INTERNET MARKETING AND ITS IMPACTS

ON THE FOUR STAR HOTELS IN CYPRUS

By

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ABSTRACT

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The application of the traditional marketing techniques has been widespread within the Cyprus hospitality industry. The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the level of awareness of the latest performances of the Internet usage among Cyprus four-star hotels and suggest some additional online marketing multimedia techniques for more exploitation of this lucrative tool between the customers and the hotels. This was determined through the collection of questionnaires and the examination of each of the Cyprus four-star hotels websites. Overall, the study has revealed that the level of awareness for both the online marketing and the Internet usage among the four-star hotels was a moderate one with expanded room for improvements. Thus, based on the survey results the study has recommended a list of proven Internet tools through an extended utilization of the electronic distribution systems that when implemented accurately would meticulously identify the visitors and potential customers, enhance online marketing relationships and allow a more intimate and direct communication between the hotels and their current and potential customers.

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INTRODUCTION

The Chartered Institute of Marketing (2000) has defined Marketing as: "The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer awareness profitably" (p. 4).

The rising Internet use reveals that marketing campaigns should encompass such a powerful tool and thus exploit the effectiveness of Information technology as a whole. Online marketing is another wave of the future but one that requires cautious, studied steps to ensure one is sending the right message to the right audience at the right cost. (Chervenak, 2000)

Unlike durable goods, intangible tourism services cannot be physically displayed or inspected at the point of sale before purchasing. Like no other industry the Travel and Hospitality Industry is information-rich with fares, timetables, destinations and hotel availability. "Consumers increasingly rely on the Internet for travel information they utilize commercial and non-commercial Internet sites for planning, searching ad attending their travel" (Buhalis, 1998, pp. 409-421).

According to the Forrester Research, online travel sales have jumped to more $29 billion by the end of 2003 in the United States. The growth of the online travel industry is continually projected with rising figures. According to the secretary general of World Tourism Organization Franscesco Franglialli, at the opening seminar "E-Business for Tourism" in Madrid, Spain, (2002) "…the Internet system is not an end in itself, and far less a panacea. But in well-structured economy it is a vital factor in terms of suppliers, distributors and clients and can also be used to accommodate a broad range of internal functions". (pp.1-2)

The effectiveness of the Internet is not an invention of today, but started 30 years ago. Grants (2000) states that "Today, it links millions of networks, large and small, government and private, commercial and academic, throughout the world" (pp. 33-34). The websites are designed to attract customers and generate online sales. The consumer should not "find the same pretty pictures and tired old text, a mass-market message developed for use in the hotel's study brochure and never updated to take advantage of the power of the web medium" (O'Connor, 2000, p. 28).

The benefits or advantages of the Internet rely on its enormous current size, its expandability, its measurability, its quantity of availability of information. One can not neglect that certain drawbacks are noticeable too. The direction or indexing can be perplexing, its wavering credibility, the overloaded information, the confusion created when in several occasions several booking systems are not accurate enough giving misleading data. (Mitchell, 2002)

Overall the Internet success is also based on a variety of other paramount elements. The immediate one-to-one or peer-to-peer communication allowed marketing and offering products more precisely to the customers' changing wants and needs. At the same time, the online establishment of reservation systems gave the opportunity for feedback thus assisting the companies for adjusting products and testing new markets and techniques. The one click hyperlink capability tool, which was created within pages, increased the speed for searching immediate information. Then customers and companies that operate computers and systems that were different did not prevent them for establishing a communication Internet connection. (Zhou, 2004)

The escalating development and effectiveness of the Internet marketing dictates an

one-to-one communication. To generate loyalty and positive financial outcomes "providers

and users need to pay close attention to necessary flexibility, credibility security and

technology" (Williams P.W., Bascombe, P., Brenner, N., & Green D., 1996, pp. 63-70).

This escalating fact already prevails with those who give the customer a variety of usable,

easy to reach information in search engines websites "with information and demand that

compare features and prices, that load quickly and are free to all netizens," (Kasavana,

Knutson, Polonowski, 1997, pp. 31-43) a chance to name a price, an offer, or even the

chance to see a website he personally desires. The opposite being less effective tilts

towards the ones who assume a website projection would be adequate enough to simply

generate sales figures for a specific period.

Internet marketing can include a variety of tools such as a constant communication

with email messages exchange to current or potential customers and informative relevant

and eye-catching e-newsletters that would keep them coming back to the website. Various

leading hotel and tourism companies commonly now use the method of posting

information regarding relevant to their products and services within various discussion

groups. Interactive information can be identified and indirectly provide the chatters the

information that would be of interest to them since the groups and messages are treated by

everybody on an ordinary equal way. The construction of a well-designed website

eventually reflects the current image and development-pursuing strategy the hotel company

aims for. Furthermore, and as an overall method, several short and long-term push and pull

Internet marketing techniques have initially be utilized by various companies to maximize

their exposure on the Web. (Zhou, 2004)

Statement of the Problem

It is apparent that the Internet development in the last 5 years has been enormous

with large budgets being spent and innovative techniques implemented to capture more markets. The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the level of awareness of the latest performances of the Internet usage among Cyprus four-star hotels and suggest some additional marketing multimedia techniques for more exploitation of this lucrative tool between the customers and the hotels. Sometimes several companies may have specialized goals with no pre-set marketing campaigns and may not be aware of what marketing options are available for them. (See Figure 2)

Purpose of the Study

The study did not aim to identify any level of awareness among the general public. The subjects were owners or managers of 37 four-star hotels located all over Cyprus. The beginning period for the data collection was from the month of December 2003 where due to the holidays all of the owners and managers could easier be located in the premises.

More particular, the purpose of the study was to collect primary and secondary data regarding the Internet marketing use in the registered four-star hotels in Cyprus to acknowledge whether the level and awareness to their customers and most importantly sales figures have gone up due to the frequent and careful use of this powerful medium.

The specific objectives of the research were to:

a. Define and emphasize the benefits of the Internet

b. Determine the level of awareness, impact and usage of the Internet Marketing including an interactive website design part of a well-organized promotion among the total population

c. Identify main techniques of enhancing Internet Marketing in the Cyprus hospitality industry

Therefore, the precise time needed for the research method was based on the gaps observed and identified in Cyprus four-star hotel websites mail or email receiving and interviews completion. Although data to be received from the Internet soon always become outdated, the Internet with the everlasting traditional, still everlasting powerful marketing with its numerous related strategies can become fruitful for the hospitality industry.

Assumptions of the Study

The study has made the following assumptions:

a. All the four-star hotels' employees have an access to the computers.

b. All the participated four-star hotels have a direct website of some standard that various tourists and other loyal customers make use of.

c. The owners/executives that responded have a substantially adequate online knowledge.

d. All the chains would have had consistent marketing objectives for all their hotels.

Definition of Terms

Browser. The software that acts as a tool for accessing the Internet determines how a website is displayed on a screen. The most-used Web browsers are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape.

Chatroom. An online facility for real time communication between people over the Internet usually achieved though typed conversations and statements that can be seen by all the group.

Cookies. It is a small temporary or permanent text file that websites place on visitors to allow the server to recognize the visitor's preferences, registration, and login information sent by the server to a web browser

Click-through. A hit generated from a banner advertisement when a user clicks on the banner ad.

Connectivity (Connection). The ability to work or communicate with diverse computer equipment types.

CTO. Cyprus Tourism Organization

Data Warehouse. It's a place for storing, retrieving and managing large amounts of any type of data. Planners and researchers are benefited from the fast searches and day-to-day operations of the production database.

E-Commerce. It is a system used to refer to using computer networks to conduct buying and selling goods and services online, electronic funds transfer and business communications.

E-mail. The transmission of messages over a network. Users can send e-mail to a single recipient or broadcast the same message to multiple users. Attachments can be used to transmit large files in addition to the e-mail message.

Extranet. It is a web-style network that is often used by suppliers and the customers. It often branches off a company's internal network

Ezines. They are electronic magazines that include print magazines that have electronic editions. An e-zine database can include both electronic-only magazines and electronic-edition magazines.

Homepage. The first main page of multipage Website

Intranet. It is a web-style network that is often used within the boundaries of a single company. Some may use more than one location and become accessible from anywhere.

Netizen. From the term citizen, referring to a citizen of the Internet, or someone who uses networked resources.

Opt-in mail. People are given the choice to be subscribed into a emailing list, receive messages and participate to online discussions.

Search engine. A means of locating resources on the Internet.

Visitors. People who have accessed or visited a site

Virtual Community. A community of people sharing common interests, ideas and feelings over the Internet or other collaborative networks.

Vortals. A website that serves as an Internet gateway to pages and sites related to a particular topic or interest.

World Wide Web. The most popular area of the Internet, which allows the easy exchange and transmission of text, graphics, audio and video.

Web Rings. A web ring is made up of a number of topic-specific sites that are grouped together.

Webcasting. It is a simultaneous transmission of live or delayed audio or video programming over the Web to a group of Internet users based on their individual needs and interests.

Methodology

The research was based on the results that came out from 37 Questionnaires sent to the entire four-star hotels' executives currently registered with the CTO all over the country. Furthermore, an investigation of all registered four-star hotel websites was used as reference, identify trends to draw ideas and make suggestions. The study had also investigated and generated secondary results initially through the aid of existing related to the topic journals, magazines and books.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Literature Review in related areas

Internet marketing encompasses many invaluable tools that can be proven lucrative for a hotel company once they are used effectively. Several of the main ones include the personalized, customized email relevant messages sent to actual or potential customers while providing the marketers with the option of knowing through certain instruments the amount of customers that have actually seen the email sent to them. (Zhou, 2004)

Various leading hotel and tourism companies commonly now post information regarding relevant to their products and services in an educational informative purpose that can draw the attention and be more accepted from various groups. Chatroom marketing becomes quite popular since it can be accepted by many chatters due to its simplicity to enter to the places of their interest and search information thorough a casual, semi-formal chatting. (Zhou, 2004)

The creation of a well-crafted website presents the opportunity for a hotel company to effortlessly and with a low cost, to reach any customer without any restrictions on 24-hour basis, seven times a week once a connection to the Internet is feasible. A hotel company's website should replicate the kind of business, the purpose of existence of the site either as an informative, customers' service-orientated or purely as an opportunity to fully use the site as an e-commerce function. (Zhou, 2004)

The traditional methods based on short and long design basis should accommodate diverse push and pull marketing techniques. These can equally be utilized through the Internet and bring some positive noticeable financial results. Push marketing techniques may include the maximum effective use of search engines, the use of the banner ads, the

pop-ups or interstitials, the hyperlink with special ads called as e-promotions, associating to a brand through the e-sponsorship and last by not least the use of same page remained rich media with streaming media communication directly in the ad provided space by installing software on their system that receive contents from the Webcaster. In this way, they may receive latest offers and discounts form a hotel operator. (Zhou, 2004)

The pull marketing or opt-in marketing techniques whereby qualified groups agreed to be on a emailing list, encompass the option of opt-in, but opt-out as well whenever email marketing Internet users will or will not be engrossed in receiving information from the sender hotel company either at the early beginning or along the time. It can also include the portals where these serve as a bigger source of information to other related to the portal sites. The E-Newsletters serve as an additional inexpensive tool to bring together Internet users who wish to be informed and be responded faster than with the previous mailed newsletters. Consumers can also participate in an event of their choice and then a hotel company can effectively present their messages to pull them in. Webcasting becomes increasingly more enticing since the customers need not to download any preferred data, but rather immediately transfer data and have them displayed on their screen with the use of prerecorded information or streaming media. (Zhou, 2004)

Search Engines and Directories

It becomes necessary for a hotel's site to be registered into a number of main possible search engines and directories, thus receiving a maximum exposure and thus eliminating the possibility of any of the potential customers not to locate the main website of the place. According to the search engines spiders called bots, a hotel site can be found either at the top of a page or even at the end of the other(s) pages. To be positioned high enough on the initial 20 or so number of initial searches a hotel needs to submit its site together with a small

description of less than 250 words right under the site's name as found on the search engines pages. The Directories link to the main pages of a paid or non-paid registration hotel site or other establishment. (Sweeney, 2000)

Portals and Vortals

Through the main portals or else called search engines a user can search and find the right source of information he looks for. The searching depends solely on the search engines consideration of which areas or which sites are central and thus are ranked higher than other. It is thus the responsibility of a hotel company to acknowledge the benefits that the portals offer and registered to as many as possible thus achieving higher exposure. The Vortals become more specific on a specific topic and business, or an industry's associations such as the www.restaurant.org whenever users may search for related information regarding existing restaurants and their projected current operations. Within the travel area examples may include the Travelocity and the Orbitz Vortals as opposed to the Directories that are "the specialists with news articles, guidance, updates and specialty directories" (Cox & Koelzer, 2004, pp.19-20).

Internet Advertising

As in the case of a traditional advertising design strategy, it is at the same or at a higher stage a careful current up-to-date campaign planning to be established. By no means, Internet advertising should be excluded in the primary campaign planning regardless of the initial implementation intricacies. Advertising needs a multi-channel approach whereby various products and services can be linked with the various and potential customers. Due to its current structure and design the Internet advertising provides an excellent opportunity for last-minute discounts and offers, a part of shorter periods of planning designated and posted to specific market customer segments. (Briggs, 2001)

Customers can incessantly be reached with various techniques structuring. Numerous elements can include and are not limited to posting advertisements during specific times in a day and in a week according to the predetermined objectives set by the hotel company. Advertising through submitting specific keywords to a mixture of search engines that potential customers may look for is another technique or tactic that is being used. That can be done either for the registered name of the hotel company or through its particular offered facilities, or even through its location. In addition, in a faster pace the customers can be lead from one link to another thus from an information search to end up to an actual booking or buying of a product. The gap of a traditionally used advertising logo (AIDA) that is a mere attention, followed by an initial interest, to possibly genuine desire that can hopefully lead to an action from the customers, can effectively be implemented with lower costs with the augmented advent of the Internet Adverting. (Briggs, 2001)

One of the most central aspects is that a hotel company can know how many users attempted to enter the site and the number of times until they made the final bookings through a chosen enrolment application so called cookie, or whether they bought the hotel's offered products and services through a session cookie. (Britishaiways.com, 2004) One of the well-known methods of achieving exposure, creating awareness, drawing attention, or encouraging a purchase, is by offering an incentive with one short message, targeted to the customers' needs. This is incorporated in a banner ad, a rectangular shape box, several times found at the top or the bottom of another similarly related site. (Briggs, 2001)

The interstitials is another hard to disregard technique that can appear in between a search site that the user aims for. In this way, the customer may see the site before he makes a choice to move on with his first original site. The pop-up ad is a further technique to reach the customers with small windows opposing in front of the screen. The benefit and the

attention generated can higher, but as today this has gradually been underestimated by the abundance of them, distracting the customers from receiving the attention. (Briggs, 2001)

E-Commerce

All the activities that pertain with financial transactions, business data exchange, and communications with the customers and the suppliers defined the today's existence of the e-commerce. This can be separated between one business and a customer (B2C) which as the most popular one. In this scenario an e-commerce process can become beneficial when a hotel at the outset establishes a clear web presence and give all the information and sources related to its products and services. It is also within this parameter that a hotel company should strive to excel by bringing the customer through the variety of tactics closer to its offerings. One of the most efficient ways is by the institution of a prompt completion of a requested order and a quick shipping and handling process. E-commerce is also an ongoing method between one business and another business (B2B). From a customer's perspective, it can be transaction to a business (C2B) or with another customer (C2C) can be feasible since companies like Priceline.com and eBay.com respectively operate productively within this nature. One of the foremost purposes of a hotel company is to provide to the customers the opportunity to collect sought information and complete a reservation. A further classification of e-commerce includes a division to the online-only businesses and the ones that have a web presence and a physical existing space called the bricks and clicks businesses. (Zhou, 2004)

One of the issues that become too important to neglect is the secure and accurate online payments. It mainly depends on the objectives of a hotel company whether to purchase a software solution with pre-established templates or to develop a website with the help of web designer. Establishing an ecommerce system that would generate fast

solutions would require an enduring high-cost staff training program before and after and securing an unremitting maintenance and development program on behalf of the suppliers. (Briggs, 2001)

Several large companies such as the those carrying the Secure Socket Layer (SSL) carry encryption or coded programs systems that can prevent anyone seeing the information once the customer provides credit-card number information. Several of the sites equipped with the SSL such as the VeriSign are well known, provide guaranteed online payments had established and enlarged their reputation of their customers such as hotels towards influencing the image towards their customers. At the same time, it becomes the task of a hotel to encrypt the information by including an additional firewall protection. (Briggs, 2001) Furthermore, an escalating increase of wireless digital organizers or the PDAs (Personal Digital Assistant) is noticeable. Whenever customers or attendees participate at meetings taken place at hotels, they may frequently need to "beam business cards, update agendas or check emails are broadcasting information are [unfortunately] subjected to illegal access" (Walters, 2003, p. 44). It is thus the responsibility of the hotel to establish its image of a secure online connectivity region once these attendees spend time at the premises to at least recommending them to download antivirus programs and firewalls thus protecting their data and software. (McAfee.com, 2004)

For a successful implementation of an e-commerce system and whenever information is requested from the customers either to seek a purchase or provide an ad; a hotel should seriously be concerned with providing a privacy statement explicitly with explanation along with an incentive. An industry airline leader such as British Airways provides a list of the type of cookies it uses for each occasion. (Britishairways.com, 2004)

or provide less technical, for the sole propose of collecting personal information at privacy statement at the Le Meridien Hotels and Resorts. (lemeridien.com, 2004)

E-Newsletters

It becomes like a common practice for the customers to accept in a much more frequency personalized, short in description, and more product-orientated information rather than a company-orientated informative e-newsletters send by a company's representative instead of other forms of advertising such as the banner ads, interstitials or the pop-ups. On the other hand, the other Internet adverting techniques can become more accepted once they are incorporated into the e-newsletters. Then as an additional step, e-newsletters can be connected into the main hotel company's website through a hyperlink inserted in the newsletters document. At the same time, the website can provide a link leading to the newsletter issue(s) as well. (Cox & Koelzer, 2004)

Webcasting

In several occasions there is the need of providing live prerecorded audios or video clips to customers and other visitors. These can be done in a variety of ways that can engender profound attention than can bring about more click-through rates such as with the use of rich media which as opposed to static banner ads they are equipped with streaming video tours that include audio as well that do not require downloading the files or clips of the hotel company. Non-streaming software may include power presentations of the hotel establishment. Several main examples include the RealPlayer and the Media Player software companies. The drawbacks can include higher costs of establishing and maintaining such programs and may require higher speed Internet connection capabilities, higher bandwidth and plug-ins, but these can be overcome if the click-through can provide faster return of investment. Additionally, several registered hotel sites like the hotel view.com which is an

interactive video library of hotels allow a choice of slower modem connections to faster bandwidth connections. Other ways include clickable banner ads that require information from the users so they could later on be contacted by the hotel's representative. (Sweeney, 2000)

Newsgroups

Several discussion groups and subgroups that consist of virtual communities of people provide an opportunity of communication. They can make use of an abundance of topics and can easily be located though any server by simply logging in to the master list which is known as the Usernet and posting a message to other at the moment participants. (Zhou, 2004) In this way, even online marketers of a hotel company can reach existing or potential customers and identify existing trends and customers' needs, post jobs and other offers, create higher reputation once questions are answered in an effective way, which could ultimately lead more traffic to the hotel's website in the hotel area with minimal costs of an Internet connection. One of the most effective ways to identify related to the industry newsgroups is through the Google.com groups search engine and searching furthers the hotel online newsgroups available at the time. (Google.com, 2004 and Sweeney, 2000)

Web Rings

Web Rings are a more specific group of sites that are linked together and can lead to a one or to list of many interrelated sites through navigation links found mostly at the bottom of member pages with various categories and subcategories according to the topic that is been generated. This method becomes more effective than the search engines when sites are found spread all over the web, even though many sites can be linked and come before or after a competitor's site. This has gradually been diminished by the growing benefit that webrings can offer. (Sweeney, 2000)

E-Zines

E-zines or online publications are electronic magazines that have an online presence on the web with many travel e-zines having fascinating colorful appearance with pictures. Some are more content orientated called email e-zines and allow sending, receiving and saving for future reference information, are less fascinating than the web based ones and provide editions to subscribers as often as once a week. E-zines are easily searchable on the web either by keyword or specific category. The benefits of subscribing through an e-zine are to post targeted advertisements at a low cost within specific categories and achieve high response rates. E-zines also can easily be pass around from one user or another, submit important press releases and articles related to the hotel's product or service or even becoming a sponsor. (Sweeney, 2000)

Email Marketing

On of the strongest ways to achieve product and service awareness through existing or potential customers is with the effective use of the email marketing. In several occasions, marketers need to be aware of the prevailing mailing lists that they purchase or rent, since some may be outdated and some may not function at all. Emails sending to them provide the option of opting in (officially registering themselves to the site) and opting out (to be removed); in case they choose to be removed from the mailing lists. In this way, the customers can have the preference to commit or not, to several offers, discount deadlines, complete online survey forms newsletters, receive a hotel restaurants' menu recipe among other examples whenever they may feel or not comfortable with. If emails are sent on a permission basis then they would be acceptable, otherwise they would be considered as junk emails, in the same way that mail is sent to a home, or to an office address without been

requested. This would become detrimental since the customers will most probably block or automatically delete it the next time they receive it in their email box. (Cox & Koelzer, 2004)

According to Jerry Fireman in his article 'Using email newsletters as sales tools': "Newsletters that simply provide a recap of the latest products and news from the company that issued them will be read only by the most loyal customers. To reach out and influence potential buyers, you need to provide objective information that can help your prospects do a better job" (MarketingProfs.com, 2004). A variety of articles have been indicating the reason for receiving larger email lists, improving the image of a brand through effective email sending and handling relevant external links to a company's website.
(See Appendices C, D and E)

Strauss and Hill (2001) studied the effectiveness of the email and identified that: "…quickly responding, addressing the questions and closing with an employee's name were simple ways to boost customer satisfaction" (p.63). In addition, "…friendly answers, personalized salutations and politely closing with the sender's full name, contact details and position" (p.66), were other indispensable elements. Schegg, R., Steiner, T., Frey, S., & Murphy, J. (2003) proceed one step further by proposing future researchers to investigate and explore hotels' current eService and how the should hotels could respond to email from guests.

It is thus a responsibility for various hotels to constantly identify various marketing techniques with current research methodologies as the one in the study, to breach the gaps that can bring closer the customers and a hotel into a mutual satisfaction.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Description of Methodology

The Methodology becomes an integral part of the research. In this study the Methodology makes use of several tracking methods. Initially, 37 questionnaires were given as surveys to the owners/managers each representing a Cyprus four-star hotel from all the main tourist areas of Nicosia, Limassol, Pafos, Larnaca, Ayia Napa, Protaras and Paralimni (See Figure 3). This was done regardless if some of the hotels belonged under the same group of hotels or chain of the hotels. Each of the questionnaires was accompanied with the cover letter explaining the details, purpose and time deadline limit of the survey. It was necessary the questionnaire to include a human subjects description, explaining the confidentiality and the right of participating or not in the survey. To collect primary data each of the questionnaires, along with the cover letter were directly handed in either to the managers/owners or sent as an email attachment to their provided hotel email account(s). In certain cases, where managers were not available and had to attend job's related key meetings, the questionnaires were left in envelopes with an accompanied notice at the main reception offices of the Hotels.

Thereafter, the completed questionnaires were sent back to the researcher's address as requested on the cover letter or were picked up by the researcher from the reception offices whenever the cost and the distance to an operation were trivial and when time was available. Follow-up phone calls were made to reestablish connections, remind the deadline time limit and emphasize the optional upon request benefit of email attachment the study's results to the manager's personal P.O. Box hotel addresses. That could be accomplished

after the finalization of the results of the survey, data analysis and blending of the questionnaires into the research study.

In particular cases, the operation and marketing use of some hotels are managed by the largest operator in Cyprus that owns hotels, travel agencies and cruise ships. Therefore, some of the replies on the questionnaires on these particular hotels were similar, although other differences were later on observed as well.

Furthermore, a thorough examination of all registered four-star hotels websites was used as a main point of reference and to identify contemporary trends, draw some conclusions, ideas and make suggestions. Other data were also extracted from the investigated hotels' various websites and from imperative supplementary data from latest issues of Journals and first and latest books editions all directly interrelated to the Internet hospitality marketing topic. The budget was based on the amount of money spent for the stationery needed to prepare all the questionnaires, the follow-up phone calls and the amount needed for the transportation from the point of origin to the point of destination to each of the investigated hotels in the different cities around the island.

Research Design

This is a survey with a series of issues and questions to be covered when the questionnaires were created. The research results did not included any manipulation of the variables. The related variables for the intended research were firstly the Internet Marketing (Independent variable) and the level of effectiveness to the selected four-star hotels in Cyprus (dependent variable). Other secondary variables or factors such as the affiliation of each hotel (Individual, Independent management company, regional chain, global chain and management company), the location of each, the size of the groups and the volume of revenue were taken into consideration as well. In addition, the location (seaside, inland) of

each of the surveyed hotels and whether that had affected their level of online presence. Another secondary variable is the identification of the size of the groups in each of the specified regional or global hotel chain and the connection with their Internet marketing activities. Lastly, the design included the intention of whether Internet marketing has had a direct or indirect liaison with approximate volume of recent profit projections for each of the surveyed hotel companies.

Subjects

A total population of accessible population of 37 four-star hotels' executives all over the 7 main Cyprus cities and regions was chosen to identify the importance of investigating their separate characteristics, acknowledge any Internet infrastructure gaps and make any necessary recommendations. In some cases, the questionnaires were further re-directed to other marketing executives as decided by their hotel directors. The majority of the hotels were also identified both through the online directories and through the CTO's directories as well. Lots of valuable time was put aside and more accurate information was initially received once the head executives of the hotels were tracked down.

Instrumentation

The first method that was used to assist in completing the study is the use of the 37 Questionnaires to the four-star hotels' owners/managers. The questionnaires were attached along with a separate cover letter. The online questionnaires were created in the form of structured, multiple choice and likert-scale questions. The content validity was based on the fact that a lot of respondents have shown interest in answering the questionnaire, which made it imperative to consider. In order to receive bigger samples, prolonged questionnaires or with extended responses were not sought and avoided. Instead, questions that were more focused to the topic were addressed. Among other, the questionnaires main

aims were to identify the use of certain web features and to the extent of which the Cyprus four-star hotels are connected with the Internet, invest in Internet advertising, eCommerce activities, produce online publications, skillfully take advantage of the newsgroups and chatroom marketing discovering and repeatedly receiving business with customers through portal arrangements with online companies. Moreover, identify whether the employees utilize properly the daily Internet activities of fast reservations, and follow-up with customers' requests.

Furthermore, extra notices at the bottom indicated a specific deadline notification as a response format. An email reminder has followed up for each of the hotels to ascertain that a reply was to be to be obtained. Specific information such as demographics was requested from all the hotels' subjects (Managers/owners) and data for the employees' level of awareness of the Internet use was requested which was used to analyze the results, abstract more targeted data and embed the market research questions within the entry form.(Briggs, 2001)

Data Collection Procedures

A 29 question survey was administered to compile the questionnaires. It did not carry any different subheadings to avoid confusion since the Internet marketing topic by itself was somewhat novice to some hotels' executives. All the 37 Questionnaires were sent to all four-star hotels and were distributed in the seven cities and areas of Cyprus in the following order: Nicosia, Limassol, Pafos, Larnaca, Ayia Napa, Protaras and Paralimni. The dates that the questionnaires were distributed initialized from Monday, December 22nd after 09.30am and until before 1.30pm. Due to the higher influx of domestic tourists coming to the hotels during the Christmas and New Year eve ceremonies, most of the managers were located at the hotel's premises around the specified time range. In several

cases, the questionnaires/cover letters were given to the reception whenever the managers were in the hotels, but had other important meetings to attend. In few cases, when time was available and the managers made their daily walk (check-up) around the hotel just before they would come back to their office, were willing to pass from the reception and receive themselves the questionnaires from the researcher.

Data Analysis

The primary data-questionnaires were collected through the mail in whichever order they were coming in the address provided on the cover letter. In other cases, the results were picked up on a later date at the hotel's reception whenever time and transportation were accessible. The recording of data was extremely imperative since as more questionnaires results came in, the more transformation on data was occurring within the number of Tables and Figures. The Statistical Program for Social Sciences, version 11.0, (SPSS, 2001) was used to analyze the data**.** Under the descriptive statistics adequately two important areas were used for this reason.

Initially, frequencies were used in among some of the variables in order to extract a number of occurrences. Also, crosstabs tabulation method was used as well, to make comparisons among certain variables where appropriate Results were conducted. Secondary data, from the investigated hotels' various websites were extracted and from latest issues of academic Journals. In addition, first and latest books editions were immensely used all associated with the Internet hospitality marketing topic.

Limitations

The main limitations that existed in the distributed survey were as such:

1. Not all the surveys that were promptly sent, either as email attachment or given at the Front desk, were received by the deadline.

2. The immediate reaching of the hotel managers or owners was not always possible.

3. Not all hotel owners or managers were familiar with all the new terms in Internet Marketing as they appeared on the survey.

Despite the limitations, the research managed to include a full population of the currently registered four-star hotels as appeared in the official CTO 2004 report, with an overall prominent questionnaire response rate of up to 89 percent or 33 hotel respondents out of the total population of 37.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Evidence

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the level of awareness and use of the latest performances of the Internet usage among Cyprus four-star hotels and at the same time suggest additional marketing multimedia techniques for more exploitation of this lucrative tool between the customers and the hotels. A survey was divided into a 29 diverse questions (multiple choice, short filling the blank and some based on the likert scale. All surveys were distributed to 37 hotels of which a high response of 33 responded positively in completing all or most of the part of the survey. At the same time a thorough investigation of each and every registered four-star hotel, has presented some necessary evidence to further extract results from. It was not the purpose of the study to analyze the data from a web, graphic designer or copywriter's point of view solely, but as a holistic more useful approach for the participated in the study hotels.

Unanticipated Results: Surveyed Hotel websites

According to the thorough examination of the surveyed four-star hotels websites important and useful information was initially revealed from certain areas such as the online marketing performance of each that can be utilized and calibrate. Important information is the fact that not all the four hotels that belonged under the same group of hotels identified themselves as such. Interesting enough was the piece of information that from the total number of surveyed 33 hotels, 13 identified themselves as Independent hotels whereas from the rest 20, only 8 of them identified themselves as belonging to a regional or global chain. This probably reflects either the lack of standardized objectives applied to the chain of Hotels or to the amount of necessary flexibility that is provided among the hotels. An additional thorough discussion follows on the next session as well.

Favorable Data that were extracted presented the following (See also Figure 2):

- The majority of websites were registered with largest reservation universal sites (i.e. Orbitz, Travelocity, Expedia)

Although some hotels did not present any photo, it is encouraging for the loyal customers to know that the Hotel they have last visited could easily be found on these sites as well. Using reputable online reservation companies is definitely an additional effective tool for further building the brand positioning and image and ascertains a vested interest.

- First online attempts were functional.

It is important to emphasize that the majority of the sites did not any present any broken links on first attempts made by the researcher from the point of origin in Cyprus at the initial stage of the research last December.

- Some present comments and reviews in other online reservation directories.

This is one additional tool that can build credibility, since a comment made by a customer who actually visited the hotel makes it more acceptable from another user than a detailed description given by the hotel for their facilities may more presumably end up as less factual and more favorable to the hotel. Few hotels offered Internet reservation offers and the online option of printing out the hotels' brochure.

- Several of the surveyed hotel companies depended on the expertise profile of other companies.

Several of the surveyed hotels depended on the reputation of Internet design and advertising company or other multimedia marketing companies to achieve an enhanced balance of an attractive website design and a consistent Internet marketing approach.

- Several of the Hotels made use of plug-ins and the online cameras features.

In many occasions where the online attempt to a hotel's side was successful, several internationally well-known plug-ins and from a top floor wide angle online cameras were commonly provided after the user installs them in order to obtain visual virtual tours benefits of the hotel's facilities.

- A majority of the surveyed Hotels' online directory use presented less number of inconsistencies.

Due to the overdependence to online hotel directories, the minority of the Hotels that did not create their website had presented a number of other inconsistencies. While investigating the reservations availability one can identify that many of the hotels present over bookings (some present the exact dates they are fully booked and to some other hotels travelers had to try a variety of dates until customers may realize that many of these are overbooked for months after the present day). Nonetheless, this element is minimized by the fact that the hotels also projected their own websites either as individual hotels or under the umbrella of a regional or global chain of hotels.

- The majority of the surveyed hotels (30) belonged to the highest level of the web building 3rd generation and the minority (3) to the 2nd generation.

According to Mitchell, & Moore (2002), a website can be created and be classified under four main generations. The 1st generation is a website which uses simple texts. These were almost non-existent with main Internet users in the US and in main European countries UK, France, Spain, Germany and Sweden. (Briggs, 2001) A 2nd generation of websites makes uses of Graphic lines, junk, while a 3rd generation website is more interactive, more dynamic and friendly. The 4th generation which is non-existent yet to the observed 37 four-star hotels in Cyprus has the end users to be in control of problem solving. Out of the 33 hotel from the total population of 37 hotels, the minority (11) of the hotels which responded and used

online hotels directories and have had an online presence belonged to the web building 2nd generation and the majority (21) which presented their own web presence with several additional attributes belonged to the 3rd generation.

Non-favorable data that were extracted presented the following (See also Figure 2):

- Additional attempts presented some broken links.

It is noteworthy information to present that several links (reservation information) were not reached successfully on additional attempts made by the researcher from the United States. Some requested installing several plug-ins to view virtual tours that were not always functional. Additionally, the majority of the broken links came from the online directories that the hotels agreed to use them as part of their overall advertising campaigns.

- According to the www.SearchFactor.com link popularity tool not all the surveyed Websites were included in major search engines.

Here the assumption that can be made is the fact that a majority of the hoteliers as they orally revealed to the researcher and as they responded on the questionnaires, heavily depended on the Cyprus and the UK online hotel directories. Once requested, the names of several of the hotels, the search engines initially presented the hotel online directories that accommodated the hotels instead of projecting the hotel's main webpage right at the front page of the search results.

- Not all Websites had achieved highest rank in the listed search engines.

Here it was revealed that the hotels websites did not received the highest rank on the following search Engines: Google, AllTheWeb, AltaVista, AOL, MSN, Hotbot and Lycos. The same reasoning applies to the overdependence on the various hotels online directory, thus the rest of the hotels which have had an online presence were still not found at higher rankings.

- An online Cyprus Hotel directory provided extended non-used calendar dates, outdated data and misleading photos.

The calendar dates presented were up to the 2006 year where the command: 'No room matching your criteria' came up, regardless of the date, city, or hotel that was chosen. A possible reason for this particular misleading information is the level of frequency or lack of communication between the online hotel directory and the particular hotel. Outdated data either indicating the proper hotel star classification or posting photos that did not present either the city or the hotel's facilities is misleading needed to be corrected or instantly be excluded. On additional numerous attempts the following hotel directory did not present any online reservation availabilities for any dates.

- Some online Cyprus Hotel directories did not reassure for secure online payments.

Although they reassured to be on a 'secure Internet environment' or that 'no charge is made on credit cards unless penalties are imposed i.e. late cancellations, there did not carry any kind of encryption or coded programs systems before any payment was made that could reassure the customer and prevent anyone seeing the information before the customer could provide any credit-card number information.

- Another foreign online Cyprus Hotel directory had confusing menu categories.

This online directory provides the opportunity for reserving hotel rooms worldwide. It provided several countries and accommodation areas that belong in the seven areas/categories but some of the countries were either not found or were duplicated shown in another worldwide category presented on its menu. Cyprus is not found on the continents/area and someone has to assume that it belongs to the other shown worldwide hotels category.

- Online hotel directories website follow a consistent but mass production approach. Even in the cases where an online Cyprus or foreign (Mostly, UK, Germany, Dutch) hotel directory followed the mass production approach that would probably prove to be more lucrative for their operation. The presentation results for each of the hotels particularly the Cyprus four-star Hotels is detrimental to the wishful image and positioning that each may long for to project. Same structure, shapes, types of few low resolution photos on incompatible backgrounds (a restaurant, a swimming an exterior and an air photo), few descriptions together with room availability and rates is common.

- Hotels who kept their website presented less number of inconsistencies.

The main hotels which either belonged under a bigger chain or operator, or presented a more professional approach seemed to have presented a better alternative for their current and potential customers. The inconsistencies and a variety and accuracy of information are more obvious and the approach is better than the previous mass approach followed by the majority of hotels. An individualistic Internet presence with an unswerving marketing support can guarantee more positive, long-term results.

Anticipated Results: Responded questionnaires

As previously mentioned on the research design, several factors or secondary variables were related with the nature of the study. The affiliation of the 33 hotels which belonged to one of the categories of individual hotel, independent management company, regional hotel chain, global hotel chain or franchisor has shown that the ones who belonged to the larger categories projected some expected results in connection to the Internet marketing activity and interest.

As a general note the information that was extracted from the questionnaires as the directors presented and the found hotel websites, were to identify the current status of the

online marketing as part of the its Individual or chain of hotels exclusive campaigns. The recommendations were based on both the websites and responded questionnaires. The anticipated amount of the hotels belonged to the first two categories of Individual hotels and regional chains. (See Figure 2) In addition, the location of hotels presented the majority found by the seaside since all of the cities except Nicosia the capital are found by the seaside areas. (See Table 2)

Table 1.

Which Of the Following Best Describes Your Organization?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Individual hotel	**20**	60.6	60.6	60.6
	Indep mgmt company	1	3.0	3.0	63.6
	Regional chain	**11**	33.3	33.3	97.0
	Global Chain	1	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	33	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

Location of Hotel

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Seaside	**29**	87.9	87.9	87.9
	Inland	**4**	12.1	12.1	100.0
	Total	33	100.0	100.0	

The purpose of the study demanded that apart from identifying the location of each of the hotels, it was important to spot the website and the number of rooms of each of the Independent or chain of hotels. The notification of the Individual or Chain does not necessarily represent the whole picture. The reason is based on the fact that 7 out of the 11 reported themselves as Independent although they are found on the regional chain category. The assumption that is given here is based either to the amount of flexibility that each of the hotels have had within the chain to adjust to the kind of customers it dealt with, or to the lack of standardized methods for all the hotels found in the same category.

In the question of what percentage of the people making reservations over the Internet in various four age different ranges, the category that received the highest is the one with the range 25-34 as anticipated before the questionnaires were given. Nevertheless the variable that was not anticipated was the high amount of people (18/33) who did not respond to this particular question. (See Table 3)

Another estimated result was the countries where the online reservations came from. The results projected in order of a 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice of countries each separately shown in three different Tables with all the other countries that are followed and which are important to ponder.

The surveys projected that the United Kingdom became the respondents' first choice and second choice and Germany the next one. This was highly expected since most of the holiday and business tourists originate from these two countries. Other countries are followed with considerably less frequency and percentages. The results are shown on the following Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5.

Table 3

Making Reservations % in Age Range: 25-34

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	005 %	2	6.1	13.3	13.3
	010 %	1	3.0	6.7	20.0
	015 %	1	3.0	6.7	26.7
	28 %	1	3.0	6.7	33.3
	035 %	1	3.0	6.7	40.0
	040 %	1	3.0	6.7	46.7
	42 %	1	3.0	6.7	53.3
	045 %	1	3.0	6.7	60.0
	060 %	**4**	12.1	26.7	86.7
	065 %	1	3.0	6.7	93.3
	070 %	1	3.0	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	45.5	100.0	
Missing	System	**18**	54.5		
Total		33	100.0		

Table 4

1st country Making Reservations Through Website

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ENGLAND	3	9.1	10.0	10.0
	EUROPE	3	9.1	10.0	20.0
	GERMANY	1	3.0	3.3	23.3
	RUSSIA	1	3.0	3.3	26.7
	UK	**20**	60.6	66.7	93.3
	USA	2	6.1	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	90.9	100.0	
Missing		3	9.1		
Total		33	100.0		

The high percentage of 60.6 or 20 respondents responded UK as their first country which makes use of the Internet to make reservations. That emphasizes the fact that the first country with the highest number of visitors which travels on the island is also the UK.

This correlation does not necessarily justify the reason for having the first number (Internet Usage and Number of visitors) in both cases. It simply presents a trend and also justifies the fact that the UK is one of the first countries that makes use of the Internet technology and projects 4th websites generations.

Table 5

2nd Country Making Reservations Through Website

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AUSTRALI	1	3.0	4.2	4.2
	BELGIUM	1	3.0	4.2	8.3
	CYPRUS	1	3.0	4.2	12.5
	ENGLAND	2	6.1	8.3	20.8
	FRANCE	2	6.1	8.3	29.2
	GERMANY	**6**	**18.2**	25.0	54.2
	GRT_BRIT	1	3.0	4.2	58.3
	MID_EAST	1	3.0	4.2	62.5
	NORWAY	1	3.0	4.2	66.7
	RUSSIA	1	3.0	4.2	70.8
	SWEDEN	1	3.0	4.2	75.0
	SWITZERL	1	3.0	4.2	79.2
	UK	1	3.0	4.2	83.3
	USA	4	12.1	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	72.7	100.0	
Missing		9	27.3		

This correlation displayed in the current and next Table 5, 6 defend parallel reasoning as formerly with the UK, since Germany is currently the 2nd country with the highest number of visitors and is also one of the few countries that makes use of the Internet technology and presents several 4th websites generations.

Table 6

3rd country making reservations through website

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CANADA	1	3.0	5.3	5.3
	EUROPE	1	3.0	5.3	10.5
	FRANCE	2	6.1	10.5	21.1
	GERMANY	**6**	18.2	31.6	52.6
	HOLLAND	1	3.0	5.3	57.9
	RUSSIA	1	3.0	5.3	63.2
	SWEDEN	2	6.1	10.5	73.7
	UK	1	3.0	5.3	78.9
	USA	4	12.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	19	57.6	100.0	
Missing		14	42.4		
Total		33	100.0		

Unanticipated Results: Responded Questionnaires

The benefits that the Internet Marketing presents do not only come from the mere use of it, but also by the use of the Intranet, a web style network that it is for internal used only within the hotel organization, can be spanned and be accessed in more than one location. Several of the respondents projected orally to the researcher that they were not aware of the either its use or immediate benefits. That justifies also the results of not using any type of this system. This becomes a point for immediate consideration for both the Independent of chain of hotels. (See Table 7)

Table 7

Does your Hotel Have an Intranet?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency
Valid	**Yes**	**18**	54.5	54.5	54.5
	No	**14**	42.4	42.4	97.0
	Don't know	1	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	33	100.0	100.0	

The amount of the ones who did not respond 15/33 or 45% is resented clearly on the next Table 8.

As shown in range of Tables as Table 9, Table 10, and Table 11 important data was extracted from the ones (18/33) who have actually responded utilizing the Intranet. The results shown that although they are present at the hotels only 1-33% has an access to all existing levels with almost identical numbers, either at the senior management, mid-level management or at the staff level.

The results did not show though any indication whether there is a tendency towards calibrating this area, since it seems not to be of an instantaneous concern. As the websites revealed, the main concern is towards raising higher booking amounts, and Intranet does not yet project immediate financial benefit, of which system functionality is anyway not seen by the consumers except the suppliers.

Table 8

Type of Intranet in Hotel

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Frequency
Valid	Within hotel(s)	8	24.2	44.4	44.4	
	Between hotels	4	12.1	22.2	66.7	
	Hotel w/Cor. Office	4	12.1	22.2	88.9	
	2 & 3 Combination	1	3.0	5.6	94.4	
	1-2-3 Combination	1	3.0	5.6	100.0	
	Total	18	54.5	100.0		
Missing	**System**	**15**	**45.5**			
Total		33	100.0			

Table 9

What % Employees have an access to Intranet: Senior Mgmt

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**001-033%**	**10**	30.3	55.6	55.6
	034-066%	6	18.2	33.3	88.9
	067-100%	2	6.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	18	54.5	100.0	
Missing	System	15	45.5		
Total		33	100.0		

Table 10

What % Employees have an access to Intranet: Mid-Level Mgmt

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**001-033%**	**9**	27.3	50.0	50.0
	034-066%	6	18.2	33.3	83.3
	067-100%	3	9.1	16.7	100.0
	Total	18	54.5	100.0	
Missing	System	15	45.5		
Total		33	100.0		

Table 11

What % Employees have an access to Intranet: Staff

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**001-033%**	**8**	24.2	44.4	44.4
	034-066%	6	18.2	33.3	77.8
	067-100%	2	6.1	11.1	88.9
	Don't know	2	6.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	18	54.5	100.0	
Missing	System	15	45.5		
Total		33	100.0		

In the next particular pattern in Table 12, an additional Cross tabulation technique was used to categorize the two variables of the type of organization and whether any web

traffic system was present. 63% or (12/19) of the Individual hotels admitted that they make

a systematic use of a system whereas a 70% or else 7 out of the 10 respondents from the

chain of hotels reported the same current use.

Table 12

*Which of following best describes organization? * Use Web Traffic System to Tabulate Visitors/Customers*

		Use Web Traffic System To Tabulate Visitors/Customers			Total
		Yes	No	Don't know	
Which Of Following Best Describes Organization	**Individual hotel**	**12**	7		19
	Independ. mgmt company			1	1
	Regional Chain	**7**	2	1	10
	Global Chain		1		1

An assumption was made here on whether the results were based on the manager's

rough estimation since the results wholly projected dispersed numbers for the customers

and visitors given separately during a typical week and mostly in rounded up percentage

numbers. (See Table 13 and Table 14)

As shown in the next Table 15, an online presence of a complete 100% (33/33) of all the websites carried reservations transactions. Before both the Guide to hotel and other tourist establishments by the CTO and each of the hotels managers provided the relevant website marketing and other information only several online hotel directories were the only ways to extract initial data from, thus a Website Support Transactions of a total amount could not have been predicted.

Table 13

Typical Week, what % are: Customers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	000 %	1	3.0	8.3	8.3
	010 %	1	3.0	8.3	16.7
	020 %	1	3.0	8.3	25.0
	030 %	1	3.0	8.3	33.3
	33 %	1	3.0	8.3	41.7
	040 %	1	3.0	8.3	50.0
	050 %	1	3.0	8.3	58.3
	070 %	2	6.1	16.7	75.0
	080 %	1	3.0	8.3	83.3
	085 %	2	6.1	16.7	100.0
	Total	12	36.4	100.0	
Missing	System	**21**	63.6		
Total		33	100.0		

The main reward revealed from the next Tables 16 and Table 17, is the comparisons between the years of 2002 and the 2003 in terms of the reservation percentages and whether any website support reservations are apparent. The results shown that there is a slight positive shift upwards with two additional 6% and 7% projected in the year of 2003. It is assumed that a further upward tendency in the last part of the last month of December when the survey was conducted was not included in the study.

Table 14

Typical Week, what % are: Visitors

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	000 %	1	3.0	8.3	8.3
	010 %	1	3.0	8.3	16.7
	020 %	1	3.0	8.3	25.0
	030 %	1	3.0	8.3	33.3
	33 %	1	3.0	8.3	41.7
	040 %	1	3.0	8.3	50.0
	050 %	1	3.0	8.3	58.3
	070 %	2	6.1	16.7	75.0
	080 %	1	3.0	8.3	83.3
	085 %	2	6.1	16.7	100.0
	Total	12	36.4	100.0	
Missing	System	21	63.6		
Total		33	100.0		

Table 15

Does Website Support Transactions (Reservations)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	**33**	100.0	100.0	100.0

Aiming for higher rates of exposure through a variety of planning efforts is the responsibility of every hotel sales and marketing department. This can be achieved with a variety of ways as mentioned in the research study.

One way is through direct or indirect individual or joined efforts of an online publication probably in the form of regular newsletters with other hoteliers or tourist establishments' of a projection of the existence of the operations, facilities. The benefit of such online publications is initially the connection of chain of hotels or related organizations to publicize information common interest to their customers and others information relevant to its operations and at the same time analyze some trends in the market.

In addition, several educational institutions that provide a number of seasonal workers during the summer periods can become the main source jointly publishing some of the online publications. Currently, due to the lack of immediate examples of hotels which have recurrently produced such publications probably made a variety of hotels to still be hesitant towards that direction. Consequently, the results have shown that 39.45% of the respondents responded unenthusiastically to this execution. (See Table 19)

Table 16

Reservations % in 2002 from Hotel's Website/Does Website Support Transactions

(Reservations)?

		Does Website Support Transactions (Reservations)	Total
		Yes	
% Reservations in 2002 from: hotel's website	000 %	1	1
	001 %	1	1
	002 %	3	3
	003 %	3	3
	004 %	1	1
	005 %	4	4
	010 %	4	4
	015 %	2	2
	18 %	1	1
	020 %	2	2
	28 %	1	1
	050 %	1	1
Total		24	24

Table 17

Reservations % in 2003 from Hotel's Website/Does Website Support Transactions

(Reservations)?

		Does Website Support Transactions (Reservations)	Total
		Yes	
% Reservations In 2003 From: Hotel's Website	000 %	1	1
	002 %	2	2
	003 %	2	2
	004 %	1	1
	005 %	4	4
	006 %	**1**	1
	007 %	**2**	2
	010 %	4	4
	015 %	3	3
	020 %	3	3
	030 %	1	1
	060 %	1	1
Total		25	25

Table 18

Does Hotel participate to Online Hosp/Tour Publication?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	**18**	**54.5**	54.5	54.5
	No	**13**	**39.4**	39.4	93.9
	Don't know	2	6.1	6.1	100.0
	Total	33	100.0	100.0	

The assumption made is based on the close environment that Cyprus Hoteliers operate with fierce competition that still prevents hoteliers establishing immediate strategic alliance partnership with other hotels. It is reported that a 51.5% or 17/33 (Table 19) deal with this kind of partnerships with skepticism. With the Cyprus eminent entry to the European Union, and due to heavier competition this will become more an essential survival tool than a mere alternative.

Table 19
Have Links on Site to Strategic Alliance Partners?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	14	42.4	43.8	43.8
	No	**17**	**51.5**	53.1	96.9
	Don't know	1	3.0	3.1	100.0
	Total	32	97.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.0		
Total		33	100.0		

Information was requested from all the hoteliers regarding their own view or rating of the current status of the hotel's web-presence against a variety of attributes. In the case of rating of Customization a 33.3% of an above Average level was presented. This is justified by the fact that still the websites are found in the 3rd generation but lean towards the 4th generation where the customers will basically determine what they wish to see on websites. Nonetheless, a 27.3% of rating their customization as Very Strong can not be overlooked. (See Table 20)

Table 20

Rate Status of Web-Presence: Customization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below Average	2	6.1	7.1	7.1
	Average	6	18.2	21.4	28.6
	Above Average	**11**	**33.3**	39.3	67.9
	Very Strong	**9**	**27.3**	32.1	100.0
	Total	28	84.8	100.0	
Missing	Don't know	1	3.0		
	System	4	12.1		
	Total	5	15.2		
Total		33	100.0		

Table 21

Rate status of Web-Presence: Community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below Average	1	3.0	4.2	4.2
	Average	4	12.1	16.7	20.8
	Above Average	**15**	**45.5**	62.5	83.3
	Very Strong	4	12.1	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	72.7	100.0	
Missing	don't know	1	3.0		
	System	8	24.2		
	Total	9	27.3		
Total		33	100.0		

The rating based on the represented against the community is just of 45.5% Above Average. This is a point of later consideration for all the four-star hotels. It becomes the liability of the director to spell out targeted goals towards the needs for a stronger realistic community care. (See Table 21)

Table 22

Rate status of Web-Presence: Service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Average	2	6.1	6.7	6.7
	Above Average	**19**	**57.6**	63.3	70.0
	Very Strong	**9**	**27.3**	30.0	100.0
	Total	30	90.9	100.0	
Missing	don't know	1	3.0		
	System	2	6.1		
	Total	3	9.1		
Total		33	100.0		

In the Table 22, a joint amount of 84% reported an above Average (57.6%) and a Very Strong (27.3%) of the level of service customers receive from the webpage. This justifies the hard efforts of each the marketing departments they exert.

Although a 42.4% projected their customers rating of web-presence for the online provided discounts as satisfactory, a 27.3% of the directors gave a non-positive, non-negative answer of not knowing what their customers' views were. This is one supplementary point for contemplation by establishing a proactive level of acknowledging the customers wants and needs in advance. (See Table 23)

Table 23
Customer Rating Of Web-Presence: Online Discounts

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unsatisfactory	2	6.1	11.1	11.1
	Neutral	2	6.1	11.1	22.2
	Satisfactory	**14**	**42.4**	77.8	100.0
	Total	18	54.5	100.0	
Missing	Don't know	**9**	**27.3**		
	System	6	18.2		
	Total	15	45.5		
Total		33	100.0		

Table 24
*Which of following best describes organization * % change from 2002 to 2003: Hotel's Website*

		% Change from 2002 to 2003: hotel's website					Total
		no change 2002/2003	1	2	5	10	
Which Of Following Best Describes Organization	Individual hotel	**10**	1	1	1		13
	Independ. mgmt company			1			1
	Regional Chain	1	3	4		**1**	9
Total		11	4	6	6	11	23

It is finally a substantial element the survey to contain a question related with the 2002 year that was preceded and the current last December year where the survey has taken place. (See Table 24) As such, a comparison has shown that there has been no change from the two years 2002 to 2003 on an estimated number of 10 out of 13 Independent hotels, whereas inversely there have been 4 chains of hotels out of the 9 that responded a 4% change. The enhancement is not tremendous but the shift is optimistically upwards.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Summary

The majority of the 30 hotels which responded and used online hotels directories belonged to the web building 3rd generation. Out of the 30 hotels which presented their own web presence 7 of them based their reservations and presence through their main national chain operator and on the international franchise brand name. These 7 hotels significantly projected a higher image for their brand name, although there is no indication whether this would necessarily justify a higher reservation record. All the other favorable attributes mentioned have a direct impact to the main users of 25-34 as presented in the study mainly coming from the western Europeans destinations including Australia and the United States.

The final non-favorable results were basically based on the direct communication and use of third parties like several online national and international mainly based directories and even with the main Hotel guide produced by the CTO. In the last case, few negligible errors were noticed either on one hotel's name or on three website names. This becomes a major issue whenever the customers depended fully on the guide for both information listed above. This does imply the discontinuation of their services of both the online directories and the CTO, but rather for the betterment of the image projection for both sides.

Implications

Within the area of the new field of Internet Marketing there is always room for improvement for all the business with an aim for higher more lucrative business. The Internet Hospitality marketing that the study aimed to reach becomes an even more intense field with lot of variables that need further analysis and research in the near periods.

Within the last few years there has been a shift in hotel room reservations from the traditional use of travel agencies and hotel chains to an additional use of having customers contacting either the online intermediaries or immediately the hotels or chains. The online intermediaries seek to distribute rooms and generate their own profit through their own websites. It is important to acknowledge that in the US several hotel chain executives acknowledge that "up to 20 percent of customers who look at the chain's website end up calling the chain's reservation center to make a booking [and a]…55 percent looked online booked offline" (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003, p.39). It is also important to notice that on a worldwide basis, large portion of corporate travelers will be spending to an average estimate of $33 billion by 2005. Several online companies like the Expedia.com that belongs to the Microsoft Company, has sprung up and dominates a large portion of online bookings. At the same time, Marriott one of the largest hotel chains, leader and achiever in online marketing reported, in 2002 a high of up 75 percent of its bookings came through the Internet.

Although in larger countries such as the US, the Internet connections and websites are comparatively higher and more advanced than in other regions of the world, it is important to emphasize that the travel trends and customers' needs can affect other areas significantly too. It is not a paradox to refer to Cyprus Internet booking activities and emphasize that some of the investigated in the research hotels, depend on the foreign tour operators mainly for the UK, Germany and Russia. According to the results shown in the study several will still continue to do so for the following year. Nonetheless, several of the hotels and hotel chains started using the electronic distribution to bring down the costs by partially switching the system of their own websites to a more interactive one than can accept bookings, instead of fully depending on the intermediaries, as they were used to

operate. This means saving a lot of time since customers who visited the Internet can make quick calls directly posting their information and requesting a booking data. Data and customers can be retained for the hotel establishments which can provide reduce rates or special offers, relevant newsletters, special frequent programs with loyalty points given to members for the range of booking dates made at the hotel, special packages that include airfare and car rental all provided to those who make their bookings online. (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003)

Additionally, the benefits can be enlarged by encouraging the customers who traditionally made bookings only through other sources, to take advantage by using the Internet to make their online bookings and receive lowest available rates than making a booking with other intermediaries, collect relevant information for the hotel, and become informed for any upcoming events at the hotel or in the area. In several other cases several chains like the Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott, Six Continents and the Starwood have formed, developed, and maintain the TravelWeb an online booking engine and thus promote and offer to their customers more favorable booking conditions and lower rates and 'place pressures on margins sought by Expedia.com and Hotels.com. (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003) As an initial step, several Cyprus Hotels initiated and provide certain online directories to serve the purpose of promotion and bookings.

In the recent years, even with the advent and increased use of the Internet, mass market practice has taken place. It becomes a necessity that hoteliers should not only emphasize the favorable prices to their websites but at the same time demonstrate better positioning for themselves, emphasize the value added offered and "create brand and service loyalty", (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003, pp.48-49) even if wholesaling is to be exercised. The wholesaling main purpose is to differentiate a hotel form another and manage but only

"as a short-term tactic" to convince the customers to switch to them as a more appropriate alternative.

Further Recommendations

It is important thus for the Cyprus hoteliers to observe and acknowledge the benefit that can be gained for their hotels through the advancement that was made with the extended utilization of the electronic distribution systems that request the "users permission, [and are] more intimate in communication, transactions and information gathering that has formerly been the case. At the same time "a system's operation allows users to target information searches, make choices and efficiently execute transactions, whether directly or in concert with a reservations center or a travel agency's call center" (Carroll & Siguaw, 2003, pp. 40-41).

According to Fam, Foscht, & Collins (2004), "the Internet is no longer the company that decides what topic/s will have an effect on the consumers through which medium (or which part of the medium) and at which point in time. The consumers are the ones who now decide that topic/s should be included and through which medium. The hoteliers in Cyprus also need to accommodate the needs of the international mainly and domestic customers through a relationship marketing program. Thus, hotel companies need to be aware of the need to equally provide information and accept their feedback, thus it is a wise choice to "implement active complaints management in their websites so that they can comment on the problems occurring and in the end also solve them" (Fam, Foscht, & Collins, 2004, pp.198-199).

Perry and Gilbert (2003), emphasize that the "true marketing relationships like other human relationships, should be characterized by the deeper feelings of trust, concern and loyalty commitment, [especially in a] current competitive market place of oversupply

and falling demand, hotel companies found it necessary to win the loyalty of the reduced number of customers". The authors characterized, "keeping customers loyal is a sensible business strategy" (p. 8).

Needless to overemphasize, that an inclusion of various elements are necessary for higher customer retention rates. According to Murphy, Olaru, Schegg, & Frey (2003), an absence or presence of certain features can determine a further success of a hotel operation. In the current survey conducted in December 2003, several of these features were not asked since the list is long one to encompass. Thus, it is recommended that hoteliers should contemplate in using several other elements along "…with the strategic intention of developing relationship marketing" (p. 76). Such elements can not be restrained to one list that continually updates itself due to the advancement of technology, but should at least have the following: More animated pictures and use of multimedia, (audio, video, webcams) online brochure request, online cancellation options, providing the option of downloading print documents, use of different languages, virtual tour. In addition, to use cookies to capture important customer's personal profile information, enhance room-availability check and online guest booking, offer the option of press releases and news, recurrent use of special online promotions, sign-in option, numerous hyperlinks that can redirect to various pages of the main website, and more proper exploitation of online service features (i.e. currency converters, weather reports, maps). (Murphy, Olaru, Schegg, & Frey, 2003)

Furthermore, hoteliers need to make sure to keep receiving higher targeted email lists and personal information directly from the customers such as email addresses through online registration cards while they browse the hotel company's website through inquiries which may prove to be other alternatives.

Another recommendation is based on improving the ranking and optimizing the position in the registered Search engine optimization and ranking. This is due to the observation that several hotels were not found either in the first or second page of major search engines search results. This presents lot of obscurity on whether the hotel was registered or existed with the CTO, especially when no hotel printed guide was readily available. Thus, several techniques can be used towards a higher positioning on several channels the customers may come in contact with.

Initially, apart from the other techniques that need to be addressed (Internet advertising use, e-commerce maximum exploitation, e-newsletters produce, webcasting use, newsgroups and web rings observation, e-zines consideration) the website of a hotelier need also to be submitted and registered with several search areas within several search engines such as the Yahoo, Google, MSN Metacrawler, About. According to the researcher's observation for searching by the full name for each and every four-star hotels, major search engines were not exercised.

However, it should not be every hotel's main dependability to relay their hotels into all existing engines, but as four-star hotels the main distress could be registering and exposing themselves to other engines as an additional expansion tool. The results shown that few or none of the hotels have not made clear presence either on the first two search pages or even none, to most of the following search engines: AllTheWeb, Lycos, AltaVista, Excite, Looksmart, Overture, Teoma, or the Open Directory.

As part of a reliable web promotion the hoteliers need to avid several pitfalls and embrace several neat and distinctive elements that would distinguish themselves from the competition. Engaging for instance to a free banner exchange service is not always the best method unless they are used through the Web rings or through major engines like the

Netscape or the Open Directory. Generally speaking fewer results-traffic do really come up and the credibility may be lost from some of the users. (Tabke, 2004)

Checking the competition for the keywords and phrases as presented in the various search engines and other referrals is a step forward. Every page of the website can be regarded as potential entry point and results can be extracted through the search engines. Several tracking methods through specified software programs can show where visitors may come from either on hit per page or click through real-time statistics, thus using this as "steering traffic and visitors back to your main page" even though that search modify their ranking systems quite often. (Tabke, 2004)

Tracking visitors would definitely present some valuable results since not only the number of hits a customer made is shown, but also whether these customers came from the hotel's campaigns and promotions. Is becomes a necessity to identify these customers, the segment they belong into and their changing preferences. Several of these customers will simply pick up information regarding the provided services and some other customers may take more time until they make a final reservation with the hotel online or though another source, or even which of the visitors made no response at all. (Cox & Koelzer, 2004)

Several suppliers of data like the Netscape browser provide a 'hitometer' service whereby companies identify visitors on a particular day, in a week or month with a range of visitors that came from a variety of search engines, thus knowing the origin of the potential customers, better focus the advertising investments. In addition, to measure the business activity of the site a more precise technique would be to acknowledge the number of inquiries through the email responses and other response forms created though the website. (Bickerton, 2000)

Good analysis tool programs are abundant and promise amazing results such as translating the visits into conversion rates and final revenues and then reflected in various reports that can be exported into Excel and Word formats. One of the most successful companies in the US is currently the WebTrends.com that can assist a site to achieve high placements, identify which websites sales came from and eventually higher revenues. Other companies like the Search Factor.com provide free tips and knowledge and guidelines to search for both a hotel's or other company's search engine optimization and ranking. (Cox & Koelzer, 2004)

As a result, there are several ongoing elements that the four-star hotels should incorporate in their frequently updated websites. It is substantial that the site should present clearly their hotel obtainable services and products along with a tagline thus skillfully communicate their positioning either with the logo, the content or the graphics or a combination of these. The content and information should make use of a combination of "both visual and written elements that clearly demonstrate that a particular product [can be] the fastest, healthiest or whatever else characterizes its market position" (Cox & Koelzer, 2004, p. 59).

In order to accommodate the particular needs of the specific customers in each of the four-star hotel establishments in Cyprus it is imperative for a website to be translated into an informative, educating, accompanied with a balance of few reciprocal links, become problem-solving, or entertaining website, or reservation-oriented providing the customers with the necessary tools and guarantee for a smooth financial online payment. Personalized email replies are providing ways for the customer to reach the hotel are excellent additional channels.

Other elements to bear in consideration is the testimonials; a section that was neglected by the majority of the surveyed hotels. It becomes as reinforcement for a consumer to be able to read opinions and probably see photos of customers who visited the place and remained satisfied. The section will gain more credibility once it includes some non-positive opinions too. A powerful tool is the inclusion of higher resolution photos of the site. Most importantly few photos of people such the manager or the owner(s) or department head managers and other key areas positions can further assist a relationship and enhance employee loyalty. In some cases this can be accompanied with a small description of their biography and current titles and hotel activities (Cox & Koelzer, 2004).

The future of the Intent Marketing within the four-star hotels is at least escalating. The future of technology and e-Commerce need to be closely watched and observed that various adjustments can be made for each and every hotel. Several eminent technological advancements are bound to become a big part of the hospitality industry as well. These are not secluded to just a few, but some next steps include the higher speed connections, wireless and satellite communications that would minimize the mobility of the travelers, provide instant live chats and email service for customized last minute cancellations and travel changing. Furthermore, the voice recognition aspect can provide convenience for receiving and sending email messages at no time. The convergence into one Internet central communication network of voice, data and video, videoconferencing among business tourists will be more evident such as initial unremitting first use of the Intranet. (Zhou, 2004)

Correctly establishing and adopting the new technologies could provide an edge, diminish costs and increase productivity. Above all, the current customization and personalization are the main key points of joining together the technology with the people

factor. That is the main reason that several companies introduced the electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM) as an additional powerful tool.

Limitations

The main limitations that existed in the distributed survey were as such:

1. Not all the surveys that were promptly sent, either as email attachment or given at the Front desk, were received by the deadline.

2. The immediate reaching of the hotel managers or owners was not always possible.

3. Not all hotel owners or managers were familiar with all the new terms in Internet Marketing as they appeared on the survey.

Conclusions

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the level of awareness of the latest performances of the Internet usage among Cyprus four-star hotels. Internet Marketing is not only a search engine optimization and a best utilization of banner creation and placement, or email. It is an effective blend of all of these and more other elements not included on this study along with the use of an adjusted marketing planning campaign long-term program. The suggestion for additional marketing multimedia techniques for more exploitation of this lucrative tool between the customers and the hotels has been accomplished at a large part. Further research should be addressed to the current individual elements of the online marketing and the continuous efforts to join this with the traditional offline marketing.

In addition, a future research should focus to each of the hotels and chains to further pinpoint whether the various establishments enforced the minimized gaps that were currently neglected as observed in this study and whether more systematic objectives were addressed towards the betterment of this powerful Internet Marketing tool.

The objectives of the research were to define and emphasize these benefits coming out of the effective use of the Internet and identify the level of awareness, impact and usage of the Internet Marketing including an interactive website design part of a well-organized promotion. Finally, the identification of main techniques can unquestionably become the step stone point of enhancing Internet Marketing in the Cyprus Hospitality Industry once implemented properly.

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Appendix A

Constantinos Iacovou   22 December, 2003
Dragoumi 19A, Aglangia,
Nicosia, 2123
CYPRUS
Tel: 22333182/ 22335064
Fax: 22335064
Email: diacovou@yahoo.com

Full Name
General Manager
Name of Hotel
Address
CYPRUS

Dear Mr/Mrs. (Full Name),

My name is Constantinos Iacovou working under the Hospitality and Tourism program of
the University of Wisconsin-Stout, in the USA.

In order to acknowledge the effects Internet Marketing has to hotels, I am conducting a
survey. The study includes all four-star hotels registered at the moment with the CTO.

Your contribution and opinion is of utmost importance to me. So, please take
approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire and return to me as mail or
fax before the end of the following week. Only myself as the researcher and the people who
will evaluate this study will have access to your individual response. Your answers will be
treated with confidentiality as the purpose of the study.

The results of the survey can be available to you by May 31st upon your request. The
results of this survey will shed light into the betterment of Internet Marketing as important
promotional tool.

If you have any questions regarding this survey please do not hesitate to email me any time
at the above address.

Sincerely,

Constantinos Iacovou

**PS. It is essential I receive a high response rate for the survey to be more valid for the
results to become beneficial to your organization too.**

QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographics

1. Which of the following describes your organization?

                                                               (Select One)

(a) Individual Hotel   ____

(b) Independent Management company   ____

(c) Regional Hotel chain   ____

(d) Global Hotel chain   ____

(e) Franchisor   ____

(f) Other (please specify) _____

2. What are your company's (approximate) revenues in (US Dollars)?

                                                               (Select One)

(a) 0-400,000   ____

(b) 400,001-500,000   ____

(c) 500,001-600,000   ____

(d) 600,001-700,000   ____

(e) 700,001-800,000   ____

(f) 800,001-900,000   ____

(g) 900,001-1,000,000   ____

(h) Over 1,000,000   ____

3. What percentage of your employees in your organization has access to Internet at work?

                                                               (Select One)

(a) 0-10%   ____

(b) 11-20%   ____

(c) 21-30%   ____

(d) 31-40%   ____

(e) 41-50%   ____

(f) 51-60%   ____

(g) 61-70%   ____

(h) 71-80%   ____

(i) 81-90%   ____

(j) 91-100%   ____

4. Does your Hotel have an Intranet?
(Internet content available only to employees and internal members of a company)
     Yes   ____

     No   ____ (If No, skip to Question 9)

     Don't know   ____

5. In attempting to define the type of Intranet that your Hotel has, please indicate what kinds of connections that Intranet makes?

(Select One)

Provides connectivity within the Hotel(s)   ____

Provides connectivity between Hotels in an organization   ____

Provides connectivity between the Hotel(s) and a corporate office   ____

Don't know   ____

6. What percentage of your employees in your organization by category has an access to your Hotels' intranet?

(Senior Management)
     1-33%   ____

     34-66%   ____

     67-100%   ____

     Don't know   ____

7. What percentage of your employees in your organization by category has an access to your Hotels' intranet?

(Mid-level Management)
     1-33%   ____

     34-66%   ____

     67-100%   ____

     Don't Know   ____

8. What percentage of your employees in your organization by category has an access to your Hotels' intranet?

(Staff)
     1-33%   ____

     34-66%   ____

     67-100%   ____

     Don't Know   ____

9. Does your Hotel have an Extranet that connects your Hotel to other businesses such as suppliers and customers?

Yes   ____
No   ____
Don't know   ____

10. Does your Hotel use a Web traffic system to regularly tabulate visitors and customers to its site?

Yes   ____
No   ____
Don't know   ____

11. Does your Hotel use a software system to observe the number of times it takes for a visitor to enter the Hotel's website until a reservation is completed?

Yes   ____
No   ____
Don't know   ____

1. During a typical week what percentage of visitors to the website are:

(Should add to 100%)

Visitors   ____

Customers   ____

Other (Please specify): _____

13. Does your website support transactions such as reservations?

Yes   ____

No   ____

Don't Know   ____

14. What percentage of your total reservations is currently coming over the:

(Should add to 100%)

	2002	2003
Telephone	____	____
Hotel's website	____	____
Through a Travel Agency	____	____
Other link/Portals	____	____
Don't know	____	____

15. Please specify the type of Internet link where other reservations may come from?

_____

16. What is the percentage of the people making reservations over the Internet in the following age range during the 2003?

25-34	____
35-44	____
45-54	____
55+	____

17. Which countries have made reservations through your companies' website?

_____

18. What is the percentage of the customers' purpose of visit that made a reservation over the Internet?

(Should add to 100%)

Holidays	____
Business	____
Conferencing	____
Other	____

19. How often do you update your webpage?

(Select One)

Once every three months	____
Once every six months	____
Once a year	____
Other (Please specify)_____	
Don't Know	____

20. Who in your Hotel is responsible for your Website design, update and strategy?

Hotel Owner/Director	____
General Assistant Director	____
Sales and Marketing Director	____
Other (Please specify)	____
Outsourcing	____
Don't Know	____

21. Does your website support a human support system? (Telephone, mail, email, etc.)

Yes	____
No	____
Don't Know	____

22. Who in your Hotel is responsible for online advertising as an additional promotional tool?

Hotel Owner/Director	____
General Assistant Director	____
Sales and Marketing Director	____
Other (Please specify)	____
Outsourcing	____
Don't Know	____

23. Does you Hotel also provide visual access? (i.e Icons or pictures)

Yes	____
No	____
Don't Know	____

24. Does your Hotel provide incentive such as discounted rates, bonus points, for visitors to your sit to book online?

Yes	____
No	____
Don't Know	____
Not applicable	____

25. Does your Hotel participate with an online Hospitality, Tourism or Leisure online publication?

Yes   ____

No   ____

Don't Know   ____

26. Do you have links on your site to strategic alliance partners? (I.e. Other Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure organizations)

Yes   ____

No   ____

Don't Know   ____

27. How would you rate the following benefits of your organization's Intranet?

(Answer any of the following):

	Extremely Unsatisfactory				Extremely Satisfactory	Don't Know
Speed	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Downtime	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Flexibility	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Security of Network	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____

28. How would you rate the current status of your web-presence against each of the following attributes?
 (Answer any of the following):

	Very Weak				Very Strong	Don't Know
Information	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Convenience	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Customization	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Savings	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Community	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Entertainment	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Trust/Security	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Service	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____

29. According to the number of the reservations and personal concerns and comments coming through the Internet, how do your customers rate the current status of your web presence?

(Answer any of the following):

	Extremely Unsatisfactory				Extremely Satisfactory	Don't Know
Email Inquiries reply	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Online Service	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Online Account Calculation	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Online Payments	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Website Information Menu	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____
Online Discounts	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____	____

Appendix B:

CONSTRUCTIVE WEBSITES

CyberAtlas
http://www.cyberatlas.Internet.com
Internet statistics and market research for web marketers

CNET.com-Web Building
http://www.cnet.com/
Just about everything need to know about website design.

InforJump-The Magazine & Newsstudys Article Search Engine
http://www.infojump.com
Over 4,000 online publications and over 5,000,000 articles from online magazines, news, journals, newsletters and e-zines. If you plan to publish an email newsletter, be sure to get it listed here.

EzineSearch
http://www.worldabooks.com/search-it/ezine/
A well-known e-marketing database

Hotel.com.
http://www.hotelview.com/
A Travel and tourism video (with sound and motion) library distribution network.

Kanoodle Spy.
http://www.kanoodle.com/spy/spy.cool
A site that searches and refreshes itself every 10 second checking the popularity of certain subjects from a database of over 350 million keywords.

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Loop link (Web ring)
http://www.looplink.com

Metacrawler: MetaSpy. *Infospace Inc*.
http://www.metaspy.com/ info.metac.spy/metaspy/unfiltered.htm

Web Ring
http://www.webring.org/rw

Search Factor
http://www.searchfactor.com/
Provides guidelines, knowledge and tips to help webmasters achieve better ranking on search engines.

Source: Internet Marketing for your Tourism Business, by Sweeny Susan Sweeney, 2000.

Appendix B:

CONSTRUCTIVE WEBSITES *(continued)*

The Epicurus Awards
http://www.epicurus.com/500best.htm
Grant awards for the best hospitality/tourism we sites in 14 different categories

Golden Eagle Awards
http://www.photojournal.com/american/notesoftheday/blueaward.html
The best travel and home websites are honored by the American PhotoJournal

Appendix C

Some Tips when getting EXTERNAL LINKS:

♦ Get relevant links. If you're selling content management software, there's no point in being linked to from gardening Websites.

♦ Avoid reciprocal linking. Getting a link by giving a link is generally not a good idea. Unless the other Website absolutely makes sense to link to, don't link to it.

♦ Get linked from Websites that don't link to too many other Websites. If you're just one link among a long list of links, there's not much value there.

♦ Get linked from Websites that are also well linked. The more those other Websites are linked to the Website that is linking to you, the more valuable a link from that site is.

♦ Get links that reflect how people search. Let's say that your customers search for "content management workshops." If you can get links with that exact phrase, the chances of you being found during those types of searches are increased.

♦ Don't keep changing the structure of your Website. If you change the structure, you risk breaking incoming links.

♦ To maximize the power of your links, you should try to have as few Websites as possible. If you have a single Website address, you can consolidate all the links you are receiving under that address. If you have multiple Websites, then you need to build up a set of links for each Website.

Source: Hotel Marketing Newsweekly *http://www.hotelmarketing.com/triedtrue_article/3861_0_2_0_m/*
April 14, 2004, volume 7, issue 14.

Appendix D

Use E-Mail to Optimize Your Brand
> > >   E-Mail Marketing Optimization

al DIGUIDO
Articles
E-mail
Bio

BY Al DiGuido | January 16, 2003

Using the Power of E-Mail

So how can you use the power of e-mail to improve your brand? When done right, e-mail is guaranteed to generate positive results. But when executed incorrectly, you can damage your brand as much as you can help it (e.g., sending e-mails that promote snow tires to customers in Florida). So, to avoid the unwanted recipient reactions such as, "What's this nonsense in my inbox?" and generate the desired, "Wow -- these guys are good!" comments, follow these helpful tips on your road to brand optimization through e-mail:

- **Audit touch points.** Review every customer touch point and build a matrix detailing your ability to not only capture opt-in e-mail addresses but also communicate to customers the value/benefit of opting in. Furthermore, don't be afraid to get feedback directly from customers to assess their own communication needs and wants.

- **Think service.** E-mail is not just for marketing or promotional messaging. Some of the most effective e-mail communications are service-oriented, such as shipping and billing notifications. Think outside the box. Are there services in which e-mail can play a role? If so, be among the first to offer them -- they will serve your brand well in this increasingly digital marketplace.

- **Automate and be on time.** Don't be late; timing is everything. Customers cherish the immediacy e-mail provides them. Faster messaging often drives instant response. If you can automate key messaging and tie it directly to a customer's profile, you have created the ultimate win-win. Automated programs that can be triggered based on a customers profile or action will enable your e-mail communications program to be more effective and cost efficient.

- **Personalize and be relevant.** In this dog-eat-dog world, the brand that does the best job of building relationships wins. You need to know your customers the way the local deli knows your sandwich preferences. Spend time building your customer profile and crafting personalized, relevant communications based on those profiles. Your customers will better appreciate your messaging -- and your brand -- if you deliver content that's personally valuable to them. But beware of overpersonalizing and appearing too "slick" in building the dialogue, as it's sure to turn off your customers.

- **Spread the word: viral.** If you have an exciting product or service with a strong brand, your customers will be more likely to share it with people just like them. To make it easy for them, incorporate a viral component that can help you build awareness for brand and grow your customer file cost efficiently. Make sure to provide a benefit for passing along a recommendation.

Appendix D *(continued)*

- **Build internal support.** There's nothing like a few powerful case studies to build consensus across your organization. Document your successes and share them with others who may have an opportunity to build their own relevant e-mail program around the customer. When the number of e-mail addresses reaches a critical mass, accounting for at least 40 percent of the overall customer file, management will pay even greater attention to e-mail communication efforts and its potential impact on brand. In a multibrand company, make sure you have a cohesive strategy for communicating with your customers. Avoid marketing overlap and message saturation, which will only serve to reduce the respect for your brand.

- **Distribute subscription access.** Through the audit process, you may gain valuable knowledge about key touch points that can further improve your customer data. Make sure critical customer interface personnel, such as call center representatives, can edit a profile or add comments. This information can be critical in maintaining accurate and up-to-the-minute profile and preference information, and thus impact overall customer satisfaction.

- **Integrate systems.** Ensure all touch points and systems converge in a data warehouse or an e-mail warehouse, where you can leverage all the company's customer intelligence. Though CRM has been thought of as the holy grail, software alone won't solve all your issues. To launch programs that actually work, you'll need to leverage your systems in coordination with all of your off- and online communication media, including e-mail. In addition, the timing of those integrated programs is critical in maximizing performance and building your brand.

- **Study competitors and best practices.** Look at the competition and at best practices in other industries. A horizontal and vertical approach to identify best practices is helpful in generating new concepts and ideas. You never know, a newsletter or collection technique from a local business may spark your next great idea. Brand preference efforts will only continue to work their magic if you remain competitive compared to other players in the marketplace.

- **Measure and report.** To build strong internal consensus, you must measure and report. Use research techniques to document and track success so funding for future initiatives can be established. Understand what data you need to calculate performance metrics on brand building, such as unit sales, market share changes, and increased product recommendations. Some full-service providers use research techniques that allow you to measure changes in brand attributes tied directly to e-mail initiatives. In an economy with an emphasis on results, you can't afford to leave off this valuable step.

Source: **ClickZ Experts**
Advice & Opinions. By & for Marketers
http://www.clickz.com/experts/em_mkt/opt/article.php/1570141

Appendix E

Growing an E-Mail List: Five Practical Tips
> > >   **E-Mail Marketing Optimization**

jeanneJENNINGS
Articles
E-mail
Bio

BY Jeanne Jennings | March 25, 2004

When is enough enough? Never, if you're growing an e-mail list. You always want to bring in new opt-in subscribers, enough, at least, to replace the e-mail addresses lost each month (via hard bounces and unsubscribes). Hopefully you bring in more, so the list grows. Most organizations can quote a net monthly growth rate. Here are some tips for deeper analysis and really identifying where you can boost opt-ins.

Website Conversion

People visiting your Website are natural candidates to sign up for your newsletter. How many of them do? What's considered a "good" conversion rate? Based on past experience, I consider a 5 percent conversion rate Average, 15 percent pretty good (but you *always* want to boost whatever your conversion rate is). Know your conversion rate, but don't ever assume it's enough.

Contests and Other Incentives

Although contests and incentives can significantly boost growth rate, be sure you're getting qualified prospects, not just serial sweepstakes entrants or people looking for the freebie. Look at the e-mail opt-in rate. As a guide, I consider 45 percent opt-in good; I've seen rates as high as 60 percent.

Down the road, look at this group's unsubscribe rate. If it's significantly higher than that of your control group, you may decide the short-term boost isn't worth the long-term decline.

Online Advertising

If you promote an e-mail newsletter on your site, basically you're advertising. A great thing about DoubleClick's conference earlier this month was the dual focus on e-mail marketing and online advertising. Although absolute clicks and conversion percentages should be higher when advertising on your own site (most data out there is for third-party ads), you can still pick up pointers to increase performance.

DoubleClick reported rich media ads are generating four times the click-throughs of standard display ads. Four times. Image what testing a rich media ad on your Website could do for opt-in e-mail list growth.

I always shied away from rich media. I had concerns about slower dial-up connections. But there's good news on this front: Nielsen//NetRatings recently reported 39 percent of U.S. Internet users are on broadband connections. Some of my clients are testing Flash ads for e-mail acquisition. I'll let you know how it goes.

Rich media ads tend to cost more. Be sure the lift justifies the cost. Ensure not just click-throughs but also subscription conversions grow. (DoubleClick reports on Average, post-impression activity/sales from rich media ads are about twice that of non-rich media.)

Appendix E *(continued)*

Abandonment

How many people land on the sign-up page for your e-mail newsletter but don't complete the process? Decreasing the abandon rate is a quick way to improve list growth. A 30 percent or less abandon rate is considered very good; if over 50 percent of visitors leave before they complete the process, you've got a real opportunity to grow your list by decreasing the abandon rate.

Common ways to decrease the abandon rate include:

- **Request less information.** Limiting sign-up information to 5 to 7 items is an old-time standard I still try to adhere to.

- **Remove intrusive questions.** Things such as street address, phone number, household income, or business budget tend to make people abandon (or lie). Either way, it's lose-lose. Don't request information unless there's a good reason. Does it directly tie to the offer?

  This holds especially true for contests. Even if you deliver the prize to a physical address, don't ask everyone for this information. Save it, and ask just the winners.

- **Ensure there's no disconnect between the ad and the landing page.** You may want to add some rich media to your landing page to keep with the ad's look and feel. In addition, the page should mirror the Website's look and feel.

Figure 1
List of Respondents[1]

NAME OF HOTEL	LOCATION	INDIVID. / CHAIN	WEBSITE	NUMBER OF ROOMS
1. Princess	Larnaca	Chain	www.louishotels.com	138
2. Hilton Park	Nicosia	Chain	www.louishotels.com/forum[2]	194
3. Cleopatra	Nicosia	Individual	www.hotelworld.com	89
4. Holiday Inn	Nicosia	Chain	www.cyprus.online.com	140
5. Sandy Beach	Larnaca	Chain	www.sandybeachhotel.com.cy	205
6. Lordos Beach	Larnaca	Individual	www.lordos.com.cy	175
7. Palm Beach	Larnaca	Individual	www.palmbeachhotel.com	228
8. Sun Hall	Larnaca	Individual	N/A[3]	112
9. Sunrise Beach	Paralimni	Individual	www.sunrisehotelcyprus.com.cy	235
10. Adams Beach	Ayia Napa	Individual	www.adams.com.cy	271
11. Melissi Beach	Ayia Napa	Individual	www.melissi.hotel.cytanet.com.cy	128
12. Cyprotel Florida	Ayia Napa	Individual	www.dhcyprotels.com	128
13. Olympic Lagoon	Ayia Napa	Chain	www.kanikahotels.com	179
14. Ajax	Limassol	Individual	www.ajaxhotel.com	176
15. Elias Beach	Limassol	Individual	www.eliasbeach.com	168
16. Atlantica Bay	Limassol	Chain	www.Atlanticahotels.com	201
17. Curium Palace	Limassol	Individual	www.curiumpalace.com	60
18. Atlantica Golden Beach	Pafos	Individual	www.Atlanticahotels.com	168
19. Ledra Beach	Pafos	Chain	www.louishotels.com/ledra	261
20. Avanti	Pafos	Individual	www.avantihotel.com	243

Figure 1(continued)

List of Respondents[1]

NAME OF HOTEL	LOCATION	INDIVID. / CHAIN	WEBSITE	NUMBER OF ROOMS
21. Imperial Beach	Pafos	Chain	www.louishotels.com	242
22. Almyra	Pafos	Individual	www.thanoshotels.com	190
23. Pioneer Beach	Pafos	Individual	www.pioneer-cbh.com	254
24. Alexander the Great	Pafos	Individual	www.kanikahotels.com	202
25. Crown	Pafos	Chain	www.crownresortsgroup.com	201
26. St. George	Pafos	Independent	www.stgeorge.hotel.com	245

Figure 2

Observations from perusing the four-star hotels websites

Favorable	Non-Favorable
• The majority of websites were registered with largest reservation universal sites (i.e. Orbitz, Travelocity, Expedia) • Some present comments and reviews in other online reservation directories. • Few of them generated an improved 3rd generation websites. • Two hotels offered Internet reservation offers. • Hotels offered a brochure print out options. • Several of the surveyed hotel companies have depended on the experience profile of other companies. • Hotels who kept their website presented less number of inconsistencies. • First online attempts were functional[d] . • Several hotels make use of the plug-ins an online camera features. • The majority of the hotels belonged to the web building 3rd generation and the minority to the 2nd generation.	• Not all Websites were included in major search engines[a, b] • Not all Websites achieve highest rank in the listed search engines[c] • An online Cyprus Hotel directory provided outdated data and misleading photos. • Same online Cyprus Hotel directory did not provide secure online payments. • Additional foreign online Cyprus Hotel directory had confusing menu categories. • A majority of the surveyed Hotels' online directory presented a number of inconsistencies. • Online hotel directories website follow a consistent but mass production approach. • Several other website discrepancies did not meet high standards of web design and marketing. • Additional online attempts presented some broken links[e].

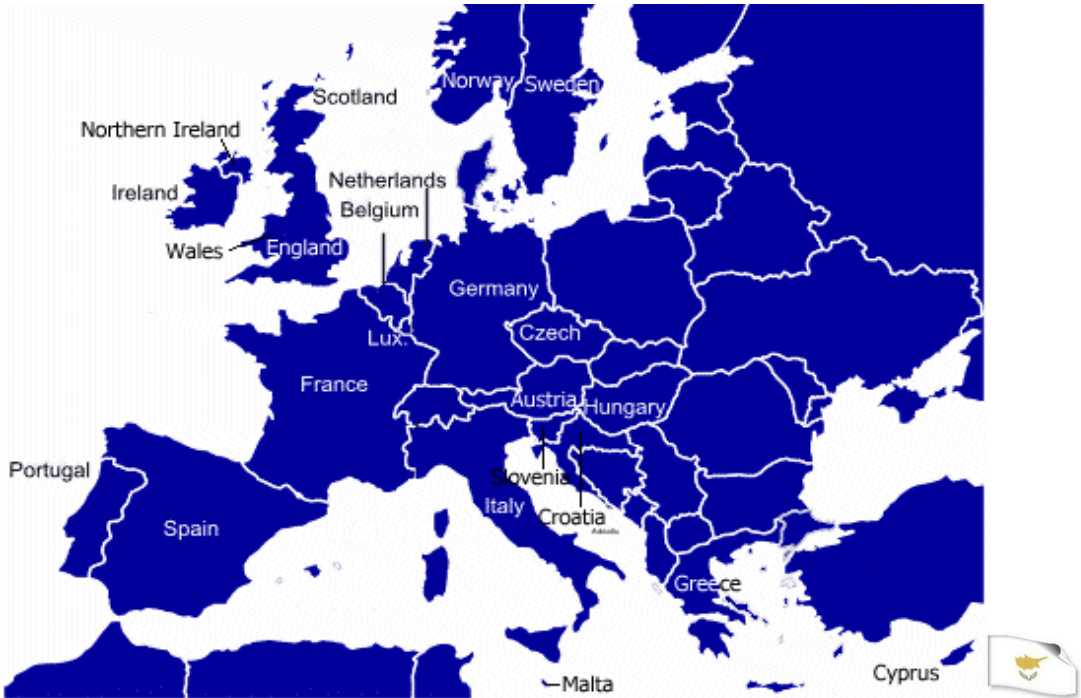a. c. As according to the www.SearchFactor.com link popularity tool.
b. Search Engines included: Google, AllTheWeb, AltaVista, AOL, MSN, Hotbot and Lycos.
d. When online website attempts made from Cyprus the place where hotels originate.
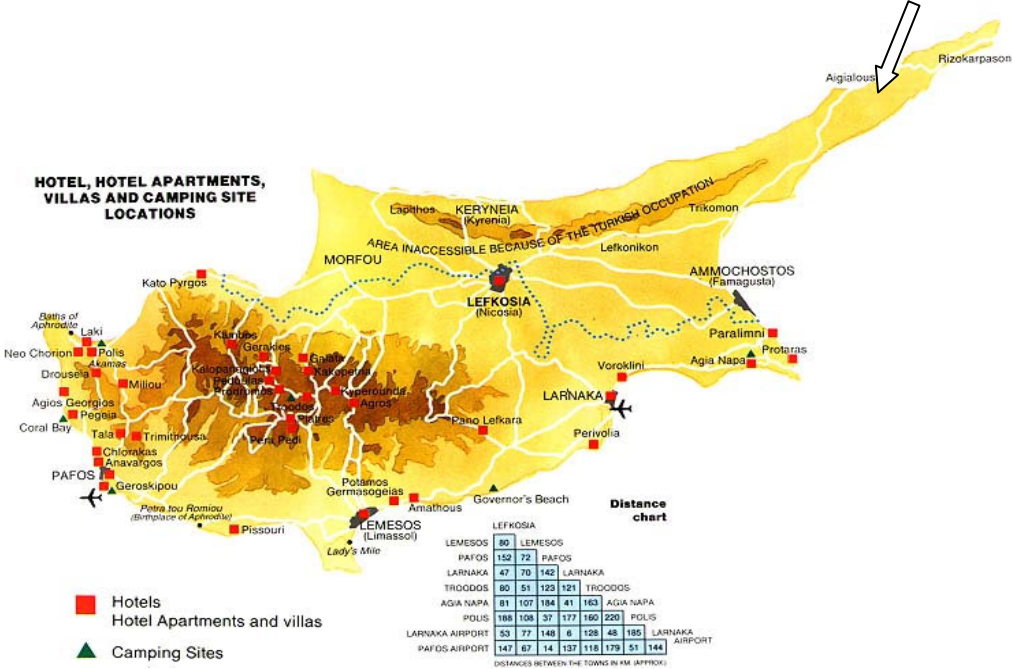e. Attempts made from the United States, the place where the research was completed.

Figure 3

Map of Cyprus

Source:

South East Asia Tours at http://www.southtravels.com/middleeast/cyprus/map.html

Note: The areas and cities of Nicosia, Limassol, Pafos, Larnaca, Ayia Napa, Protaras and Paralimni where the survey was conducted.