

Internet: A Powerful Source of Tourism Information

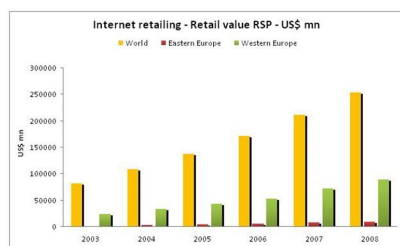
Interview with Euromonitor International Industry research analyst Angelo Rossini

Internet is growing in popularity as an information source for travellers worldwide. What groups of would-be tourists use the net the most?

The medium and high socio-economic groups are still the ones especially using the internet as a source of information for their trips. However, the internet is today expanding its influence as a source of information for travellers to all socio-economic groups for which it is increasingly common to look for their flight or search for information on a destination through the internet.

According to the New Media Trend Watch “the internet has revolutionised the way in which consumers make their travel decisions”. In what ways specifically has internet changed the tourism industry?

The internet has changed the way travel decisions are taken in two ways. Firstly, as a very powerful source of information on destinations and tourist services providers it has an important impact on the choice of the destination of the trip as well as of e.g. the hotel and airline as travellers are able to take more informed decision based on their needs and preferences. Secondly, the choice of a specific destination and trip are now also influenced by the availability of internet deals or also particularly interesting travel propositions found on the internet.



Has the current global downturn influenced the way travellers use the internet?

The current global crisis resulted in tourists opting for less expensive trips. Therefore as a result of it travellers increasingly use the internet to search for travel deals, also through both advanced booking and last minute reservations.

Which tourism sector is the most successful with respect to internet travel sales?

Air travel, and especially low cost airlines, was the first tourism sector to significantly benefit from internet sales, and is still the most successful in particular as far as sales through direct suppliers are concerned. Hotel reservations through the internet are also very important; in their case online travel agencies play a

major role.

What is the future of online travel agents?

Online travel agents will present to their visitors an increasingly wider offer of travel services, where dynamic travel packages and tours will play a more important role. They will also increasingly act as travel consultants offering personalized advice and support before and during the trip.

Social networking sites are a hot topic today even in the travel world. However can tourism businesses really increase their sales through these sites? How?

Due to their peculiar nature of “experiential goods”, travel and tourism services can particularly benefit from travellers reviews and exchange of advice. Travellers believe more to reviews and travel stories written by their peers than to what is written in industry players or destinations institutional websites. Tourism businesses can benefit from social networks and the Web 2.0 phenomenon by advertising on or partnering with travel and tourism social networks and also by implementing Web 2.0 functionalities on their websites allowing their customers to write reviews and comments on them.



Are there any drawbacks of the social networking sites and blogs?

The impact generic social networks such as Facebook or Twitter can have on travel and tourism sales is doubtful, and therefore investing resources on them can result unproductive for travel and tourism companies. In fact people use these websites to get in touch with old and new friends and socialize rather than to choose and book their holidays. Specific travel and tourism websites which are visited by people willing to choose and book their holidays can be much more useful to invest in. These include websites and blogs such as e.g. Trip Advisor, Thorn Tree, TripSay and NextStop.

What is your vision about the role of internet in the tourism industry in the next decade?

Thanks to the development and diffusion of mobile devices to access the internet, this is expected to increasingly accompany people along their whole travel experience, from the moment of booking the trip until their return home, allowing them more flexibility for their reservations and to access travel information in any moment during the trip – e.g. alerting them about available hotel deals or interesting tourist attractions to visit once they get to their destination.

People online in tourism markets (%'s): Europe

		1/
Iceland	89,30%	
		18/
Latvia	59,40%	
		2/
Norway	85,70%	
		19/
Lithuania	59,20%	
		3/
Finland	82,90%	
		20/
Ireland	57,40%	
		4/
Netherlands	82,50%	
		21/
Slovak Republic	55,20%	

		5/
Sweden	80,50%	
		22/
Hungary	52,60%	
		6/
Denmark	80,10%	
		23/
Poland	52%	
		7/
Switzerland	75,80%	
		24/
Czech Republic	48,90%	
		8/
Luxembourg	74%	
		25/
Italy	48,80%	

		9/
UK	70,70%	
		26/
Greece	45,90%	
		10/
Austria	68,20%	
		27/
Croatia	44,20%	
		11/
Spain	68%	
		28/
Cyprus	40,80%	
		12/
Belgium	67,30%	
		29/
Portugal	39,70%	

		13/
Germany	67,10%	
		30/
Turkey	34,50%	
		14/
Estonia	65,80%	
		31/
Romania	33,40%	
		15/
Slovenia	64,80%	
		32/
Bulgaria	32,90%	
		16/
France	63,40%	
		33/
Russia	27,10%	

Monaco

60,70%

Malta

23,40%

Ó ETC New Media Trend Watch

Air Internet Transactions 2007–2012

Retail Value RSP % breakdown

2007

2012

Ireland

51.1

70.3

UK

49.5

64.3

Netherlands

47.0

72.1

USA

41.7

45.7

Australia

40.7

51.9

Norway

37.3

53.3

Germany

36.0

60.5

Switzerland

34.8

92.5

Austria

33.5

68.5

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