



Benchmarking Website Statistics

European Cities Marketing Website Analytics

White Paper

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1 Introduction

There is dramatic growth in internet use especially for travel information searches. Each time an individual uses a website he or she leaves traces on that site. These traces can be collected and used for different purposes such as tracking user behavior, recommending products to the customer during their next visit to the website, or optimizing website usability. Although many tourism organizations are collecting these types of information from their websites, they are not being used when making managerial decisions but merely used by the IT department to assess website usability. However, the web, understood as a mirror of the world, allows us to monitor user needs and expectations and base our management decisions upon what we find and track online.

Travel Information Search

95 percent of web users used the Internet to gather travel related information; 93 percent use the Web for planning vacations

2 Current Situation

The main problems with standard software tools in the field of website analytics today are:

- > They are only partially used for or tied to business objectives
- > They are not providing comparable data
- > They are not designed for the special requirements of the tourism industry

Data Usefulness

Web analytics tools have a smattering of metrics and KPIs that were created just because someone decided it would be cute to add, subtract, multiply, or divide some numbers

Modern day tourism organizations use standard general-purpose software tools, such as Google Analytics to collect and report website statistics. But to the standardized key performance indicators (KPIs) provided by these tools really provide added value? What insights do they provide? How can they be applied in an effective way? It is of utmost importance to find KPIs that are linked to the objectives of every tourism organization. General-purpose tools are good in improving an individual's website content or for identifying and solving usability issues. However, they are not capable of providing meaningful, industry specific information.

Monitor User Needs

Any source of data is only as good as understanding exactly how it is captured

The results provided by such general-purpose tools are often technology driven and difficult to interpret. A report with nice looking infographics and impressive figures might be appealing on the first glance; however, if it cannot be linked to business objectives, it is of limited value. One of the most frequently used reports is one that focuses on the number of visitors to someone's homepage. What does it mean if the report indicates one million visitors per day or a 5 percent increase? Does this have any effect on the number of arrivals to a destination? Besides the issue of there being numerous reasons for variation and the problem of reporting tools not being 100% accurate or comparable, it must not be forgotten that the consequences of these reports are very often not obvious to tourism managers.

Web analytics need to move from a technology driven, standardized reporting function towards a business objective centered approach, which provides useful information to managers.

3 ECM Website Analytics

ECM Website Analytics aims to provide a better solution to the tourism industry than the general-purpose programs that are currently available. The system is designed to complement rather than replace running web analytics systems by providing useful and industry specific information, which is comparable and provides access to key performance indicators tailor-made for tourism organizations.

Learn From the Best

Celebrating success (or failure) of our websites based on just our numbers is easy; knowing how you are doing vis à vis your competitors or the industry as a whole delivers insights

It only makes sense to celebrate one million visitors on your website if you can put the milestone into context. Benchmarking your own performance against your competition provides the opportunity to understand your performance. Is your competition seeing the same growth, is it a general phenomenon, are your growth rates superior to other's or could it be that these results reflect more on the data collected than performance achieved? ECM Website Analytics offers managers a tool that tackles the existing lack of comparability and standardized definitions among existing systems in an effort to avoid comparing apples with oranges.

With ECM Website Analytics you will be able to:

- > Benchmark your City Tourist Website against those of your competitors
- > Own and retrieve comparable data
- > Gain knowledge and understand your own organization's performance
- > Develop strategies for continuous improvement
- > Use it as a tool for increasing one's own effectiveness
- > Identify and learn from the best of your industry
- > Create real insights by first establishing the context

The Tip of the Iceberg

Besides benchmarking metrics such as the number of visitors, time on site, bounce rate, pages visited, access channels, etc., future analyses are envisioned to forecast tourism flows or create country of origin profiles to better plan marketing activities.

ECM Website Analytics provides even more. It is a vision that is designed and stemmed from the tourism industry with the aim to create value for the tourism industry. The creative approach of combining data from the new system with existing management information systems such as TourMIS (www.tourmis.info) will offer completely new types of management information.

It is a strategic project that generates a competitive advantage in knowledge and thus has the potential to lead to competitive positioning. The ability to forecast tourism demand based on the visitors' search needs or the opportunity to predict

when tourists from certain countries or even cities look for information, are just two very basic examples of where the project might lead us.

4 What Does it Take to Join the Project?

Join Now!

Join the project and learn from the pilot destinations Graz, Helsinki, Lisbon, Tallinn, Vilnius, Vienna, etc.

Joining the project is quick and simple. Your IT department only has to integrate a small snippet of code into your website and within an hour, you can be part of the project. MODUL University Vienna provides a detailed explanation and personal support for your IT department to implement ECM Website Analytics into your website. MODUL University Vienna guarantees confidentiality and analyses of the data will only be shared among the benchmarking partners. This service is limited to ECM members, developed by MODUL University Vienna and advanced by ECM's Research & Statistics and Benchmarking Group. The project is supported by Silverserver (www.sil.at), which is providing the technological infrastructure.

If you would like to know more or are ready to join the ECM Web Analytics project, we encourage you to get in touch. Further presentations featuring preliminary results are available from the download area on European Cities Marketing's intranet.

5 Get in Touch



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