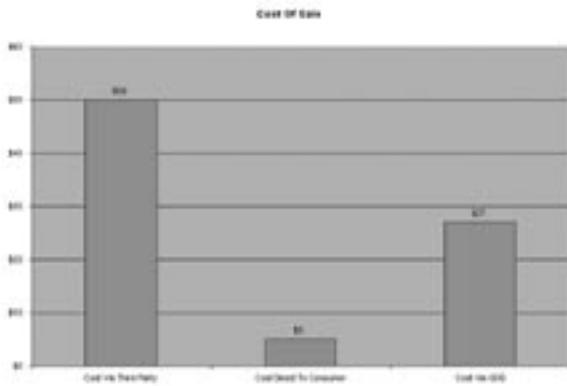
- Online sales of leisure and unmanaged travel in the U.S. are estimated to be \$122 billion in 2009 – up from \$65 billion in 2005.
- Half of U.S. interactive marketers questioned by Forrester Research in April 2006 said that they either used or planned to use blogs.

#### **ehotelier.com**

- The average rate for room nights booked through travel agents was 33.3

percent higher than the average rate for room nights booked via the Internet.

- In 2007, nearly one-third of all reservations in hospitality in North America will be generated from the Internet (29% in 2005).
- By 2010, more than 45% of all travel reservations in the U.S. will be done via the Internet (Merrill Lynch, HeBS).
- By 2010, the Internet will contribute over 45% of all travel-related bookings in North America.
- The ratio between the direct and indirect online channel continues to improve in favor of the direct channel: from 52:48 in 2002 to 56:44 in 2006; it is projected to be 62:38 by 2008. Some major brands already enjoy a very healthy 80:20 direct vs. indirect online channel ratios.



- It is much more expensive to book through a third party:
- Customers were more satisfied with the Internet travel service provider they last purchased from than they were with Internet travel services in general.

### TravelDaily News

- According to a new report from PhoCusWright, Inc., next year, for the first time, transactions on the Internet will account for over half (54 percent) of all U.S. travel bookings.

What does it all mean?

Several trends emerge from all of this information, the most obvious is that online sales for the travel industry are becoming the norm. Consumers will become more accustomed to going online to make all of their travel arrangements. There are

many third party vendors and resellers that will help distribute products on behalf of tourism supplier, but the wise supplier will always give the customer the ability to accept bookings through their own website.

Giving the customer the ability to make a booking on a supplier's home page will save the company from paying high commissions and booking charges for each of the products that are sold. The savings are shared by the consumer and the supplier, plus it gives the supplier enhanced inventory control and eliminates the unnecessary middle man.

<http://tourismtide.blogspot.com>

Way back in 2002 the Canadian Government released some findings on how the Retail Travel and Service Industry (RTSI) was undergoing drastic changes. They were picking up on the fact that, yes, customers are price sensitive, but retaining customers is a much more effective way to grow your revenue stream. The Canadian Government noted that the tour and travel industry is composed of some early stage adapters they still mention that one of the most critical challenges facing the RTSI is the adoption of the new e-commerce economy.

Some interesting findings that can be taken from the report are:

- It is six times more costly to service a customer through a call center than via the Internet, a tool that the RTSI is adopting rapidly.
- It is up to 10 times more costly to generate revenue from a new customer than from an existing customer.
- A 5% increase in retention rate can increase company profits by 60-100%.



## CRM the 'Must Have' for all Tourism Companies

*Philip Caines*

- Referred customers generally stay longer, use more products and become profitable customers faster, a consumer pattern familiar to most stakeholders of the RTSI.

It is becoming very clear that to excel in this modern e-commerce economy, one must set up a great CRM program, focus on relationship building and hold on to those customers for the long haul. The report states that an effective CRM plan "...translates into faster service, higher customer satisfaction, customer retention, customer acquisition, repeat purchases, lower cost and profitability."

Fred Reichheld ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred\\_Reichheld](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Reichheld)) spoke to the advantages of the "The Loyalty Effect":

- Customer Retention: CRM enables a company to retain loyal and profitable customers and channel members. According to the International Data Corporation, it costs online merchants from \$0.90 to \$2.67 to get a visitor to

their website for the first time. These companies must find a way to achieve repeat business in order to justify their initial acquisition expenditures. CRM through its extensive data warehousing solutions could help companies attract and retain customers.

- Customer Acquisition: Based on known or learned client characteristics, CRM may assist companies in acquiring the right customer through effective targeting and segmentation.
- Lower Cost: The automation process minimizes paper work and manual labour.
- Customer Loyalty and Satisfaction: One of the prominent features of CRM is its ability to create the opportunity of mass customization. Increasingly, today's traveler wants customized products. When the service is personalized and tailored to meet the preference and choice of the customer, client satisfaction can be expected to increase. Customer satisfaction, over time, builds allegiance.
- Profitability: All of the factors listed above translate into profitability. Annual customer profits increase over time as the client - agency relationship expands. CRM can offer additional items to the companies that provide new profitability curves.

It just makes sense to take care of those that you are already servicing and advocate for your product. This is worth 10 times the amount spent on attracting your initial customer. There are many practical (and inexpensive) ways to ensure you have an effective CRM plan, here are a few small tips that come to mind:

- Invite dialogue: Have a blog, a forum or a public rant wiki on your website, people need to feel that you are listening, and do listen!! Take what is said seriously, and respond to every posting.
- Keep them up to date: Have a newsletter that is more than a sales message, help and educate them with articles and personal experiences, this gives your business a warmer relationship with your clients. Update your website!! Keep your clients interested in what you are doing by staying fresh and continuously updating.
- Personalize all information: It is so easy to have an auto-filler that will help you customize all of your contact messages. It adds a personal touch, very worthwhile.
- Check up on your stars: Routinely, proactively contact the greatest 20% of your client list, don't wait for something to go wrong before you say 'hi'.

<http://tourismtide.blogspot.com>

Travel 2.0 has, among other things, spawned a number of sites that use advertising as a revenue base instead of the more traditional booking fee based approach.

Does the following article portend tough times for the non commerce based Travel 2.0 sites or is the travel content sufficiently compelling to attract the necessary ad revenue?

Heather Havenstein August 30, 2007 (Computerworld) Despite generating a hefty media buzz, social networking sites like MySpace.com and YouTube Inc. have not yet figured out how to use that publicity to generate significant advertising revenue, according to a report released this week by IDC.



## Commerce or Advertising for Travel 2.0

*Bob Offutt*

The Framingham, Mass.-based research firm predicts that while the barriers keeping companies from advertising brands on sites featuring unfiltered user-generated content may eventually be solved by some social networks, others may never be able to attract significant advertising, the report noted.

The issue of advertising on social networking came to the forefront last week when YouTube launched new overlay advertisements, prompting numerous complaints from its users, some who threatened to stop using the site.

“YouTube is a prominent example of the problems that surround advertising on social networks. Its members abuse the freedom to upload any video and to publish content that they essentially stole and to which neither they nor YouTube owner Google hold the copyright,” the report noted.

The report also noted that “big brand advertisers such as General Motors, Colgate Palmolive or Kraft will likely not run ads on YouTube as long as it features illicit content.”

YouTube, the report suggests, could earn substantial advertising revenue if it could figure out a way to acquire premium content from distribution deals with companies like Viacom Inc., NBC and Walt Disney Co. However, the report noted that Google so far declines to pay the sums required to purchase the content.

The report did note that MySpace generated \$125 million in advertising revenue in the fourth quarter of 2006, but also added that the total amounts to only a fifth of what Microsoft Corp.’s Microsoft Online Services Business brought in during the same period.

MySpace’s primary challenge is to offer advertisers precise demographic targeting and to provide an environment that doesn’t threaten the safety of a company’s brand, according to the report. “If it chooses not to restrict or filter user-generated content, it may never support brand advertising on a larger scale,” the report added.

[http://www.phocuswright.com/library\\_blog](http://www.phocuswright.com/library_blog)

According to the ASTA, travel agents do \$120B a year, including 51% of airline tickets and 47% of hotels. The media is eating up such numbers in trumpeting the comeback of the travel agent.

According to PCWI data, between travel agents' leisure/unmanaged business bookings and offline corporate bookings, the ASTA numbers are not WAY off (around 25-40% higher than our current thoughts—I wonder what we will end with in the upcoming travel agency special report), but I think this illustrates what a brilliant job the traditional travel agency community is doing to leverage its continued power in the corporate market to suggest that LEISURE travel agents are making a comeback, which I personally find to be a pretty upbeat interpretation, to say the least.



## **T** ravel Agencies: Depends on Your Definition of “Comeback”

*Michael Cannizzaro*

But the idea of the “comeback of the travel agent” theme is clearly to plant the seed in consumers' heads that others are finding value in going back to an agent and maybe they should too, since there is value for some (e.g., complex leisure travel). But the fact is, the mass media is taking the easy way and ignoring the fact that the vast majority of traditional travel agency leisure dollars have shifted online, and the survivors of this shift will be the ones who are able to leverage online resources while bridging the gaps in capability (e.g., dynamically packaged trips to multiple destinations).

### **Comments:**

*On 22 August, 2007, Brendan May wrote:*

The spin is amazing: when was the last time your travel agent was able to give you better insider advice than say a ugc platform and help you find something only a local would know? “But when it comes to visiting somewhere new or exotic, having an advocate that can get you into the best restaurant in town or give valuable tips only a local would know, it makes all the difference.” I think the point is that some people are either too time pressed or scared to do their own bookings. It is not the medium that is the important piece, but the attitude. Some people are “do it your selfers” and some pay a professional to paint their house. I believe that there’s an attitude connection there. Similar thing when the do it yourself renovation boom started people predicted that all painters would go out of business. There was a shake-up but those that were able to give value survived. Eventually the market balanced out with a strong leaning to do it yourself. OK the analogy only works so far, but still the point is valid. The key point here is those that provide value will survive.

*On 23 August, 2007, Joe Buhler wrote:*

In the whole discussion what to me is the key statement is this: At AAA, the Vice President of Travel for Western and Central New York Tharwat Abouraya said customers are now more informed because of the internet, which let’s his agents concentrate more on handling complex travel. “When people come in here, they know just what they want,” said Abouraya. “We are able to do a unique job at providing our members with advice that is way beyond a simple hotel booking or airline ticket, but with complicated travel. Now we help them more with trips to places like China or to multiple European cities.” It’s hard to prove this comment wrong, as long as the OTAs are as lame in their complex vacation trip offerings as they are today. Just try to do that “multiple European cities” or Far East trip on any of them, and I don’t mean by pushing an already pre-packaged tour operator product at me, but a truly dynamically self-designed one. As long as this isn’t happening travel agents with the skills and destination knowledge will stay in business profitably.

[http://www.phocuswright.com/library\\_blog](http://www.phocuswright.com/library_blog)

A debate is going on about content and Travel 2.0/Web 2.0. What is better at providing recommendations and information - the crowd or the specialist? TripAdvisor.com has proven that crowd has power. Millions of people with millions of points of view producing a searchable and understandable review mechanism. But Web 2.0 is also pushing back on the size and difficulty of listening to the crowd. This has produced plenty of sites that believe that editorial is now critical - for example human search start up Mahalo.com is producing dedicated and editorially driven guides.

The crowds eliminate the errors of an editorial statistical sample of one but there is a point at which UGC is too hard to navigate. Ever tried surfing YouTube? Just going to the YouTube homepage with no plan in mind and looking around for something to watch rarely produces entertainment. Compare that experience to

downside is that it is less reactive. The editorial based product sometimes misses updates because its research or publishing cycle is...well.. by definition a cycle and not immediate.

In the wisdom of the crowds model you throw as many human beings as you can at a problem/issue/thing/wall and hope that the accumulation of knowledge produces the right answer and that the right answer can be filtered by those looking for it. This is what TripAdvisor does and there is a point at which for every hotel they have their is a terrible review (room sucks, staff awful, never again), a brilliant review (love it...oh my God I love it) and a whatever review (it was ok, kinda, sorta, you know).

As with all these things it is about balance. You need the crowds to give you the immediacy of updates and the statistical spread but you need the editors or trusted uber user to help you sift and order the information. This has problems of scale (how do you balance controlling quality across a huge range of destinations and information) and openness (to be an editor involves cutting out some of the crowd - a crowd that can get ugly when you cut them out).

My thoughts on how to balance this are the same as for a transactional site/intermediary that has thousands of hotel/supplier options. In the early days of hotel/air intermediaries there was discussion that at some point a limit to the number of choices would arise. How could a consumer possibly look through 10,000 hotels, then 20,000 hotels, then 30,000? Now people like HRS and hotel.de are claiming 200,000+ hotels. The answer is more than better search technologies. It is combing technology, merchandising/rev management smarts and user reviews to generate sort order biasing. This is the approach that content companies need to follow. Match UGC with editorial biasing.

This thinking came to me in an email exchange with a startup pitching itself as the review/information site that has found the balance. The email exchange was with Jim Johnson Vice President of Product Management of LocalGuides.com - itself a spin off from a local search company called LocalMatters.com. The LocalGuides site is a site that wants to provide...well...local guides. Detailed information on destinations about activities, restaurants, hotels etc. Jim and I had a very interesting mail exchange on the how they would find the balance. Here is what he had to say...



## **UGC vs Editorial. What's better? What's the balance? What's more 2.0?**

*Timothy Hughes*

going to Break.com or Digg.com/Videos where an editor or technology backed by the community has produced an easy list to tell you what they think you should watch. There are fewer videos on Digg and Break, and you may not like the ones you see, but you can be certain that you will find something to watch that does not involve a cat or an idiot miming Justin Timberlake.

Travel reviews and content are similar. As much as I shift from giving Lonely Planet a good and a bad time for their online activities there is a sense of comfort and certainty you get from reading a Lonely Planet story or recommendation. This comfort comes from their brand, their readership but mainly from their editorial rigour. They send someone to everywhere they review and they send them back again and again. This is the pure editorial model. The positive of it is that trust is already established and time and energy is spent maintaining that trust. The

*"Our approach to Local Guides has been to seed the site with the key editorial content to provide users a starting point to iterate based on their own local expertise. The interesting transformation is the community has used the tools to create a personal publishing platform (think blogging on steroids) in ways beyond what we originally thought. Guides have been created around making sushi at home, best concert venues and how to get out of the doghouse with your wife. We expected more top 10 restaurants; hotels and bars to be the norm. The distinguishing focus on Local Guides is in its "personal local publishing" orientation; rather than aggregating all user's content into one summary view of a business or place, it supports each user's unique views as "guides"; and builds community around exploring, sharing and relating to "individual voices". While sites like TripAdvisor, while highly useful for opinion aggregation, we aim to retain the opinion and viewpoint of each individual. Somewhat more of a "reporter's view", if you will."*

Their view is that the editors set up the framework, provide the basic facts and guidance and then let the crowd fill in the detail with more freedom than you see on TripAdvisor. It is hard to provide much commentary on their approach and whether it will work as the site is in beta - though I would call it very early beta maybe even alpha as there is a lot more content that they need (editorial or otherwise). I like the idea but I'm not sure if that will provide the balance I have discussed. If you give the crowd too much control you risk looking like the comment list in a popular video on YouTube.

<http://tims-boot.blogspot.com>

I had a very interesting conversation a week or so ago with the CEO of 2.0 start up Travelgator - Chris DeBrusk. Travelgator is a two year old company, their site came out of beta in August 2006 with their major release hitting the cyberways early last month (Feb).

Like a lot of the new travel services companies Travelgator is looking to build a community around travel – around helping people find out what they want to do next in travel and helping them draw on the experiences of other to decide. The prospect of speaking to Travelgator turned me to thinking about the market history that has led to this new wave of travel companies and what inherent needs they have for success.

## When is there too much choice for consumers?

*Timothy Hughes*

In thinking through this I thought back on the phases of online travel - I decided there have been three broad overlapping phases.

**Phase 1 (1995-2003) – I know where I want to go, find me the cheapest price.** Expedia.com, Travelocity.com and (the subsequently acquired) Preview started the market by turning the green screen around and giving early Internet users access to travel agent booking processes. This made visible the dark art of booking travel. The low cost carriers followed quickly as did start ups on other locations such as Lastminute.com in the UK and (with much less success at the time) Travel.com.au in Australia;



**Phase 2 (2000-2006) – I want to find a deal on where to stay, can you help me with rates, availability and advice.**

Expedia buys Travelscape (and eventually HRN) and the merchant model goes mainstream. Soon everyone is contracting directly with hotels, a pace that accelerates as the hotel industry tries to recover from the horrors of 9/11, SARS and more. TripAdvisor.com (soon to be part of Expedia) adds the next piece to the puzzle with the power of group based recommendation.

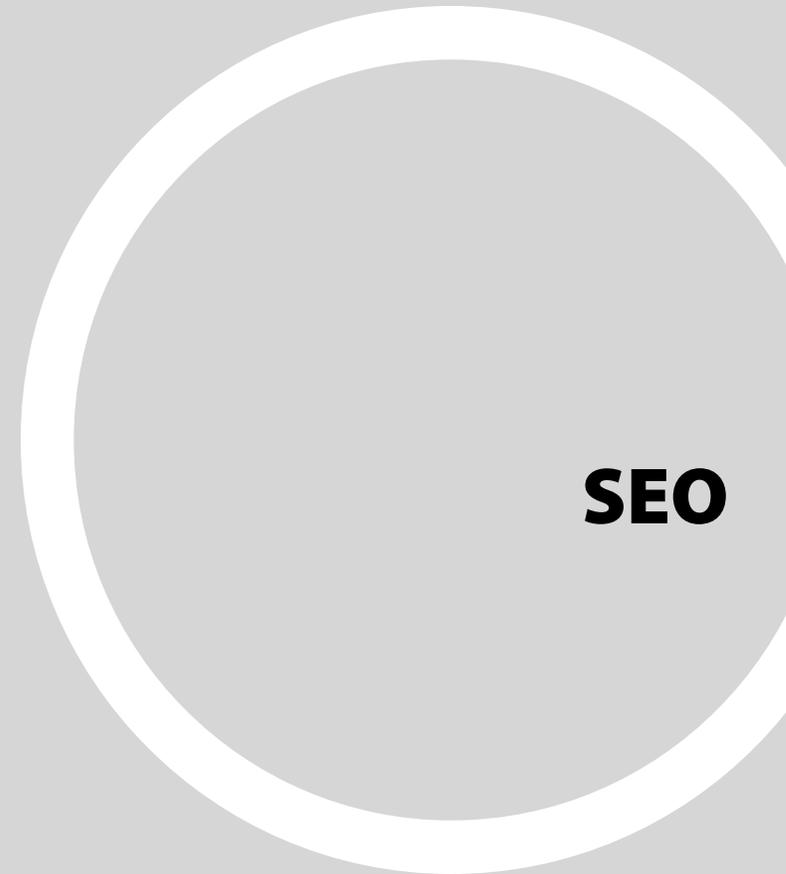
**Phase 3 (2005 – now) – what do I do next, where should I go next.**

A global audience that has travelled, enjoyed booming economies and is comfortable sharing everything and anything with a keyboard and mouse, has bought the wisdom of crowds mantra and wants to know what the world knows. Out of this comes social networking in TripAdvisor, investments in WAYN.com and start-ups like Travelgator.

I remember meeting in 1999 the founder and members of a company called TravelDonkey.co.uk. Now little more than a traffic page – at the time the business model was to capture the experiences of travellers from the entire world and share them. People would be able to write in with their trip notes in real time. Search and matching algorithms would match like minded travellers and enable them to interact and build community. The CEO of the time Sally Meecham, shopped this story throughout Europe – door-to-door and conference-by-conference. No-one bought it but looking back it was simply out of phase.

The big question for Phase 3 is - when does the provision of options, choice and possibilities confuse customers. In Phase 1 and 2 I sat through usability labs and customer surveys that showed that the more choice you gave a customer through buttons, links, options etc, the less they did. There are famous surveys in old school retail proving that a point is reached when you give a customer so much choice that they choose nothing. Each of the phase 3 business models therefore have an near impossible challenge – how do you provide choice, how do you meet the need from the consumer to find out “what to do next” without either providing too much choice or (to go to the other extreme) targeting in on a niche that is so small or focused that there is no money in it.

<http://tims-boot.blogspot.com>



In order to achieve significant results, an effective SEO strategy must involve the website's content, optimising the text, HTML, information distribution and site architecture in order to make the website content more visible and relevant.

A simplistic approach usually means trouble, or rather, a waste of money. Here is my list of top 10 ways to detect that the people sitting in front of you might not be a serious partner to make your online business grow.

### 1. Here is your "Top 50" "Top 100" or "Guarantee positioning" package.

Yeah..really...

There is no way of predicting which position any given site can reach on any search engine for any keyword. The actual ranking of a site is a function of a number of ever-changing interactions which are not in the hands of the search



# Top 10 reasons why you shouldn't choose THAT SEO agency

*Annalisa Ballaira*

engine agency. Besides the engines themselves periodically changing their ranking logics, in this very second there are hundreds of websites and search engine agencies working hard to improve their positioning for the keyword "London hotel". How can you honestly ensure you will rank at the top of them?

And moreover... who cares? The position of a given keyword is NOT the objective of a SEO activity. Nor is it a parameter to measure your online success. The number of top rankings for over-inflated keywords is not going to affect your Earnings. Conversions and CPA are.

A serious search engine agency will rather get committed on the quantity and quality of traffic (conversions!), and to bring you tangible sales leads (and should be able to give you better advice than just trying to get your traffic from the same

old 50 obvious keywords).

### 2. We don't do doorway pages. These are "landing pages".

BMW used to think it didn't make much difference. Then, its website completely disappeared from Google. Search engines can discriminate between proper landing pages and spamming, and can ban you in a second, making all your investments go up in smoke. Be sure landing pages are what they should be, an informative landing environment which is fully integrated in your navigation and content structure.

### 3. SEO is just about throwing in some metatags.

Meaning: "We do have a feeling that there are other key factors...off-the page elements such as blogs, social bookmarking, press releases, viral content, advanced link popularity and linkbait are just as important as metatags for search engines, but actually, we haven't got a clue of how to do that stuff."

### 4. It's ok to spend 95% of your online budget on pay-per-click.

Meaning: "Getting you your fair share of traffic from SEO might take a bit more effort on our side and we do not really care about your distribution costs".

### 5. PPC is more controllable than SEO.

Meaning: "Achieving and tracking SEO results seems kind of hard, let's do some ppc advertising instead".

### 6. We guarantee you get ranked in 15 days.

Option 1: "No, not in Google really, just in 20.000 obscure search engines."

Option 2: "We will get you a top position in Google for 'design luxury yet budget accomodation providers in the tundra' (with exact phrase match)".

### 7. We only specialize in search engines.

Meaning: "What happens when a user arrives to your site is not our business and we don't understand much about usability or what it takes to generate a booking on a travel website".

### 8. Yeah, we are a web agency but will do the search engine for you.

Sounds like: "I've been plumber for the last 30 years, but I will fix your electrical system for some extra cash".

**9. You don't need to do any work on your website.**

Meaning: "Deleting that annoying flash intro page would destroy the user experience. And adding some interesting content is not necessary. Not that many people really use search engines to book their travel anyway".

**Hint no.10 is open for discussion:** post your comments and contribute to the black list!

<http://blog.relations.com>

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is now a serious marketing consideration for travel marketers with three-fifths of all online travel shoppers reporting that they rely on search engines as their research and planning resource (source: PhoCusWright). Clearly, search engine visibility can be a major determinant for online success.

There is a great deal of good information written on the subject of search marketing, however little focuses on some of the more unique characteristics of travel and even less specifically for Canadian travel companies and markets. Because of this I decided to share my 'top 10' travel search marketing strategies here and – while some are certainly true for other markets besides travel – many of these focus on specific aspects unique to online travel marketing in Canada.

# Top 10 Search Engine Marketing Strategies for Travel Marketers

*Scott MacGregor*



1. Create unique, compelling and relevant content. Leverage your own travel expertise and knowledge to publish meaningful travel content that targets that much discussed long tail of travel search. Uniqueness is worth stressing, syndicated content available to hundreds of other websites may provide some value but know that Search Engines filter duplicate results and the SEO benefits may be little.

2. Become knowledgeable in SEM (or hire someone who is). This is not (entirely) a shameless plug for SEM firms or others. It just not as simple as it used to be and not all web developers, programmers or designers have the skills to compete in the hyper-competitive travel space. So whether you outsource or develop skills in-house, you need to work with people who have developed expertise working in competitive markets like travel.

3. Get quality links. Consider buying directory listings (like Yahoo!) and work on getting relevant links from local sites (if you are a local travel business), suppliers, partners, trade organizations and even your clients where appropriate. Avoid link-swapping schemes and focus instead on getting good links from high quality trusted sites in your locale, industry or vertical.

4. Avoid 'tricks' and shortcuts. The search engines are sophisticated and some of those tricks of the past like keyword stuffing and site cloaking don't work and, worse yet, may get you in hot water. Protect your brand online (from penalties imposed by search engines) and don't waste your time and energy.

5. Understand your Web Analytics. Google Analytics is free and provides customizable reports that allow you to set and report on Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) like Unique Monthly Visits, Search Engine Referred Visits, Conversions, etc. If you use a hosted reservation system be sure it allows you to track conversions. Whatever your analytics solution, set goals and KPI's and diligently monitor them.

The next three points relate to more specifically to Paid Placement (or Pay-per-click) tools like Google AdWords or Yahoo! Search Marketing.

6. Employ best practices in Paid Placement. Be sure you understand how to use Paid Placement most effectively. Are you tracking conversions online? Do you really want Content Match traffic or is it just on by default? Are you using all the 'best' keywords and employing appropriate keyword matching options like negative, phrase or exact matching? Have you split your campaigns into thematic groups with relevant ads and landing pages?

7. Use Geotargetting to segment your message. The major search engines all now offer geographic targeting within Canada and given our huge regional differences in travel preferences across our great country (and beyond) we should be using this tool to segment our audiences. Selling vacation packages to sun destinations? Maybe you show Dominican and Cuba packages to Eastern Canadians, and Pacific destinations like Hawaii or Los Cabos to Western Canadians? A Whistler hotel may send Washington State visitors to a 'Drive and Save' promotion while Europeans see something else (with pricing in Euros)?

8. Test everything and measure results against your desired result. This media is immensely fluid and trackable so try different ads and landing pages in your Paid Placement campaigns. Use Analytics and Conversion tracking to evaluate performance and understand that website and campaign optimization is the art of continuous refinement.

9. Use Local Search when applicable. If your business is likely to be searched with a regional qualifier ('Victoria BC Boutique Hotel' for example) be sure you have done the work to make sure it can appear in Google Local or Yahoo! Local results. Is your geographic location clearly available to the search engines?

10. Retain your customers with Email, RSS, Blogs or other compelling reasons to return. Engage prospects and clients to return to your website so that you don't have to re-acquire them later. Send email followups, leverage Web 2.0 or social media and consumer generated media to engage or share photos, stories and reviews.

<http://tourismtechnology.rezgo.com>

How do people find out about your destination or tourism business? How did your guests come to your particular hotel or B&B? How did your customers learn about your attraction? Was it through your website? Through a brochure? Or through a relationship with a tour operator/travel agent? Did your guest searched on the Internet for your destination? And if so, how did they know what to search for in the first place?

The more specific you can be about answering these questions the more you will be able to compete in the crowded global tourism market. When it comes to basics the fact is potential customers will never come to you if they don't know you exist in the first place. While website optimization and Social Media initiatives are becoming increasingly important for tourism destinations and businesses,

In order to first inform the consumer that something or somewhere exists, organizations need to advertise. Furthermore, good advertising may still be the best way to brand a product or service. You can optimize your website for search engines all you want, but if people are not searching for your product or destination, they will never come across it. For example, say you want to promote your destination in Spain because you've heard that it's an up and coming market and Spaniards have a high standard of living and are affluent enough to travel to Canada. But other than Canada as a peaceful country, most Spaniards don't know much about it as a tourism destination and it's not in most peoples' radars. You just launched a blog about your destination in Spanish and you found someone who can keep it going in that language. The problem is Spaniards are not searching for blogs in Spanish about Canada. How can you get them to visit the blog? Advertising. Blogs, Social Media and Search engines are great when people participate, but for them to do this they have to be interested in the topic (i.e. the destination) and if they don't know anything about you or even that you exist, how will they?

<http://canadiantourism.blogspot.com>



## 39 **S**ocial Media and SEO are no substitute for Advertising and PR

*Jaime Horwitz*

advertising and PR are still the best way to get known. It may be online advertising, but it is still (paid) advertising.

Search engine optimization and incursions into social media are no substitutes for advertising. Online advertising investment in the US in recent years has been growing substantially but it is still only about 6.5% of ad expenditures (TV and Print account for over 80% - source: TNS). Online advertising grew 17% from 2005 to 2006, by far the largest increase in the ad world (followed by Spanish TV and Spanish Press advertising with 13.9% and 8.5% respectively). As convergence continues to happen (the combination of video, print and interactive content delivered via many devices) it will be harder to separate the media, but what is clear is that the market still believes in advertising.

Call me a stats-geek, but one of the first questions I tend to ask tourism website managers is “are you measuring how well the site is delivering?” Increasingly – thanks to products like Google Analytics and Nedstat Pro - the answer to that question is yes.

However, the very next thing I’m often told is how many hits the website has, or that page views are increasing. Beyond this, businesses often admit they are largely in the dark.

Counting page views isn’t measuring how your website is delivering for your business. So what if your page views are up? Are revenues from the site up too?



## Tracking Tourism Why counting hits and page views leaves you completely in the dark about your website’s success

*Vicky Brock*

And why are page views up – is it because you’re spending more on marketing – and is that extra spend worth it in terms of results?

Maybe page views are up because lots of people are arriving at the site and are going round in frustrated circles because they can’t find the information they require. Perhaps a key phrase on your page is attracting hoards of inappropriate traffic from search engines.

**Page views alone don’t give you much useful information, but counting hits is an even surer route to bewilderment and confusion, for they bear little meaningful relation to your website users.**

They may give you satisfying big numbers on your reports, but hits should actually be ignored completely. Hits simply count the number of requests for page elements – a single page can generate ten or more hits – they are not an indicator of website success.

So, to get past being in the dark about the success of your website, it is important to spend a little more time counting the things that really matter to a tourism business.

A little more time – isn’t that something of a rare beast for most tourism businesses? Well, applying a little time each week to measuring the effectiveness of your website is like the proverbial “stitch in time”. If you’re already tracking your site, you have the data you need to spot a trade volume drop before it becomes serious. You’ll also have the tools to help you reduce wasted advertising. Cutting out the hit and miss aspect of promoting your website will save time, money and anxiety – and will drive more business from the web.

**What three things can tourism websites measure to really uplift online performance?**

### 1. Conversions

Conversions are success outcomes tied to any pre-defined customer action – enquiries, bookings, and newsletter sign-ups etc. In simple terms, they are often the primary reason your website exists. So what is more important, the absolute number of page views you received last month, or the quantity of online bookings? I’d wager it’s the bookings and that is where I’d start counting success. It is generally best to look at conversions as a percentages (the conversion rate), rather than absolute numbers and to observe the trends of whether your conversions are rising or falling.

Conversion rate = Total target actions completed / Number of Visits

### 2. Voice of the customer

Your website data provides actionable clues to your customer’s needs and behaviour – from the search terms they use, to the language they speak and the country they live in. Getting a good picture of who is using your site is a great way to lift the sense of mystery about your website’s success.

For example, the following image shows how by using a tool like Google Analytics to breakdown the country of origin of website users, it is possible to segment the comparative “bounce rate” by visitor country. (Bounce rate in this context is the proportion of single page views across the site – basically, people who arrive and then bounce off again without looking at any other content).

Country/Territory	Visits	Individual Country/Territory Bounce Rate	compared to site average
United Kingdom	46,885	3.39%	
United States	12,238	19.07%	
Germany	5,875		-36.60%
Spain	3,979		-39.30%
Canada	3,143	3.17%	
Italy	2,325		-4.31%
France	1,881		-14.07%

This particular tourism site may have a problem with its English-speaking visitors - they seem more likely to immediately leave the site than those viewing translated content. Why? Should the site be doing more to encourage American visitors to engage with it? The numbers alone don't give the answer, but they do raise important questions that the site owner needs to address in order to improve business from the website.

### 3. Benchmarks for hindsight and foresight

Thinking about the conversion trends coming through from your web traffic data means you can begin benchmarking your relative performance and can be quickly be alerted to any drop-off in activity while there is still time to remedy it through promotional activity.

Comparing business from referring sites will help you to understand who has sent traffic to your website (and dependent on your analytics tool, how much of that traffic then converted according to your pre-defined goals). When calculating the referred traffic, don't forget to factor in what you paid for it, eg the cost of a paid directory listing or paid search words. Again, this can all be done within Google Analytics and many other similar products.

You can use the seasonal cycle patterns that become visible (from search terms to conversion rates) to start planning promotional tactics on a more informed basis. This is particularly valuable when you consider that the period when visitors are researching online is generally before the moment they have made a purchase decision and so there is still scope to influence behaviour.

Using hindsight to give you foresight means you are actively cutting out the hit and miss aspect of promoting your site, which will save time, money and anxiety.

### Is this really practical?

So, can a tourism business – particularly a small one, with no specialist staff – really use website measurement to increase the business their website is delivering? They can and they are - and the people I have spoken to regard it not only as practical, but essential for managing their business.

There are examples from interviews in this blog – such as this one with Rene Looper - as well as many other tourism businesses for whom the web is now the primary sales channel and web measurement a primary research tool.

If you are already using website measurement to drive your online tourism marketing, I'd love to hear what you are doing, how it is working for you and what challenges you face.

<http://blog.highlandbusinessresearch.com>

### An industry practitioner interview with Rene Looper of GreaterSpeyside.com

During seven years in the hotel business, Rene Looper and Pamela van Ankeren frequently found it time consuming, and sometimes impossible, to advise guests on activities or events they could visit in the local area. They felt the lack of co-ordinated information impaired their ability to fully deliver a joined up customer experience

They also found a distinct lack of research into tourism in their local market. While most small businesses recognised the need to share information and work together towards a common goal, it was too complex and expensive to manage information individually. So after selling their hotel business, Rene and Pamela formed Tuminds Ltd, with the goal of tackling these challenges head on.



# How one tourism business is pioneering information sharing to improve a whole destination's performance

Vicky Brock

The result of a year's research, development and hard work is [www.greaterspeyside.com](http://www.greaterspeyside.com), which officially launched in early July 2007. Its objective – to promote and develop tourism in the Moray and Speyside area by delivering comprehensive and up-to-date tourist information and providing tourism businesses with IT advice, key information, statistics and benchmarking.



### Why Tuminds are better than one

Rene and Pamela conducted their own research into the Moray and Speyside markets and found that while Speyside is a term that is associated with search

engine activity of visitors, Moray is barely in visitors' vocabulary. "So we decided to brand the site as Greater Speyside, rather than Moray – you can't think about it in terms of administrative boundaries, you have to work to the perception of the visitor and in the vocabulary of the visitor."

As you can see in this example that Highland Business Research has pulled together from Google Adword searches, the Speyside searches relate to whisky, tourism attractions and trails, whereas Moray is primarily domestic searches connected to council services and property.

Keywords	Avg Search Volume	Keywords	Avg Search Volume
moray	100	speyside	100
apc moray	100	speyside whisky	100
moray council	100	speyside way	100
moray fth	100	district of speyside	100
moray college	100	speyside wildlife	100
moray fth radio	100	speyside mall	100
moray playhouse	100	speyside whiskey	100
algn moray	100	speyside leisure	100
glen moray	100	speyside single malt	100
moray scotland	100	speyside cooperage	100
moray leisure	100	speyside leather	100
centre	100	speyside distillery	100
moray gov	100	highland speyside	100
the moray council	100	speyside malt whisky	100
moray solicitors	100	speyside leather centre	100

Researching, understanding and focusing their online offering to their target market then communicating to that market in its own vocabulary is something Rene and Pamela have got absolutely right here. (I'm giving Rene a few weeks before I start grilling him about plans for internationalisation of the site!)

They're also successfully building critical mass. As Rene explains, "90% of businesses here are small operators and many are not members of VisitScotland, so no one knows about them and no one searching centrally realises there is anything in the area. Individually most businesses are not scoring high on search engines either. So the site is about presenting the whole package of attractions, events, accommodation and restaurants – the economies of scale mean that individual businesses gain more visibility than they ever could alone."

### What data sources are they working with?

Rene was an early small business adopter of website measurement, having attended one of the first analytics training courses run by Highland Business Research and then applying and developing his learning to really benefit his previous online business activity. So it is no surprise that web analytics tools like Nedstat and Google Analytics are a critical part of his current measurement arsenal.

Much of the focus is on using the web analytics tools to measure and drive insight into the behaviour of visitors to [www.greaterspeyside.com](http://www.greaterspeyside.com) in order to better understand visitors needs and interests across the local market. A lot of effort goes into analysis of travel related search terms and the volumes and conversion rates of different paid search terms. They're supporting their web analytics data with tools such as Google Key Terms.

As Rene explains, "we can start to see a pattern of search terms by market interest and times of year - that kind of information we can feed back to the businesses. So if you're a member, we can let you know that people are starting to search, for example on Christmas breaks, so you are ready and responding to what customers are interested in." Essentially, they're undertaking a form of simple segmentation and basic predictive analytics based on the visitors' search cycle, the result of which strengthens competitiveness of the area as a tourist destination.

The data is showing how the potential tourist goes through the process of satisfying their basic hierarchy of information needs. In the case of [greaterspeyside.com](http://www.greaterspeyside.com) - just as is no doubt true elsewhere - people go through a needs satisfaction based pattern when searching on the site. First they research accommodation (the area of the site which has the most traffic). Then they look at attractions - a small handful of attractions appear in most people's searches. Then visitors explore events and then finally food and drink options.

Often this process unfolds over a period of several weeks. (Research by Comscore has found that eighty-five percent of travel searchers reported that they completed a travel purchase either online or offline within 90 days of their initial search engine request).

As Rene rightly points out, with visitors taking such a holistic approach to their travel research process, it is important that a destination site links all these things and shares knowledge vital to the customer experience. Rene is constantly looking to find the words customers use and feedback this back to members. For example, the analytics shows that small businesses should be mentioning that they're near Johnson of Elgin as that is one of the attractions that people are consistently searching the site for.

The logic? Use words your customers use and more potential customers will find you. Even at an individual business level it is important not just promote your business but tie it all together with reference to the other information needs of the visitor in order to satisfy (or at least reference) the elements of the whole visitor experience.

#### **How are they using the information they have?**

Rene is effectively channeling intelligence from [Greaterspeyside.com](http://www.greaterspeyside.com) back into the local market - enabling the tourism providers to easily access and utilize information that they wouldn't have had time or budget to source alone.

He is also trying to open members' eyes to the potential of benefits of a quality Internet presence. "Compared to a few years ago, tourism businesses are seeing trade being lost to those who are using the Internet well. They are becoming aware of the need, even if they don't know how to rectify it - we can help our members with this."

His activity is timely. 83% of US travellers used the Internet to research or book summer travel in 2006 (Source: Prospectiv CPI Poll, June, 2006) and figures for some key European markets are not far off this. The vast majority of travellers now research their trip online, even if they don't book online. Research has found between 20% (Source Comscore) and one third (Source eMarketer/Prospectiv CPI Poll) book their travel offline, after first researching in online. Even if a business is not transacting online, they can't afford to be missing from the visitors' research process.

Rene is right to understand that the Internet is critical to the successful promotion of Greater Speyside. But by taking this further and pioneering a meaningful, analytics driven approach for the region that involves sharing and acting on knowledge, Tuminds might just be helping change the tourism map of Northern Scotland.

<http://blog.highlandbusinessresearch.com>

Tourism is, by definition, one of the most information-intensive industries. How are we, as potential customers, going to find information on that fantastic little cottage in the Gold Coast hinterlands that we have been dreaming about for the past 10 days? I need to book it, and I need to book it NOW... So here I start Googling "gold coast hinterland cottage"... to my surprise, not many of these fantastic little cottages come up.

"That's not possible" you will tell me, "there are millions of them up there. I see the signs in front of these properties every time I drive up! and I am certain that I remember them telling me that they are bookable online."

SEO  
**42**

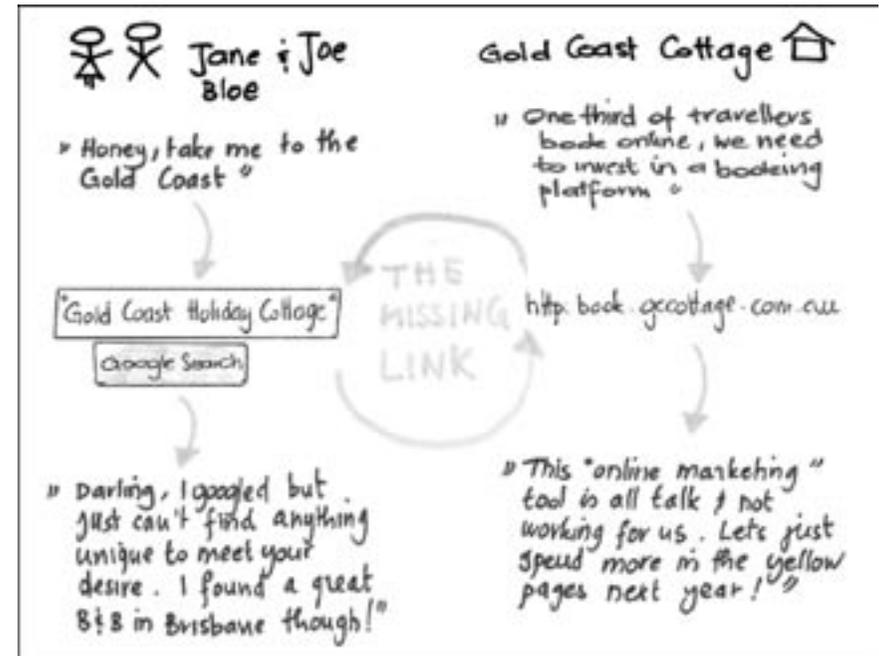
# Tourism Website Optimization

Fabienne Rabbiosi

Well, well, well. This is the issue. These properties are bookable online, however they are not SEARCHABLE let alone FINDABLE. It is a bit as if they had a phone number but they were not listed in the phone book.

As one would know, over 90% of the key players in the tourism industry are Small and Medium Enterprises. SMEs that focus on their one reason for existence: developing a product or service that will sell. They do however lack a strategic sense of how to move forward in the e-marketplace. They have yet to incorporate an e-business strategy into their business or use Web enabled technologies to assist them in their internal and external business process. However, they are starting to realise that even with a lack of financial resources, they can take advantage of the Internet as a distribution channel which will reach a global market at a lower cost than distributing through the traditional distribution channels.

So, that fantastic little cottage in the Hinterlands simply needs to let the world know it is out there and that the woodfire is on in this rainy winter month. How will it let the world know?



There is an enormous gap in the Tourism industry with regards to web optimisation. Operators get sold fancy online booking platforms by very well trained sales people but unfortunately the link between these online booking platforms and the potential customer is not established. As I mention to my clients, it is as if they now have a phonenumber but they are not listed in the phonebook. Operators do not see the expected ROI of their booking platform simply because the client cannot find them.

The discipline that makes these operators findable is called Online Marketing. Online Marketing then branches out into Search Engine Marketing (advertisements that the operator pays for), Search Engine Optimisation (keyword tweaking that should get your ranking up on search engine) and now into Social Media and Social Bookmarking (Digg, Stumbleupon etc). Online Marketing used to be assimilated to Web development a decade ago but it has now become a specialty on its own.

Unfortunately, many tourism and other operators have not yet grasped that concept and believe a Web designer will get them a fantastic website AND lots of traffic and conversions through it. WRONG! The Online Marketer therefore also has a strong educational role in this regard. One way to help operators understand how important it is for them to work on their “online findability” is to get them to put themselves in their customers’ fingers and Google their service. We need to get the Hinterland Cottage Owner on Google and type in “cottage gold coast hinterlands”, “woodfire accommodation gold coast hinterlands”.

Once the owner has convinced himself (very different from a salesperson telling him that it is the way to do it) he will be very receptive and will with no doubt work with experts to increase not only traffic to his site but also conversions and therefore ROI. 1 happy operator will quickly lead to 100 visible and bookable operators which in turn will eventually lead to a whole destination with a strengthened online reputation.

To facilitate the learning curve that tourism operators need to embrace, I have simply integrated the Google search box to my business’ website: check it out on [http://www.untanglemyweb.com/test\\_business\\_keywords\\_google.html](http://www.untanglemyweb.com/test_business_keywords_google.html). My clients really appreciate being able to become their own customer as it allows them to understand the key relationship between Search Engines and Online Marketing.

<http://blog.untanglemyweb.com>

Identify all of the possible keyword phrases that your tourism business could benefit from then follow a 5 phase keyword research and selection process to mine your Keyword Gold.

1. First identify core terms or keyword themes. These are unique two or three word combinations, not actual search phrases. For example “niagara wedding” might be the core term which will cover numerous phrases including “niagara falls wedding”. Go through your site, scanning title tags, keyword tags, description tags, text, navigation links, tour packages, etc. and identify all of the main site core terms which have already been established. Looking through packages and package descriptions will produce a gold mine of core terms. Look for unique two or three word phrases. During the course of your in-depth research finding actual

## Mining Keyword Gold

*Todd Lucier*



searched phrases, some keywords will overlap across multiple core terms. Record them all.

2. Once you’ve worked through your site, do the same with a competitor’s website. Perhaps they have used a unique word combination you hadn’t thought of.

3. Make a list of keyword combinations that make sense as core terms or keyword themes from these five categories:

- relevant place names/tourism icons
- self identifiers for your ideal guests - how do they refer to themselves
- activities you offer or that your guests partake in nearby
- travel themes - wedding, fall colours
- type of accommodation, amenities and services you offer

4. Use tools to dig up even more core terms. Keyword Discovery, WordTracker, especially their new Keyword Researcher tool.

With the Wordtracker related keywords search tool, type anything and the results produced below are other phrases that may (or may not) be relevant. Pick through those results and document any new core terms found that are not already on your list. Google and Yahoo both have tools which will provide similar information allowing you to find such core terms, Also consider L3xicon.com .

Running a keyword search through L3xicon provides results showing related words, definitions and even related web pages.

Running a search for "niagara wedding" L3xicon produces some results that allow us to find some additional core terms that may not have already been added to our list:

- wedding chapel,
- wedding package,
- wedding planner,
- wedding ceremony,
- wedding service,
- wedding planner/planning

These may have already been discovered when pouring through the site and through competitor's sites, but perhaps not. Next we're going to try 'outdoor wedding', a phrase that probably came up in our WordTracker search. Here a few more relevant core terms pulled from the results:

- garden wedding,
- wedding location

Now let's click on the 'garden wedding' link provided and see the results. Look! Another core term we can use:

- beach wedding

Let's try going back and searching for 'wedding location'. From this list of results we are able to pull:

- unique wedding,
- romantic wedding,

- exotic wedding,
- destination wedding,

Continue searching until you have finally found what you believe to be a complete list.

4b.. Ensure that you have not included core terms that are not relevant. For example without a beach, beach wedding is not relevant, remove it from your keyword optimization list.

5. After that you can begin the more in-depth research of finding all the related and actively searched phrases for each of these core terms, another time-consuming but rewarding task in the long-run. Determine which phrases are worth your time and energy and make changes to your site to take advantage of the new opportunities you have discovered.

Before rewriting your Web site for search engines, spend as much time as possible mining your keyword gold. You will design a Web site that is search engine optimized for search terms that matter. Your Tourism Business will be ready to mine a gold of a different kind.

<http://www.tourismkeys.ca>



# **Interviews & Rants**



*Germans are on the way for Travel 2.0 and travel community.*

*Today I talk with Uwe Frers, TripsByTips (<http://www.tripsbytips.de/>) CEO and future leader in the german speaking travel community.*

*Look at the screens and process, they have done a remarkable job ! and great content is already on the web site.*

Interviews  
& Rants  
**44**

# Tripsbytips, future leading German speaking travel community

Interview with Uwe Frers, General Manager

*Claude Benard*

## > Can you give us an outline of your goals at Tripsbytips?

Tripsbytips.com (<http://www.tripsbytips.de>) is the community for the honest exchange of experiences between travelers. Travel tips, hotel reviews, restaurant recommendations, travel diaries and travel pictures, which are published by members, provide transparency and offer inspiration for other travelers. In addition Tripsbytips.com brings together travelers with similar interests through intelligent match-making methods. We translate the Amazon principle of "What A bought, B bought too" for the world of travel.

Our goal for Tripsbytips.com is clearly formulated: by 2009 at the latest we want to be the biggest German speaking travel community.

## > Tourism is a people business and a destination experience with personal encounters. Do you think the community can leverage a destination or a

## product thanks to a web site and tools like Tripsbytips?

This is exactly where we can see the potential in Tripsbytips.com: personal recommendations help products (and therefore also tourist destinations) much more than classical marketing. Our members have no reason to promote a hotel or a destination, it's about real experiences and honest impressions. Whilst classical travel guides (for example books) always have to deal with a subjective selection of topics, the scope of content at Tripsbytips.com is unrestricted. This means that even smaller or to-date unknown travel destinations have a chance at gaining a larger audience. In addition, a community is the perfect answer to the problem of the increasing heterogeneity in our society. Target groups are diversifying and demands are becoming more individual, in that even very individual information and answers are demanded, which Tripsbytips.com can deliver perfectly. The matching up of similar members e.g. through groups and travel topics offers an additional possibility for inspiration.

## > Who uses your services? Do you have a target audience?

Here we have to differentiate between passive readers and active members. Experience shows us that around 99% of visitors use a community only as a source of information (that is to say just for reading), whilst 1% get actively involved as a member by writing and interaction. Regarding the members, we concentrate on those who understand travel as a passion or who combine another passion such as sport, photography or culture with the topic of travel. Our members therefore provide information about their travel destination in a knowledgeable way. As a result our focus isn't on experiences relating to package tours rather it is on experiences of individual travelers.

## > Do you plan to work with professionals as well, like travel agencies, tour operators...or is it only for the end customer?

Later this year we are going to make Tripsbytips.com accessible to professionals. It makes sense, for example, to let a travel operator specializing in travel in Kenya report about their experiences in the country. What is important in doing so is that the readers of Tripsbytips.com know that the content has been posted by a professional. In so far we will indicate content by professionals where it appears. Ultimately professionals will also be able to generate new customers through this channel, therefore this topic will also become a business model for Tripsbytips.com in the medium term.

> **Internet is going faster and we talk now about Web 2.0 and Travel 2.0. What do you think about this evolution in the tourism & hotel market place? Social media and User Generated Content are the big trends for Travel 2.0? Is Tripsbytips riding the wave of these trends?**

Social Media and User Generated Content will lead to a radical change of the media market, but also of many industries such as, for example, the tourism industry. First of all the perfect allocation of all information is possible, which will lead to a continuing weakening of intermediaries (media companies, but also large tourism companies).

From our point of view there is a further great advantage here: there rarely exists comparable industries in which a community, as soon as it reaches a noteworthy size, can be monetized similarly sensibly and without damaging the community. Demand for suitable tourist products by members can be met perfectly, therefore here it is not about heavy-handed advertising but about context related product information.

For hotels and other providers on the one hand this is a chance for direct interaction with customers and therefore higher margins, on the other hand potential weaknesses will also be discovered much quicker. In addition, in the near future market pressure from multi-national tourism businesses will no longer be solely determined by the success or failure of hotels or destinations.

> **We see the important impact of news technologies (RSS, AJAX, podcast, blog, socialnetworking tools, Google mashup, Vidéo etc), what is your point of view with respect to the travel industry?**



Technology based on a personal internet site must remain purely a means to an end. The cautious use of Ajax for example can lead to a better usability. New technologies then become exciting when they are used as a marketing means. The success of cartography information for Facebook shows that contact to several 10,000 users can be built up within no time at all. Therefore here it is about clever ideas, which, using new technologies, lead to new target groups.

> **Canadian Tourism Commission (www.canada.travel) is working on a very exciting and innovative initiative with Real Travel (a travel social networking web site) that will launch in the next few months. VisitSweden is in the process of building a travel online community. In France, DMO's are looking**

**at travel social networks with more and more interest. Tripsbytips will be a new player in the market place. Are you considering a partnership with DMO or other destination management companies?**

It makes sense if destinations use this new means as well. A possible problem area may be honesty which is the basic prerequisite for communities. At Tripsbytips.com we have no problem with a member in hindsight criticizing a trip to Canada for understandable reasons and recommending the USA instead. Whether Canada Travel will look upon this in the same relaxed way, remains to be seen. We can well imagine acting as Know How and technology partner but don't as yet have any concrete plans.

> **What are your tastes?**

> **Travel:**

My personal goal: to have always visited one more country than my age at the time. I'm working on it as best I can!

> **Travel destination:**

On the one hand I love pulsating cities such as Barcelona, Vancouver or London, but on the other hand also the solitude of the Swiss mountains or Umbria, Italy. Next on the agenda are South America and the East as there's so much to discover there.

> **Hotel:**

I like hotels that offer a coherent, harmonious overall concept. That applies to both a stylish design hotel in Paris as well as to a romantic country house in Tuscany. I like the selection at <http://en.escapio.com>.

> **Business:**

It's a small world out there. When it comes to business, both partners must be able to say, even after years have passed: it made sense to me. To date I have been happy to cross paths a second time with every business partner that I've worked with.

**Thanks Uwe. Congrats for this excellent work and all the best for your travel community.**

<http://www.lesexplorers.com>

Today I am pleased to talk with Karin Schmollgruber, one of the best bloggers in the field of PR for tourism industry, etourism, Web 2.0 and other Travel 2.0 trends.

Keep an eye on their 7 big trends for Travel 2.0 !!!!!

**> Karin, can you tell some information about you and your job as a PR in the travel industry?**

I am an independent communications consultant, and have been in online-marketing and communications since 1997. I discovered my love for the travel industry when I was working for the Vienna Tourist Board. My blog FastenYourSeatbelts.at (<http://passionpr.typepad.com/tourism/>) is about tourism marketing and communication in the Web. While most articles are German, I publish one

lesser quality will only attract seekers of lesser quality - if the price is right. Let's face it, not everybody can or wants to afford the greatest quality or every service. I believe that Travel 2.0 will help to match businesses and customers.

**> User-generated content is transforming the way users research, search and decide on their travel plans. What latest trends have you seen in this arena? How do you deal with this trend in your day to day job as a PR in travel industry?**

While some clients are aware of these trends, many remain reluctant to change. I do not blame them. Change is frightful to some.

**> Do you think consumers trust bloggers views more than traditional marketing?**

Many studies prove that "consumers trust people like themselves." Hence, bloggers and rating sites are seen as more trustworthy than traditional marketing messages. That's for sure. Other studies have shown, that readers are sensible enough to not believe everything claimed in those platforms.

**> Internet is going faster and we talk now about Web 2.0 and Travel 2.0. What do you think about this evolution in the tourism & hotel market place? Social media and User Generated Content are the big trends for Travel 2.0?**

My seven big trends for Travel 2.0 are

- 1 - Drop marketing speak for authenticity: Corporate websites will become more personal featuring people and real language, not marketing speech.
- 2 - Stop online segregation: User generated content and social media will have to morph into the traditional website.
- 3 - Connect with your online sales force: Online relations managers will become additional positions in communications departments. Budgets will have to shift significantly from traditional marketing and PR to online relations. Companies engaging in online relations and building rapport with bloggers and social networks will become increasingly successful.
- 4 - Become customer-centric,now: Websites have to be created with the customer's needs in mind, not with the companies' or stake holders' interests in mind. Destination management organisations will have to provide RSS-feeds for their partners such as hotels and attractions for aggregation into their sites. This is also true for social media networks like Facebook and others to come.



## Interview of Karin Schmollgruber from Passion PR and blog FastenYourSeatbelts.at

*Claude Benard*

English article every Monday. (<http://passionpr.typepad.com/tourism/english-posts/index.html>)

**> Tourism is a people business and a destination experience with personal encounters. Do you think social travel community can leverage a destination or a product?**

Well, even the Web 1.0 has already leveraged destinations. I remember putting San Pedro de Atacama on my Chile itinerary in 2004 because their website was so compelling. So the more advanced tools of Web 2.0 will even further that impact. On the other hand, destinations and services that are not as great as their marketing material both online and print might convey, will definitely suffer from content generated by their customers being posted to rating, photo and video platforms. Does that mean, that they will crash? No, but in the future providers of

- 5 - Educate your internal sales force: With the transparency enabled by the new web, every single action of your staff will get more attention and become part of your sales force. To beat competition use new tools like podcasts, videocasts, blogs, and wikis and enable constant improvement.
- 6 - Monitor to excel: Online monitoring of customer generated content should be viewed as a source for product development and enhancement.
- 7 - Be accessible: Content will have to be accessible from different devices. This will entail setting up different versions of the website.

**> We see important impact of news technologies (RSS, AJAX, podcast, blog, social networking tools, Google mashup, Vidéo etc), what is your point of view in the travel area?**

All of these tools will facilitate travel planning for consumers who like to research and plan their trips individually. And for those, who take the time to check locations and information first. Their numbers will increase with the digital natives on the rise. Keep the Cluetrain Manifesto in mind: Thanks to the web, markets are becoming better informed, smarter, and more demanding of qualities missing from most business organizations.

**> The Canadian Tourism Commission (www.canada.travel) is working on a very exciting and innovative initiative with Real Travel (a travel social networking web site) that will launch in the next few months.**

**Do you see some great initiative in Germany or Austria market?**

There are many travel start-ups in Germany launching new rating and travel communities. It seems to me and I have been told that the national German DMO is not as influential in Germany as the Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) is in Austria. The ANTO started a German language blog about Austrian restaurants, bars and independent hotels last year. Internal wikis are deployed for knowledge management. Like Holland, New Zealand and Sweden they are currently working on a community network called CoolAustria.com. However, the project was completely outsourced. Also keep in mind: For a country with a national language other than English, language is a definite barrier.

**> What are your tastes?**

**> Travel:**

I am an individualistic traveller.

**> Travel destination:**

My parents live in Ecuador, so longer trips always mean South America. Which is okay, because Galapagos and Easter Island are pretty impressive. I love travelling in Chile where I was born. It's so safe! I absolutely love travelling in Austria too. It's so beautiful.

**> Hotel:**

I love design hotels like Savoy Hotel in Cologne and Hotel Das Triest in Vienna, where I celebrated my wedding. Being the nostalgic type I absolutely adore places like the Grand Hotel Panhans in Lower Austria.

**> Any advises for people who want to work with a special Travel 2.0 PR like you.**

Yes, please make sure, that the agency you work with for PR or for developing social media activities does have hands-on experience in the Web 2.0. This is not about technology, it is about technology enabling people to talk and connect.

**> You have the micro.**

Thanks for having me, Claude. I see that quite a few tourism industry bloggers are breaking away, let's make an effort to connect even closer.

**About Karin business :**

As an independent communications consultant and speaker Karin works with companies who want to communicate authentically online and offline. Her clients include tourism companies and destination marketers. Karin will also be a lecturer at the [Innovation & Management in Tourism course of the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences.

More about Karin on her blog.

Merci Karin !

<http://www.leexplorers.com>



71Miles (<http://71miles.com/>) is a great travel guide for short break and week-end trips around major cities.

With special focus on local and authentic travel, deep travel knowledge and driving trips, 71Miles is changing the landscape of Travel information.

For my geeks readers, 71Miles it's built with WordPress !!! Yes, they use Wordpress as a "Travel Content Management System (CMS)" ;-))  
Great idea and great job for the technical team.



# 71 Miles : The definitive guide to weekend trips around major cities

Interview with John A. Vlahides - Executive Editor and Co-founder

Claude Benard

John A. Vlahides, 71Miles Executive Editor and Co-founder tell us more about this great website, Travel 2.0 and how he use Twitter as a tool for the 71Miles community.

**> John, can you tell some information about you and 71Miles?**

I'm the co-founder of 71miles.com, which launched in March 2007. 71Miles is the first comprehensive site for regional driving trips around major metropolitan areas---by locals, for locals. We cover Northern California and just added D.C. Metro; we'll be adding other American cities in the coming months.

Personally, I've been writing about travel in the western US since 1999; in that time, I've authored ten books for Lonely Planet, another 20 for Fodor's, and written numerous articles for other major US publications. I used to work as a \*Clefs d'Or\*

luxury-hotel concierge. Before that I studied cooking in Paris, at La Varenne, with the same chefs who trained Julia Child. I also have a background in music, and currently sing tenor with the San Francisco Symphony.

**> You manage the operation for this regional travel online community and new type of travel guide. Can you tell us the story and some facts about this project? Seems you are very innovative and explore a marketing travel niche!**

Every other travel site is built around air travel, its content written primarily for out-of-towners. Not at 71Miles.

We focus on driving trips---the fastest-growing segment of travel.

The trend is for short trips, but until now there was no single site where you could find information about local travel. The travel sections of newspapers are good, but who can remember where they put a clipping from the newspaper? Now all the info you need to plan a trip is one single place.

**> Can you give us some outline about your goals with 71Miles?**

In addition to a partnership with Kayak (we're the first to use their new hotel API), we've got deals set up with local media outlets to broadcast travel segments on television and radio. (See our press page - <http://71miles.com/press> - for my latest appearances.) We've also shot a pilot for a travel show on TV. In the coming months, we're redesigning the site so users can customize their own trips.

**> Tourism is a people business and a destination experience with personal encounters. Do you think the resident community can leverage a destination thanks to a web site and tools like using 71Miles?**

Absolutely. Travel is about finding new perspectives, new ways to view the world we live in. People want authentic travel experiences, but don't have time to do the necessary research to make that happen. But since I have been to all the places I write about, readers can build on my own authentic experiences to create their own.

**> Who will use your services ? Do you have a target audience?**

Our target audience is everyone who travels. I write for young families, gay travelers, old couples---anyone who has a love for making new discoveries in the world around them.

**> Do you see everywhere you write about ?**

Generally, yes. I see about 95% of the places I cover. But when I can't, I try to make it clear to readers where I've gotten information. Reliability and truthfulness are key to our success.

**> Can you give us advice to use 71Miles?**

If you're short on time, you can get the flavor of a 71Miles destination by doing two things: reading the short introduction at the top of the page, and watching the two-minute video in the middle of the page. If you have more interest in a destination, then read the complete reviews.

**> Internet is going faster and we talk now about Web 2.0 and Travel 2.0. What do you think about this evolution in the tourism & hotel market place ? Social media and User Generated Content are the big trends for Travel 2.0?**

I'm glad web users can now post their own reviews on various travel websites. But Web 2.0, in its early stages, relied too heavily on user-generated content. With so many conflicting reviews, whom do you believe? At 71Miles, we feel that there's room for both expert opinion AND user-generated comments. For example, I have worked as a chef and a luxury-hotel concierge, which gives me more insight into food and hotels than the average Joe. However, I want to know what Joe's personal experiences of the restaurants and hotels I cover. I help him, he helps me. Web 2.0 is about \*conversations,\* and such dialogues help us all make better decisions about travel.

**> How do you use Twitter and other new interactive tools ? It's a way to build interaction with readers?**

I post on Twitter whatever I'm doing right now---on the road, or in my writing---as it relates to my experience as a travel writer. Ask an American what his dream job is, and chances are he wants to be a travel writer. By using Twitter, I can show readers the truth about travel writing, good and bad. People love it!

**> What are your tastes?**

**> Travel:**

Support the local economies of places you visit by avoiding chain stores. For example, I don't drink Starbucks coffee, and I don't shop at Walmart. These places put family-owned cafes and shops out of business. Travel is about discovering

new worlds you never knew existed. Keep them alive by shopping locally.

**> Travel destination:**

I live in my favorite city: San Francisco. It's at the westernmost edge of Western civilization. How cool is that? My second favorite city is Paris. (Predictable, but true.) I also love small, out-of-the-way ski towns like Taos, New Mexico. I admit it: I'm a Westerner.

**> Hotel:**

I'm a luxury-hotel service expert, so I like to stay in top-end hotels---not because they're so comfortable, but because I like to test the service. Most so-called luxury hotels are actually business-class hotels, and I'm usually disappointed in the service. But I l-o-v-e discovering the real thing, places where the staff anticipates your requests before you even ask for them. Now that's service! I also love simple, mom-and-pop inns where every detail has been carefully thought out. That doesn't necessary mean luxury, but it does mean quality. A good example: the housekeeping cottages at Mar Vista Cottages , on the Mendocino Coast. Cottages have top-of-the-line mattresses and high-end linens (they even iron the sheets before placing them on the bed!), but there's no space-occupying froufrou to get in your way. And there's a big organic garden outside, which guests are expected to feed themselves from during their stay. In the morning, the innkeepers leave a basket of freshly laid eggs (from the chickens outside) by your front door. What makes Mar Vista so successful is that they're not trying to be something they're not. Again, travel should be authentic, not template-driven.

**> You have the micro.**

Why go through the hassle of getting on an airplane when there are so many amazing things to see near home? Travel locally! You'll not only discover new places you might never have known existed, but you'll also gain new perspectives on your world. Now \*that's\* a vacation!

Thanks. ---JV\*\*\*

*If you want great advices and tips about your next trip to US and California, try 71Miles. John make a incredible job and you will find unique and authentic travel content.*

<http://www.lesexplorers.com>

Based on own Easter European trip planning experience, destination websites suck, social websites are good, paper guidebooks are very helpful, mapping services, transportation and accommodation metasearch websites rule.

When we decided on our vacation this year, the plan was to go to Eastern Europe, but we didn't exactly know where. Our itinerary depended on time, transportation and what suits us the most. I have a lot of places I want to see in Eastern Europe and we had to visit my family in Amsterdam and meet up with Sheri's in Austria. So we had no idea what the best itinerary would be.

Using tourism information websites to get a sense of priority for places to visit was almost impossible. According to EVERY destination website, it is THE place for culture, entertainment, and the culinary center of the universe. So I stopped



## A anecdotal learning through personal experiences

### Part 1, pre-trip planning

*William Bakker*

visiting them in this phase of my planning. I did read a bunch of experiences on peer review websites such as IgoUgo and Gusto. That gave me a better idea of what was going on in the destinations, but it did lack a bit of authority.

Out of frustration with tourism websites, I went to my local bookstore and bought a guidebook. So I bought "Rick Steve's guide to Eastern Europe". This is exactly what I needed, and his website is helpful as well. Here's somebody who has some authority (he's been traveling to Europe forever) and is also not afraid to recommend the top things, warning about where not to go, and capture the real essence of each place. He also had some great tips and tools for transportation.

Our shortlist was long so transportation would be an important factor in finalizing our itinerary. We decided to use the train or the budget airlines in Europe.

Destination websites were useless again. Just a list of airports and airlines is not helpful; it takes me 2 seconds in Google to find that information. I did find some other resources on Ricks website and message boards and found two very handy websites:

A website for train schedules in Europe. Unfortunately, they don't tell you the prices.

A website that aggregates flights from budget airlines. Not always 100% accurate but perfect for planning purposes.

So with the help of primarily Rick, a few message boards and a few transportation websites, I locked down our itinerary. I booked our flights, both to Europe with BA, and in Europe with Easyjet. The BA website is absolutely fantastic by the way. Booking train travel online can't be done. There are travel agencies in North America but the message boards told me they overcharge. Rick told me to just buy tickets in Europe. And he was right, thanks Rick.

Next was accommodation. I must have looked at 40 or 50 websites. The main criteria were location, location, location. I wanted to be in the city center. Rick recommended some places but the long tail of the internet, combined with traveler reviews prevailed.

To select an accommodation, I had one tab in my browser to find an accommodation option. Another tab was reserved for live.com maps (I found it easier to located addresses then Google Maps) to see the location in the city. Another tab was for Tripadvisor, although some booking services also offered traveler reviews (hostelworld does a great job).

I didn't even bother with Expedia, Travelocity or Hotels.com anymore. It was all Kayak. Kayak became my benchmark for further exploration. I used Kayak to book a hotel in London and Salzburg. In Ljubljana and Krakow, I ended up finding good hostels on hostelworld.com, also found through Kayak. In Budapest I found a website that facilitates apartment rental and I found a similar service in Prague. This saved some money because you don't have to pay for all the hotel amenities we didn't really care for anyways. Another nice thing about this is that we lived in a residential building. Made us feel less like a tourist.

Now that the itinerary was locked down, planning details in each city was hard. Destination websites, again, told me everything was wonderful and tried to sell me packages and other stuff I'm not interested in. And how hard is it to put a map on a website? I gave up. I'm not much of a detailed planner so I decided to wing it and figure it out when we got there.

<http://www.wilhelmus.ca>

Based on own Easter European trip planning experience while I was there, mobile devices are changing everything, guidebooks are still king, visitor centres your best friend, and hotel concierges a valuable resource (even if you don't stay at their hotel).

As I previously posted, planning our itinerary for our month long European vacation was complicated, but I managed to nail down the dates, flights and accommodation. Most of the details, we worked out during our trip.

Communication with friends and family is always an important part of travel. I remember as a kid that once during our family vacation, my Mom got to call her sister once every trip. We had to look for a place where you could make an international phone call and while my Mom was getting updates about the dog,

## **A** anecdotal learning through my own trip planning experience

Part 2, during the trip

*William Bakker*

my Dad would be pacing around, looking at his watch and wondering how much this was going to cost him. Things have changed.

Internet Cafes are everywhere and they're packed. People use the internet to email, IM, blog, post on their MySpace or Facebook, social travel networks and other ways more to communicate with their loved ones (and anonymous blog visitors). I'm part of this crowd. But this trip was the first time that my Blackberry took over. I was emailing, using my Gmail client, IM-ing and posting on my blog, including pictures. I only went to an internet café a few times. On previous trips, finding the internet café was the first thing. This time, there was less need.

My blackberry was also my itinerary keeper. All my confirmations for accommodation and flights were stored and I used it to communicate with accommodation

Interviews  
& Rants

**48**

when I realized night trains arrive brutally early. I managed to get an early check-in every time via email. And I used the Google Maps client to find the exact location of accommodation, attractions and restaurants.

For planning our day-to-day activities, I brought my Rick Steve's guide to Eastern Europe guidebook, I also bought an Eyewitness guidebook for Prague, and my sister gave me a Lonely Planet guide for Budapest. I also downloaded a few podcasts on my iPod.

Rick's guidebook, proven to be very useful at home while planning my itinerary, became useless during my trip. Because it covers so many places, information about things to do and see became too generic. The long tail of guidebooks.

My Lonely Planet for Budapest was perfect, it was well written, provided more than enough information about the highlights, guided tours and special interest. But it was thin, probably so it's easy to carry. So again, only the "head" of information was provided. But this is where the Blackberry came in. I was looking up all kinds of stuff on the internet for more information, in particular on Wikipedia. The guidebook provided an easy way to plan our day and the internet provided details on the spot.

In Prague, we had an Eyewitness guidebook. I was very excited about it because it looks so pretty. Colorful pages, with a lot of pictures, 3D overviews of buildings, pictorial maps of squares and more. But I quickly realized that the look and feel got in the way of content. There was hardly any room for information. If I'm standing and looking at the real thing, I don't need a pictorial of the thing I'm looking at with a one sentence overview, I need more words. So I bought another Lonely Planet for the proven Lonely Planet/Blackberry combo.

In Salzburg, Ljubljana and Krakow, I had to rely on Steve and even though the book provided decent information, I felt like I missed out. In Salzburg, the front desk of the hotel had a tear-off map of Salzburg, with the main sights and attractions numbered. So we started at #1 and work our way down. On the map was an ad for a phone audio tours. Phone a number, press the number on the map and receive a guided tour. Brilliant.

When I got stuck a couple of times (Google maps didn't work in Ljubljana and we

couldn't figure out the bus in Krakow), we went to the local Visitor Centres. I think it's universal that people who work in Visitor Centres are the nicest people in town. In most cases, they treat you like family.

I also use hotels all the time when I travel, even when I don't stay there. Most of their staff members are trained customer service professionals with a passion of assisting travelers. So if your request isn't too insane, they'll often help you. So we've checked our bags at hotels, used them to call taxis, asked for direction (one woman from the Marriot walked us around for 10 minutes when we were lost), and got some band aids when Sheri had a blister.

I also downloaded some podcasts. I had a Budapest podcast from Frommers, and iPod Traveler. I didn't like them at all. The Frommers podcast was an interview with the editor of their Hungary book and didn't do more than stating the obvious and iPod Traveler was painful to listen to. I stopped midway through. The first 10 minutes were wasted by talking about their website and trying to be funny. Then they started arguing about facts. Those are 15 minutes of my life I'll never get back.

<http://www.wilhelmus.ca>

Welcome to the new media. Have blog, will travel. Before you drive down the blogosphere highway of life, Luke Clark has a light-hearted cocktail survival guide... with a few serious notes thrown in.

Over-zealous politicians feel haunted by them. Companies dabble in them. Journalists deride them publicly, then secretly write them. Some even earn cash by tracking and aggregating their content.

We are bogged down in blogs... and the term is almost losing its usefulness (was it ever useful?)

But while the novelty is wearing off, the blog platform remains potent and immediate. To really understand why blogs are useful, imagine a bustling cocktail party.



## What are the Rules of Blogging?

*Yeoh Siew Hoon*

You cruise around those whose opinions you value. The rules of conversation entry and exit are fluid, and by finding one interesting opinion - chances are you'll find four or five.

To extend the metaphor, what then are the rules of blogging? In my humble opinion, they are very much like the rules of cocktail conversation.

**1. Lighten up:** Keep it light, kids. People aren't at work here, or in church. Just because you're writing a corporate blog, that's no excuse for ranting, lecturing, or just not being interesting. Unlike a cocktail party it's harder to see people walking away in droves from the tiresome. But if you take yourself too seriously, you can bet they're heading over to chat to Mr Brown (a famous blogger in Singapore) instead.

**2. Be yourself, sort of:** You are interesting. Ever asked yourself why? It sounds a bit 'meaning of life-ish', but consider this. People are listening to you because you have first-hand knowledge of sealing that deal in Tokyo last week. How did it feel? Were there funny moments? What did you learn about your job? People generally aren't listening to you because you car-pool to work Wednesdays, nor do they care for your musings on the colour of lint in your work shirts. So unless it's incredibly strange lint you've got, stick to the message.

**3. Be a radio-friendly hit, not a tiresome concept piece:** Were the Grateful Dead a good band? Yes. Remember any hits of their's? No. Their songs were mostly too long for radio, that's why. You too should provide the sort of messages people can absorb quickly, get a smile out of and then move on from. Lots of quick-bite hit records - and fewer hippy guitar solos.

**4. Write often:** Blogging is hard work, you have to stay on it. Too many blogs die within six months, because people just get bored. Or they suddenly wonder whether anyone really cares what they think. It's like the cocktail circuit - you should attend more, but maybe drink less.

**5. Let other people talk:** Cocktail conversation dies when someone dominates it. Go searching for other people's voices, reference them in your blog's content, and send a note to other bloggers when you write something relevant to them. Eventually, you will all co-market each other, and people will come back to your combined 'cocktail parties' week after week, hit after hit.

**6. Be fair, and avoid the unfair:** Without scaring people, the legal rules for blogging are similar to journalism. Take a look at them before you get deep into "heavy blogging". In a nutshell, always be fair and balanced. Poke fun at an organization, but don't get too personal about individuals. And if someone else goes too far, read them but don't house their opinions on your blog. Also, carefully control comments on your blog. Just as when a drunk gets kicked out during a cocktail party, people will move away from them rapidly. It's sad but true.

**7. No company secrets.** It should be obvious, but companies will not tolerate you spilling the beans on their profit margin, even at 2am from your home computer. You wouldn't do it on the cocktail circuit, so don't get sucked into believing it will ride in your blog.

**8. Read and remember the good blogs:** Good bloggers are avid readers. They're the cocktail buddy who always has something really cool to share. It doesn't have to be information to bring down an empire, just something left-field that gets you thinking or induces a chuckle.

**9. Think about what you wear:** Is your cleavage showing? Did you mean to wear tartan pants? Your blog's design speaks volumes about what you have to say. If you fear that you're not fronting up, seek fashion (aka design) help.

**10. Help your readers:** Just like the title on your namecard, somewhere prominent on your blog's front page, you should announce what it is that you actually talk about. Tech news, hotel forecasts, airline schedules. Whatever, help your readers by being clear about who and what you're about.

Oh, and lastly, beware of mixing beer and wine. You know where it gets you.

<http://www.thetransitcafe.com>

So you want to be a global brand? Here are some tips from John Quelch, Senior Dean of the Harvard Business School who spoke at the Global Brand Forum 2007.

### 1. Own one word

Why did Google become the most valuable brand in the world? Quelch asked. Because it had an ambitious mission – to organize the world's information; search is important; and Google is simply better than its competitors. Plus, the notion that "Google is cool, does no evil" and has an emotional value.

Most importantly, Google owned one word – search. "If you can own an important word globally, it is the best way to create a global brand."

## Own a Word, Own the World

*Yeoh Siew Hoon*



### 2. Address a global problem

Quelch cites three hot global brands of the moment – Dove, Gore and the B787 Dreamliner.

Dove addressed a global problem with its "Campaign for Real Beauty".

"The media was setting global standards for beauty. Many women don't feel beautiful and many young girls don't feel good about themselves. Dove celebrates beauty in diversity."

Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" is not just an advertising campaign, he said, there's a self-esteem fund as well as beauty workshops for girls. "It is engaging

consumers in shaping the brand, saying, 'if you take the time to talk, we promise to listen.' It went from functional to becoming a global brand with meaning."

Al Gore, Quelch believes, can become a global brand – Brand Gore. "He is a credible messenger, there is a call to action, he is using multiple media to communicate. Is he the next Branson, the next lifestyle brand?"

The Boeing 787, the first Boeing aircraft to be branded and thus given its own personality, "connects the global village".

"It is a supranational brand – only 10% made in the US, the rest in 30 countries, it has power through scarcity – until July 8, 2007, no one had ever seen it yet 675 orders were placed. There is a power that comes to brands from being unavailable."

### **3. Define the role of the CMO (Chief Marketing Officer)**

Quoting Eric Kim, ex-CMO of Samsung, Quelch said, "The best CMO strives to make the CEO the CMO."

"The CMO should be a low key, humble person who works throughout the organization and get everyone to understand how important marketing is. Often the CMO makes the mistake of challenging the CEO – that's the best way to get fired."

### **4. Anticipate "accidents"**

Global brands are vulnerable to both the preventable and the unexpected. The saga of Starbucks in the Forbidden City (in which it was forced to close down after local protests) was a culturally-sensitive incident that should have been prevented. On the other hand, Hilton did not bargain for the antics of Paris Hilton.

"Global brands require reputation risk management. The stronger the brand, the greater the risks."

### **5. Think local, act local**

The goal is to penetrate markets beyond "global" customers. At a time of anti-globalization sentiments, it is important for global brands to acquire local brands, sign local agreements and work with local partners in developing local expertise.

"Be good local citizens," said Quelch.

Globalization, he noted, had changed the marketing debate. "We are asking, what are the similarities rather than the differences?"

Today, though, the global brand battlefield remains mostly all-American. Of the top 10 – Google, General Electric, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, China Mobile, Marlboro, Walmart, Citi, IBM and Toyota – eight are American. And of the top 100, 50 are American.

"This will change though in the next 10-20 years as Asian brands rise to stronger prominence," said Quelch.

<http://www.thetransitcafe.com>

Increasing awareness among travelers of the environmental and social impacts of travel is generating interest in “green travel”. Beyond eco-tourism, travelers going anywhere want to know what their carbon footprint will be, and that the local community is not being exploited just to show a few foreigners a good time.

The broader term for this is what’s called “Responsible Travel.” It takes the principles of sustainability -- looking at environmental, social and economic dimensions -- and applies them to tourism and travel. Responsible Travel overlaps with eco-tourism, volunteer travel (or “voluntourism”), altruistic travel and cultural tourism, but is a broader general term.

I’m a strong proponent of Responsible Travel, and through the work I do, try to help spread the word and the practices that can make a difference. We don’t

The Planeta Global Journal of Practical Eco-tourism is at [www.planeta.com](http://www.planeta.com).  
The Responsible Travel Handbook is online at [www.transitionsabroad.com](http://www.transitionsabroad.com).  
The International Centre for Responsible Tourism is at [www.icrtourism.org](http://www.icrtourism.org).  
The UN WTO’s Global Code of Ethics in Tourism is online at [www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org).

<http://afrikatourism.blogspot.com>



## Responsible Travel Resources

*Kurt Ackermann*

always get to full sustainability in one go, but we can apply the principle of “first, do no harm,” and then look for means of consistent improvement. My work in Namaqualand and in Cape Town gets into the teeth of the matter, and I have to say it’s hard to actually live by your principles, and even harder to convince others to adopt similar principles and then also to live by them.

Anyway, those are my worries to wrestle with, but I want to encourage all travelers to be responsible travelers, and to be well informed about what that means and how to be Responsible with a capital ‘R’.

For further insights into how to be a Responsible Traveler, I can recommend these resources:

**Alicia Whalen**

<http://www.ideahatching.com>

Mississauga, ON, Canada

Alicia Whalen is the co-founder of A Couple of Chicks e-Marketing which evolved out of a need for a fresh and non-intimidating approach to Internet Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, e-Distribution and Campaign Measurement. The "Chicks" specialize in using Creative, Distribution and Technology together to bring clarity to marketing online. The "Chicks", Patricia and Alicia, have published over 30 articles, launched the first ever Canadian Online Marketing Conference, Online Revealed Canada, presented over 20 e-marketing workshops for such notable organizations as Travel Alberta, SYTA (Student Youth Travel Association), Ontario Tourism (OTMP), and TIANS (Travel Industry Association of Nova Scotia), and has continued to evolve with their clients and partners to produce successful online marketing case studies. Most recently, the "Chicks" launched a new social media website [www.chicksaway.com](http://www.chicksaway.com) for women to connect about travel. The [www.ideahatching.com](http://www.ideahatching.com) blog evolved out of Alicia's passion for providing easy to read and practical online marketing tips to the tourism industry and beyond. [www.acoupleofchicks.com](http://www.acoupleofchicks.com).

**Amelia Painter**

<http://iabedandbreakfast.com/blog>

Iowa, U.S.

Internet Marketing Professional Amelia Painter, and the Iowa Bed & Breakfast Innkeepers Association, have joined forces and compiled a comprehensive guidebook full of the information needed to fill an inn with guests titled "Opening and Operating a Bed & Breakfast in the 21st Century." It can be purchased online at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

**Annalisa Ballaira**

<http://blog.relations.com>

Treviso, Italy

Annalisa Ballaira is the founder and CEO of Relations. Before founding Relations, she provided strategic consultancy to several travel operators: as the Italian Marketing Manager for [Travelprice.com](http://Travelprice.com), one of the first European online travel agencies, she specialized in web marketing for the travel sector. Annalisa then worked as a web marketing manager for [lastminute.com](http://lastminute.com) and the Boscolo Group. Relations offers travel & hospitality operators expert consulting in the field of web marketing and online distribution for planning and implementing successful sales and visibility strategies on the Internet. On Relations Blog you will find our views on some travel online distribution topics, a selection of news and hopefully some out-of-the-box web marketing thoughts. We welcome you to share your thoughts on online travel marketing with us. For more info, visit [www.relations.com](http://www.relations.com).

**Bill Geist**

<http://billgeist.typepad.com>

Wisconsin, U.S.

Consultant, author and marketing expert Bill Geist watches consumer trends like some people watch reality shows (which is, of course, no longer a trend but an expectation). After hosting a rock dj show, Bill migrated to the marketing of destinations, eventually being named the President of the Greater Madison Convention & Visitors Bureau. During his tenure, he was the lead spokesperson and co-strategist for the successful public referendum fight to build the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Monona Terrace Convention Center. He also succeeded in doubling the Bureau's sales and marketing budget and oversaw the launch of one of the Top 25 Marathons in the nation. For the past decade, he has headed up his own consulting firm called, appropriately, Zeitgeist...which specializes in strategic planning, governance, convention center development and legislative issues for destination marketing organizations, tourism-focused chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and communities. Bill is also the author of the recently released book, *Destination Leadership for Boards*. He also hosts the innovative teleseminar series DMOU, designed for destination marketing and management professionals.

**Bob Offutt**

[http://www.phocuswright.com/library\\_blog](http://www.phocuswright.com/library_blog)

Connecticut, U.S.

Mr. Offutt brings over 20 years of experience in information technology, IT management and travel industry dynamics to PhoCusWright. He was most recently the chief architect and senior vice president for Sabre Holdings where he defined the strategy and plan to migrate from a monolithic Mainframe environment to Distributed Open Systems and a Service Oriented Architecture. Prior to being Sabre's chief architect, Mr. Offutt founded and led Sabre Labs, a technology incubator that made Sabre the industry leader in new online products and services. Before Sabre, Offutt spent 26 years in the U.S. Coast Guard, where he led the agency's information technology unit. Mr. Offutt has also served on the faculty of the University of Puget Sound, George Washington University and the University of Southern California. His education includes a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and a Masters Degree in Management Science from the U. S. Navy Postgraduate School.

**Chelsea Bell**

<http://thetechnologyofbusiness.blogspot.com>

North Vancouver, BC, Canada

Chelsea Bell is the Business Development Manager at [Rezgo.com](http://Rezgo.com) (Sentias Software Corp.), and brings over 15 years of experience in assisting small and medium sized business to implement Business Software Solutions and Custom Application Solutions. Her experience with cutting edge technologies, including online booking solutions, e-commerce for tourism and retail, internet telephony, single sign on, and online security solutions, ensures that Chelsea provides her clients with unique business process development opportunities to increase their ROI.

**Chris Clarke**

<http://www.VacantReady.com>  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Chris Clarke is the founder and editor of [www.VacantReady.com](http://www.VacantReady.com), a Vancouver based online hotel industry community. Chris is a professional blogger, online community evangelist and social media developer for the hospitality industry.

**Claude Benard**

<http://www.leexplorers.com>  
Marseille, France

Claude started his career in tourism as a tour operator, he then spent 6 years as sales executive at the Envergure / Louvre Hotels. He then became the sales and marketing manager for a regional booking engine for the Marseille Chamber of Commerce, and has been consulting and training the hotel and tourism industry ever since. He has managed his blog "Les Explorers" for 2 years.

**Darren Cronian**

<http://www.travel-rants.com>  
London, U.K.

Darren is the editor of the UK's only travel consumer blog, [Travel-Rants.com](http://www.travel-rants.com). He has been blogging since April 2005, and was featured as an Essential Travel site in February 2007, by the Guardian Newspaper, along with Lonely Planet and Trip Advisor.

**Edu William**

<http://www.eduwilliam.com>  
Canary Islands, Spain

Edu is currently writing his PhD and researching Web 2.0 technology and its uses for organizations to implement social networks to evolve them into a Information and Knowledge based Society. His focus is on Web 2.0 networks and how SMEs can use these networks to manage their destinations and tourist models. He is a co-founder and manager of two startups based on his research: [destinum.com](http://destinum.com) and [innwise.com](http://innwise.com).

**Fabienne Rabbiosi**

<http://blog.untanglemyweb.com>  
Gold Coast, Australia

Fabienne has a passion for the online world and feeds on information. She slightly suffers from the GW syndrome (Google Withdrawal) but lives on the planet Earth and speaks your language. Fabienne set up the Market Intelligence division at Gold Coast Tourism where she gained a deep understanding of tourism analytics & demographics. She used her knowledge to educate the local tourism industry on how to maximise their return on investment by setting up strategies that are based on facts and research. After 2 years working for one of Australia's leading destination management organisation, Fabienne put 2 and 2 together and created [Untanglemyweb.com](http://untanglemyweb.com), an Australian Pty Ltd company with a simple but solid mission: e-growing businesses.

**Jaime Horwitz**

<http://canadiantourism.blogspot.com>  
Toronto, ON, Canada

Jaime Horwitz founded the Canadá en Español Network, [www.canadaenespanol.ca](http://www.canadaenespanol.ca), to promote Canada to Hispanic online users worldwide in 1999. He holds a BA in Film from Penn State University and an MBA from the Schulich School of Business at York University. Originally from Mexico, he immigrated to Canada in 1989. Before starting his company, he worked in the advertising industry in Mexico and Canada as a TV commercials assistant director and producer in production houses and ad agencies. Jaime blogs for the Hispanic public on his blog <http://canadaenespanol.blogspot.com/> and for the Canadian Tourism Industry on <http://CanadianTourismBlog.ca> He lives in Toronto with his wife and daughter.

**Jens Thraenhart**

<http://www.TourismInternetMarketing.com>  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

As Executive Director of Marketing Strategy & Customer Relationship Management for the Canadian Tourism Commission, Jens Thraenhart oversees e-marketing, campaign management, customer relationship management, and application development initiatives aimed at increasing the penetration of Canadian tourism in targeted global markets. Most recently, Thraenhart headed up Internet Strategy for Fairmont Hotels & Resorts as well as Marketing and CRM for Fairmont's Vacation Ownership division. Under his direction, [Fairmont.com](http://Fairmont.com) has won multiple prestigious awards in website design and online marketing. Prior, he was the co-founder of a couple revolutionary internet start-up concepts in the luxury travel space. Thraenhart holds an MBA-accredited Masters of Management in Hospitality from the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University, and a joint Bachelor of Science in International Hospitality Management from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the University Center 'Cesar Ritz' at Brig, Switzerland. He was recognized as one of the 'travel industry's top 100 rising stars' by Travel Agent Magazine in 2003, and was listed as one of the '25 Most Extraordinary Sales and Marketing Minds in Hospitality and Travel' in 2004 and 2005. Originally from Germany, and regarded as a thought-leader by his peers, Thraenhart was the founding chair of the HSMIA Travel Internet Marketing Organization and the HSMIA Hotel Internet Marketing Committee, co-founded and co-chaired the first Online Revealed Canada conference in May 2006, founded and chairs the Canadian E-Tourism Strategy Conference, Canada-e-Connect, which is held in conjunction with the first ever Canadian E-Tourism Awards, which he created. He also established and chairs the Canadian E-Tourism Council, consisting of the "who's who" in travel and tourism marketing and e-commerce in Canada, spanning through all industry sectors and all over Canada. In addition, he is quoted and has contributed to numerous articles, white papers, and text books, and is a speaker at many industry conferences and events. Thraenhart has served on various industry boards, including both the Global Board and the Americas Board of Directors of the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIA).



### Joe Buhler

<http://buhlerworks.typepad.com>  
Connecticut, U.S.

Joe runs Buhlerworks, a consulting firm for travel & tourism with a focus on strategy, marketing and eCommerce for destination marketing organizations (DMO). He is also a Partner and Executive Vice President of Level 9; a web development and software application company providing innovative solutions to the financial services industry. He also works as a Senior Destination Marketing Analyst for PhoCusWright a travel, tourism and hospitality research firm specializing in consumer, business and competitive intelligence and producer of high-profile executive conferences. He was previously part of the management team at EuroVacations.com, the online tour operator unit of Rail Europe Group, as EVP Business Development, Strategic Alliances & Industry Relations. He contributed to the successful establishment of this company, the first to offer fully custom-designed vacation packages for independent travelers. Prior to that he worked for Switzerland Tourism, the DMO for one of the top 15 global tourism destinations. During his career he was responsible for operations in North America, the United Kingdom & Ireland, Canada and Asia, where he opened the first office in Japan. Joe was twice elected as Chairman of the European Travel Commission (ETC) in Japan and in the United States and served as Vice Chairman of the Alliance of Canadian Travel Agencies (ACTA). In the past years he has appeared as a speaker and moderator at the online travel industry conferences Hostelworld, PhoCusWright Executive Conference, Travel Commerce Conference & Expo and EyeForTravel Conference on Travel Distribution.



### John McDonald

<http://thetechnologyofbusiness.blogspot.com>  
North Vancouver, BC, Canada

John McDonald provides solutions for a range of Tourism & Travel technology needs. As Project Manager for Sentias Software he leads the development team in creating Web 2.0 solutions for the Tourism market. His expertise is in HTML and PHP web based applications, and currently oversees the enhancement of the Rezgo Online Reservation System. John received his official certification from the University of British Columbia and has over 10 years of development experience.



### Karin Schmollgruber

<http://www.FastenYourSeatbelts.at>  
Austria

Karin Schmollgruber has been in online-marketing and communications since 1997. As an independent communications consultant she specialises in Web 2.0 with a strong focus on its implications for the tourism industry. Her clients include tourism boards, hotels and large hospitality companies in Austria, Germany and Italy. She is also a lecturer at the new course "Innovation & Management in Tourism" at the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences. Karin started her tourism industry blog FastenYourSeatbelts.at in September 2006. She writes in German mostly but has an English category. She started her first blog in 2003.



### Kevin May

<http://travolution.blogspot.com>  
London, U.K.

Kevin May, is the editor of Travolution, a new magazine and website for the online travel industry. Former web editor of Media Week, Mr. May commenced his journalism career as a sub-editor and subsequently a writer on the Police Gazette newspaper, a 'police-eyes-only publication' after studying Criminology at Middlesex University.



### Kurt Ackermann

<http://afrikatourism.blogspot.com>  
South Africa

Kurt Ackermann writes, researches and consults on strategy, business models and brands for African organisations adapting to globalisation and technological change. He drafted the current responsible tourism guidelines for Cape Town Tourism, has written on the information society and development as well as the links between open source software policy and development, and is the proprietor of the Afrikatourism blog for responsible travel at <http://afrikatourism.blogspot.com>.



### Mathieu Ouellet

<http://www.radaron.com>  
QC, Canada

Mathieu has been working in the Internet Technology industry for over 7 years. His career has ranged from programmer to project manager and is currently the Business Development Director & Strategist with Radaron. His goal is to bring tourism & travel related companies to take full advantage of the possibilities that the Internet offers. He is particularly interested in Travel 2.0, Internet marketing and web development. In March 2006, Mathieu started the T-List, an exponential list of travel & tourism related blogs that helped this community to connect together.



### Michael Cannizzaro

[http://www.phocuswright.com/library\\_blog](http://www.phocuswright.com/library_blog)  
Connecticut, U.S.

Mr. Cannizzaro oversees The PhoCusWright Subscription: Global Edition and European Edition and is editor, author and co-author of numerous PhoCusWright publications including the Online Travel Overview (Fifth and Sixth editions), European Online Marketplace: Focus on the U.K., and Metasearch: A Metaphor for Travel. He joined PhoCusWright in 2004, facilitating the expansion and deepening of PhoCusWright's research efforts. He brings to the company nearly two decades of experience in newspaper and magazine journalism, graphic and editorial direction and management beginning with the Washington Post and continuing as communications director for several national trade associations. He earned a BA in English and Classical Studies in Latin at Kenyon College.



### Philip Caines

<http://tourismtide.blogspot.com>  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

As head of Tourism Solutions at Sentias Software Corp., Philip is currently focused on Web 2.0 solutions for Travel and Tourism SMEs, primarily in the online sales vertical. One such solution, [www.Rezgo.com](http://www.Rezgo.com) has empowered numerous companies to sell their travel and tourism products through their existing website as well as adding distribution capabilities through a number of partner portals. His previous work includes working with an award winning DMO, Tourism Vancouver, with the focus on improving the Visitor Services department. You can find his Tourism Industry blog at <http://tourismtide.blogspot.com>.



### Ram Badrinathan

[http://www.phocuswright.com/library\\_blog](http://www.phocuswright.com/library_blog)  
Mumbai, India

As senior analyst, Ram Badrinathan's focus will be on PhoCusWright's custom research projects as well as being currently focused on the rapidly changing travel distribution markets in India and ANZ. He will also be developing regular market updates on key markets (i.e. United Kingdom). Ram has authored several PhoCusWright reports: Asia Pacific Online Travel Marketplace: Tapping a Complex Market and Asia Pacific Online Travel Marketplace Second Edition (two reports on travel distribution trends in the APAC region), European Online Travel Marketplace: Focus on the United Kingdom, The Emerging Online Travel Marketplace in India, India Offshoring and the Virtual Business Offering and co-authored Corporate Travel Distribution: Key Markets. Ram has participated in strategic consulting engagements for global travel management companies, GDS market leaders and transaction services companies in Europe, North America and Asia. Several conferences have invited Ram Badrinathan to address their audiences such as the Foresee Forum in Beijing, Wired Asia Travel Matrix in Singapore, Worldspan and Amadeus' conferences, and he has moderated the APAC panel at PhoCusWright conferences for the past three years. Well-known publications often quote Ram (including The Wall Street Journal, Straits Times Singapore, and Time). Mr. Badrinathan holds a BS in Civil Engineering from India and an MBA from Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.



### Scott MacGregor

<http://www.searchintelligence.ca>  
North Vancouver, BC, Canada

As Director of Marketing and Client Services, Scott brings over seven years of Interactive Marketing experience to the Search Intelligence team as well as more than five years in sales, marketing and event management. His skillsets include marketing and business management, copy writing, strategic plan development and account management. Scott is a graduate of the University of British Columbia's Internet Marketing program and is a Certified Internet Marketing Business Specialist. Scott is thrilled to be able apply his highly specialized knowledge and experience to work building online success for Search Intelligence's growing roster of clients.



### Dr. Scott Rains

<http://www.RollingRains.com>  
California, U.S.

Dr. Scott Rains is a former Scholar in Residence at the Center for Cultural Studies, University of California Santa Cruz. He writes daily on travel industry trends of interest to senior and disabled travelers at The Rolling Rains Report ([www.RollingRains.com](http://www.RollingRains.com)). He also writes a column for with-tv where he is a Senior Advisor (<http://withtv.blogspot.com/search/label/travel>) and works with the Inter-American Institute on Disability and Inclusive Development on destination development in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. He may be reached at [rsains@oco.net](mailto:rsains@oco.net).



### Stephen Budd

<http://blog.highlandbusinessresearch.com>  
Inverness, Scotland

Stephen Budd is the CEO of Highland Business Research and is involved in developing strategic insight through research for the tourism industry, particularly within Scotland. He is currently involved with the Scottish Government backed Tourism Framework for Change Market Intelligence and Innovation Implementation Group with an particular emphasis on how technology is changing intelligence gathering and its implication within the industry.



### Stephen Joyce

<http://tourismtechnology.rezgo.com>  
North Vancouver, BC, Canada

Mr. Joyce has been working as a travel & tourism technology consultant since 1995. In 2005 Mr. Joyce and his company, Sentias Software Corp., began development on Rezgo.com, a next generation Web 2.0 tour and activity booking engine for small and medium sized tour operators. In June of 2007, Rezgo.com was officially released and now boasts a user base of 500+ companies. Mr. Joyce is also very active in fostering tourism technology and is the founding President of the North American Chapter of the International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism (IFITT North America). He is also on the judging committee for the first Canadian E-Tourism Awards and is the publisher of the Tips from the T-List book. In addition to his tourism initiatives, Mr. Joyce is also on the Board of Directors of the North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce.



### Steve Wright

<http://cblog.brandcanadablog.com>  
Toronto, ON, Canada

Steve Wright is a destination branding and tourism marketing specialist based in Toronto, Canada. He is Chief Strategist at Radar DDB, the social media arm of DDB Canada, CEO of Carousel Content, a content creation company specializing in branded content and digital storytelling, and operates his own destination branding and tourism marketing consultancy. Steve was formerly Director of Strategic Planning at TBWA\Toronto, Co-founder and Managing Director of Cossette Interactive, and spent more than 15 years in general advertising, public relations and convergent communications before specializing in the tourism industry. Steve has worked with tourism organizations across Canada and internationally. He is an experienced workshop facilitator and occasional speaker at industry events.



**Tatsuya Nakagawa**  
<http://www.atomicacreative.com>  
 Vancouver, BC, Canada

Tatsuya Nakagawa is President and CEO of Atomica Creative Group, a specialized strategic product marketing firm based in Vancouver, Canada. He has assisted Bridgestone, Hitachi and other global companies in their early stage deployments and has been involved in many successful product launches in North America, Europe and Asia in several industries. He is a Director of the British Columbia Supply Chain Network and a member of the British Columbia Export Awards committee. He is also a Director of the Board of Trade for the City of Burnaby, British Columbia and has recently co-authored *Overcoming Inventoritis: The Silent Killer of Innovation*.



**Timothy Hughes**  
<http://tims-boot.blogspot.com>  
 Sydney, Australia

Tim is part lawyer, part online travel/retail/media executive and part Internet venture capitalist. Loves to travel and talk about the business of travel.



**Tim Warren**  
<http://www.travelbusinesssuccess.com>  
 California, U.S.

Tim specializes in increasing profits & arrivals, reducing expenses, and creating effective action plans for travel & hospitality professionals. Tim has helped hundreds of tourism companies and agencies globally promote tourism through his consulting, live and tele-training, executive coaching, group coaching, online radio podcast and tourism professional development and educational information products. His expertise is in sales, marketing, E-marketing, publicity, management, operations and strategic planning for tourism professionals and the tourism industry. Tim is an adventurer, outdoor writer, tourism workshop trainer and author of *"Tourism Marketing Success"*. An International business major in college, Tim lives in Wine country, Northern California, is fun to work with, a problem solver and can assemble the resources and road map to increase your arrivals and profits.



**Todd Lucier**  
<http://www.tourismkeys.ca>  
 Algonquin, ON, Canada

Todd Lucier describes himself as a geek who lives in the woods. Co-founder of Northern Edge Algonquin, a solar powered nature retreat near Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park, Todd and his wife Martha design, co-ordinate and deliver experiences that combine adventure, creativity and dream time in providing their guests with healing experiences in nature which they market exclusively online. A keen partnership proponent, Todd inspires clusters of like-minded businesses and communities to develop a shared approach to on-line marketing success. In his Tourism Keys Workshops, he focuses on helping tourism business owners and operators get inside the head of their ideal guests. Todd inspires and informs hundreds of tourism businesses each year on how to use the Internet to reach their ideal guests and grow their bottom line.



**Vicky Brock**  
<http://blog.highlandbusinessresearch.com>  
 Inverness, Scotland

Vicky Brock, co-founder of Highland Business Research, is passionate about using the web to gain customer insight through web analytics, social network analysis and broader online research. From search trends, to site traffic, she believes the online data that is out there has the power to turbo-charge even the smallest tourism business. She works particularly with the tourism and public sectors, with clients including the Scottish Government and VisitScotland. Vicky is co-chair of the Web Analytics Association International committee, a WAA analytics trainer and has recently developed e-marketing and web analytics courses for the University of the Highlands and Islands.



**William Bakker**  
<http://www.wilhelmus.ca>  
 Vancouver, BC, Canada

As Director of e-Business for Tourism BC, William Bakker is responsible for the development of strategies to help the BC tourism industry compete in the increasingly important and ever-evolving world of online marketing. Originally joining Tourism British Columbia in 1999, he has held a variety positions within the organization all related to the implementation of marketing technologies and online marketing strategies. Among his key projects includes the development of a consumer web platform that serves as a foundation for a variety of market-specific websites. Before moving to Canada, William lived and worked in the Netherlands.



### **Yeoh Siew Hoon**

<http://www.thetransitcafe.com>

Singapore

Yeoh Siew Hoon is blogger, travel journalist, facilitator and conference producer rolled into one. She publishes her own website, [www.thetransitcafe.com](http://www.thetransitcafe.com), for travel insiders and runs her own company, SHY Ventures, whose mantra is “Content, Communication, Connection”. She started Wired In Travel in 2005 to fill a gap for an event that would focus on the fastest growing segment of the world’s fastest growing industry in the world’s fastest growing region – ie the travel distribution and marketing space in Asia. Her thirst for new adventures led to launch two other publications – TravelAsia and TravelWeekly. At TravelWeekly, she started her “Talking Point” columns which have been compiled in two books called “Truth, Lies & Other Stuff”, with a third edition just published.