

# 3.8a Web/Internet marketing

Internet marketing is an integral component of any marketing plan. Your Internet strategy should compliment and work in conjunction with all your other marketing efforts.

The Internet has quickly become one of the most popular methods for tourists to research and purchase tourism products. Effective Internet marketing provides tourism operators with a number of options for promoting their tourism products and communicating with customers.

## Market research

The Internet is an excellent way to perform market research. Using the Internet to research information such as tourism trends, competitor's offerings, and the needs and wants of tourists, could be a good place to start.

## Website development

In today's world of e-marketing, a tourism business without a website or web presence will be at a significant disadvantage amongst its competitors. Like a newspaper ad or a brochure, the size and depth of your website can vary. No matter what the nature or content of the site, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Your design should be professional. It should appeal to your customers, and clearly represent your services and your products.
- Navigation of the site should be easy, intuitive, and problem-free. Customers should be able to find the information they are looking for in a quick and fluid manner.
- Communication and sales options such as email, telephone numbers, terms and conditions should be easy to locate and functioning.
- Your site should be designed in such a way that customers in your target markets can download information from your site quickly.

## Website maintenance

Once a website is up and running smoothly, it is important that all the content of the site be current and up-to-date. All pricing, contact information, dates and promotional items should be routinely updated to ensure they are accurate and reflect what the customer is actually purchasing.

- The updating and maintenance of the site should be considered during the site design and development stages. You might want to consider software that allows you to update your own site as opposed to relying on someone else to do so. This will leave the speed and accuracy of updates in your hands. If you are not inclined for website maintenance then you should seek the services of an agency that can provide you with this on a scheduled basis.

## Communicating with customers

The Internet, and email in particular, provides you with an effective way to communicate with your customers.

- Be sure customers can easily find your email and telephone contact information on the site.
- Be sure to answer all customer inquiries promptly, professionally and with as much detailed information as possible. If you are unavailable for a period of time, post an automated email response indicating when you will be able to reply.
- Always request email addresses from your customers. When you have promotional offers or your season is set to begin, send your customers or potential customers an email or newsletter with this information. Check with them first though if they wish to be re-contacted in this manner.

## E-commerce

Depending upon the nature of your tourism business, you may want to include an option for customers to purchase goods or services electronically. i.e. online booking forms with credit card payment ability.

# 3.8a Web/Internet marketing

## Guiding customers to your website

The existence and successful functioning of your website means you are ready to engage customers, but it doesn't mean they can find you on the web. To increase customer traffic to your website, consider these ideas:

- Purchase a domain name that is easy to remember and easy to type. The standard formula is the name of your business ending in .com or .ca (.ca represents Canada).
- Place your domain name on all your marketing materials, business cards, signs, and anywhere your business name is found.
- Host your site with a reputable hosting service that provides service-performance guarantees.
- Register your website with all the appropriate search engines and consider a search engine optimization service.
- Actively pursue marketing opportunities to have your site listed as a link on relevant, popular sites.
- Use tracking software that allows you to understand how customers view your site, including information such as country of origin of users, referring sites and search engines, pages used to enter and leave the site, number of visitors, items downloaded, and the most popular pages.

Don't forget your Internet marketing strategy is part of your complete marketing strategy and should look and feel the same as all your other marketing efforts.

## Website tracking packages:

Google Analytics, [www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics), and Onestat, [www.onestat.com](http://www.onestat.com), are among the most popular packages for tracking website statistics.

## Useful sites for further information on e-commerce and e-marketing

### Industry Canada Electronic Commerce Site

[www.e-com.ic.gc.ca](http://www.e-com.ic.gc.ca)

### International Internet Marketing Association

[www.iimaonline.org](http://www.iimaonline.org)

### E-Marketer Online Marketing Magazine

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