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Wondering who we are?

The Tourism Network is an independent, not-for-profit industry support agency. It was established by Susan Briggs, an independent marketing consultant since 1990.

Our aim is to support the UK tourism industry in a practical, enthusiastic and fun way - with training workshops, networking meetings, publications and consultancy advice.

Find out more about our consultancy services as well as the free and low cost ways in which we can help you by going to www.tourismknowledge.com/aboutTN.htm

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No Anorack Needed!

We have a bit of a technology slant in this issue, partly because that's what we've been thinking about lately and partly because of questions from those of you struggling to keep up with the latest geeky gizmos and ideas. We've tried to keep out the techno jargon and provide just enough info so if anyone asks, you'll sound like you know what's going on... If there's something we've not covered, please do get in touch.

Seek and they will find? Helping search engines to rank your site

When I first ran web site marketing courses, everyone was just desperate to know how to get the most out of search engines and bewildered by the huge array of different options. Now it is getting a little easier - at least Google's prominence means there are fewer search engines to get to know.

But you probably still get approaches from Search Engine Optimisation Specialists or other clever sounding "experts". Is it worth spending precious marketing budget on them? It may be, but if your budget is limited you might prefer to learn a DIY approach instead. And even if you are considering commissioning experts to do the job for you, it doesn't hurt to have a vague understanding of search engine optimisation so they don't pull the wool over your eyes.

Let's begin at the beginning. Not all search engines are search engines. Yahoo for example is actually a directory rather than a search engine, compiled by humans doing a task only slightly more fascinating than handling complaints in a call centre. You can "suggest a site" by going to the link at the bottom of their home page.

Real search engines create their listings automatically. They “crawl” the web, scanning sites and pages to compile listings. These listings are determined by elements such as page titles and body copy.

Each search engine has their own special software that sifts through the index and determines the rank of web sites in their listings. This is why your web site will be ranked differently by different search engines. Some search engines also index pages more frequently than others. They may also combine several techniques, using humans and automatic crawlers.

You can find more information about how each search engine or directory works by going to their “help” pages or using the links (usually) at the bottom of their home page.

All that many search engine optimisation “experts” do is use the free tools provided by search engines. So if you have time rather than cash, a DIY approach is probably enough.

Most of us in the UK now use Google but if you’re trying to attract visitors from other countries you might need to get to grips with other search engines.

Almost all search engines base their rankings on these elements:

- keywords appearing in the title;
- keywords appearing near the top of the page, in the headline or first paragraphs;
- pages that mention the keywords more frequently and within their true context, are likely to achieve a higher ranking. But don’t overdo it or you’ll be penalized;
- link popularity is used to some extent by all the search engines to determine how sites should be ranked. The link popularity of your site is determined by the number

of web sites that link to your site. The basic premise being that if other sites link to yours, chances are your site is a decent one. You can find out who is linking to your site at www.linkpopularity.com;

- meta tags are important for some search engines. This is HTML code that surrounds certain words so that search engines can identify keywords when performing a search.

You will need to identify relevant keywords or short phrases for search engine registration, and to use them on your site. These should be at least two words long – focusing on just one word will mean that you are in enormous competition with many other sites, but choosing two together will increase the relevancy of your site in many searches.

For example, the word “hotel” will return thousands of sites, whereas the words, “London hotels” will narrow down the search (a little!). However, there will still be many listings for these two key words so words such as “Central”, “town-house or “budget” or “cheap” might be added.

Think of all the terms and combinations someone looking for you might use. It’s also worth including some words that are spelt incorrectly. For example, many people spell accommodation with only one c or m.

Take a look at what terms are most frequently used by people searching for sites by going to <http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

And if you still want to know more – take a look at www.searchenginewatch.com for the ultimate geeky guide to what’s hot and not in this fascinating virtual world.

Susan Briggs
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Next Tourism Network Event

2nd November: **Russian & Chinese language taster class** - learn just enough to be friendly with Russian and Chinese visitors and decide whether you want to do a full course. Details www.tourismknowledge.com/events.htm

Follow up from the Bateaux Brainstorm

The "Bateaux Brainstorm" took place on one of the Summer's last glorious days and brought together over 100 tourism companies who wanted to share ideas on how to counteract the effects of the London bombings and work together.

We also invited representatives from VisitBritain and Visit London so they could tell the audience more about their initiatives. One of the common complaints had been the lack of communication and consultation.

It wasn't as if the tourist boards were sitting back and not doing anything but many people in the industry either didn't know what the tourist boards were doing or didn't agree with some of the ideas (discounts) but felt there was little choice but to go along with them.

If you'd like a copy of the notes from the meeting email susan@tourismnetwork.org.

Please note that we don't normally provide notes from meetings - you usually have to come along to get the information!

Thank you VisitBritain

We'd like to say a big "thank you" to VisitBritain for being so pro-active and positive. Kenny Boyle and Bernard Donoghue spent time advising and speaking to participants and then followed up by making sure everyone at the meeting was on the VisitBritain mailing list, sending out a special update bulletin and writing the following brief article for this newsletter.

, but here's what **Bernard Donoghue Head of Government and Public Affairs at VisitBritain** has to say.

"Delight and despair came in quick succession when on July 6th London won the right to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, but the following day terrorism revisited London.

The events of the 7th and 21st of July are now estimated to have cost the UK's tourism economy £750million, approximately £550 million is specific to London's tourism economy.

Within an hour of the first news coming through on July 7th VisitBritain initiated its own crisis management procedures as well as calling a meeting of the Tourism Industry Emergency Response group (TIER), the industry's national crisis management group.

TIER comprises Visit London, British Airways, Association of British Travel Agents, the Society of London Theatres, London Development Agency, UKinbound, the British Hospitality Association and Association of Leading Visitor Attractions well as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, amongst others.

TIER commissioned research into the economic effects of the bombings, updated Ministers, agreed media lines for its members to take and became a 'clearing house' for a deluge of information pouring in from

businesses, big and small, across London and the UK who were affected.

VisitBritain's own industry intelligence network - from our overseas offices which kept us updated on how overseas media were covering the London bombings, through to e-mail newsletters and meetings with businesses - has enabled us to accurately assess the impact and, crucially, to determine what is required to recover our domestic and overseas business.

For more information about VisitBritain's marketing activities and the latest industry news go to www.visitbritain.com/ukindustry. You can also sign up online to receive our monthly e-newsletter and any special bulletins relating to serious incidents impacting on UK tourism.

The Tourism Network's Bateaux Brainstorm was another great opportunity to let people know what we have been doing and, equally, to hear from individual businesses about their experiences and ideas for recovery.

Good communication between and within our disparate industry is crucial at times like this, especially if we need to build a case for additional support from central or local Government. In the meantime let's keep talking and listening to each other, work hard to get our business back and provide our customers with a fantastic experience."

We haven't heard from Visit London since we sent them the follow up notes after the meeting so we don't know if they have listened to what some of the partners said about no more discounts or lower membership fees for smaller companies.

Presumably they have been in touch with anyone directly affected.

Message from Superbreak

We also received a message from Ray Jones at Superbreak:

"Following the excellent meeting on Bateaux London, I am pleased to let you know that Superbreak will be working alongside Visit London and Cameron Mackintosh to stimulate demand from the domestic leisure sector this autumn and winter.

I was conscious of the fact that I did not know all of the people in the room and was very impressed with the level of energy and commitment shown by all.

Could I ask you to pass my details to all participants. If anyone wishes to explore how Superbreak might promote their product I would be delighted to hear from them by e mail Ray.Jones@Superbreak.com

Do you blog?

Tourism is a major feature of many blogs and yet few in our industry really understand blogging. So here's the jargon free guide and how you might be able to use a blog for your business - or at least to make a few new friends.

A blog is basically a sort of diary or stream of thoughts posted on to the internet and to which it's easy to respond and add comments. Blogs have become the latest must have, largely because they are so easy to use.

Blogs are now used as background research by travellers before visiting places, using recommendations and comments from others instead of more traditional guidebooks. These "peer to peer" recommendations are set to grow exponentially as more people recognise their power and use.

To take a look at what's already out there and try your hand at your own blog in just a few very easy steps, go to www.blogger.com.

For a great example of a blog site, that relies almost exclusively on "been there, done that" information and personal recommendations see www.tripadvisor.com and see if you are mentioned. Perhaps you can even encourage some of your clients to write and recommend you?

What does your web site DO?

The very first web sites were basically online brochures - the same information and pictures adapted for the net. As time has gone by, the internet has become a vital part of the research process and consumers have become more demanding.

Research commissioned by AOL and the Henley Centre has shown that the purchase and booking process is now more considered and convoluted because consumers want to be better informed. Price is not the exclusive driver.

There are essentially four stages that most consumers go through before they make a booking or purchase. An easy way to improve your web site is to make sure it provides the right information for each of these stages.

1. I know nothing about...

At this stage basic information is all that's needed. Does your web site provide at-a-glance info as well as more detailed descriptions? What sort of information do users need? Do you provide it? Is it instantly obvious where you are and what you offer?

2. I want to compare...

It's unlikely that visitors will come to you without comparing with another destination,

attraction or place to stay. So make sure your site shows how you are better or different to your competition. This doesn't mean bad-mouthing the competition or even mentioning them. You simply need to make your unique selling points crystal clear.

3. Final "just in case" check

At this point consumers are almost convinced. They are about to place a booking but will do some final research before doing so, perhaps looking at other official or non-official sources of information to see if you are mentioned.

This is when it's important to make sure consumers can see that you are members or any appropriate organisation, that you're listed within other sites such as those run by VisitBritain or regional tourist boards and mentioned in guide books or on peer to peer sites, such as tripadvisor.

Consumers increasingly want to book direct and not via travel agents and operators but they spend a great deal of time cross-checking before making their bookings. Perhaps you also need a clear list of responses to Frequently Asked Questions?

4. A little reassurance about my choice

Even when they've made their booking or decision (or are just about to do so), consumers are still anxious to make sure they've made the right choice. Or perhaps they want to build their sense of anticipation about coming to see you.

This is when they'll take a quick final look at your web site. Are the photos the most attractive possible? Are there any "add ons" to your service that you need to tell them about? Is it clear how to get to you?

The internet is also changing how people perceive branded and other well-known products. They often prefer them because

they inspire confidence and consumers believe they know what they're getting even before they'd made a booking.

But this is now changing, largely due to the power of the internet and way that consumers conduct such intensive research. The AOL survey found that 42% of online consumers have changed their mind about a brand they were going to buy and switched to a different brand and 43% of online consumers decided not to purchase a certain brand after they'd conducted their research.

Susan Briggs

Want to improve your web site?

Ask about our web site analysis and spring clean service - the most cost effective way to add sparkle to your site and differentiate from the competition

We take a look at your site, assess it and provide suggestions for its improvement as well as consumer testing methods that don't cost a fortune.

The price of the assessment and our recommendations depends on the site but starts at £750 + VAT.

Email susan@tourismnetwork.org or call 07768 365591 for more details

What's Wiffy?

Wi-Fi stands for "wireless fidelity" and taken purely as a concept is unlikely to appeal to anyone other than super-geeks. But if you can bear with me for a moment, you'll see that it's really pretty marvelous for us all. Really.

Normally computers and printers are networked together on a LAN or Local Area

Network. This means that every computer and printer is physically connected together via cables, in addition to the internet connection through a phone line. A lot of wires to trip over.

Wi-Fi replaces all this cabling with a 'wire free' system, not too dissimilar to the cordless phone system in your home. There is a base station, as with the phone system, and your computer or laptop has a Wi-Fi receiver (the phone in the cordless phone analogy), and the two communicate with each other. A Wi-Fi enabled laptop computer can be taken anywhere within range of the base station and still connect to e-mail and the Internet.

The benefits are numerous:

Cost - no need for all those cables and you can put computer terminals all over the place without having to run wires through walls.

Easy - every corner can enjoy internet access. Someone in a ticket kiosk in the grounds of a historic house can be connected to the main operations' centre through Wi-Fi. No more feeling like Nobbie No-mates alone in a field.

Same speed and quality - there is no difference in the speed or quality of a cabled or Wi-Fi network.

Increased mobility - people are no-longer restricted to working only at their desks or in offices. I'm able to write this outside in the sun - it's just the sun I'm missing.

The cost of creating Wi-Fi networks in places like coffee shops are low, leading to the creation of many new "Wi-Fi hotspots", places with Wi-Fi access or coverage. Some Wi-Fi hotspot owners make a charge whereas others offer it as a free service, knowing it encourages clients to linger and spend more on refreshments etc.

Hotels have also benefited. In the same way that some hotels have started upgrading in

room entertainment to include flat panel televisions, high-speed Internet access may soon be as common as soap in the bathroom.

Hotels can even have the best of two worlds. They can provide free Wi-Fi access for residents and be a paid-for hotspot for non-residents. It is worth noting that North American leisure travellers increasingly also want to be able to access their e-mail whilst travelling, and are making accommodation decisions based on this.

It is also likely that pubs will get a welcome boost during the day-time by installing Wi-Fi to attract business travellers and people who want to hold informal meetings with Internet access.

Internet access is not the only way in which Wi-Fi is being used. The London-based chain of noodle restaurants, Wagamama has adopted Wi-Fi in its day-to-day operations. The waiters are equipped with handheld computers running on a Wi-Fi network, with immediate connection to the kitchen and pay point. They can even accept orders from customers waiting to be seated and have their chosen food on the table immediately the customers sit down, ensuring faster turnover.

The implications for major visitor attractions are equally dramatic. Overseas' visitors to museums or galleries could easily bring along their own Wi-Fi enabled device and access the museum web site in their own language with information on exhibits, restaurants and special viewings.

Attractions with large queues can use mobile terminals to take bookings, issue tickets and provide all manner of information services previously only possible via tethered equipment, thus improving customer service.

Elias Moubayed

Civic Pride

What is the most boring marketing campaign you have ever run?

Was it a 2 for 1 voucher offer last Easter? Perhaps you spent thousands on a door-drop campaign in Manchester? Or maybe you were lucky enough to attend the Day's Out Fairs in exotic locations around the country?

We work in such a glamorous industry don't we? Where is the foreign travel and strategic campaigns with airlines and far-flung destinations? Hey, it ain't gonna happen.

For those of you with no more stomach for what the Mayor of London thinks will keep our industry afloat, why not try something really dull? It is perceived as being so dull in fact, it isn't even on the radar. Except in East London.

TourEast London, the destination marketing organisation for East London will be working with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets on a campaign that we hope will encourage the 200,000 or so residents living there to take a fresh look at their neighbourhood.

Tower Hamlets boasts some of the most diverse tourism products in the country, including such wonders as Canary Wharf, the Woman's Library, Ideas Stores, Lounge Lover, Billingsgate Fish Market, and Subterranean art to name but a few.

Residents will be invited to visit local attractions, open spaces, galleries etc so that they can sample the local tourism offer with the aim of harnessing not only their buying power, but their powerful word of mouth recommendations which we hope will reach the ears and purses of their Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR).

Why, I hear you ask, would you want to do something as unglamorous as that? Well -

1. We believe we can broaden the audience for any tourism operator and leisure provider.
2. We can undertake research into the VFR market through the participants of the campaign.
3. We can support a sense of civic pride and identity.
4. We can encourage the residents of Tower Hamlets to support their local businesses.
5. We can help the borough to revitalise their residents' impressions of the borough and its attractions.
6. We can also use it to explain why visitors want to come and what the value is to the local economy.
7. We can also use this campaign to thank the residents for putting up with the thousands of tourists who wear out the cobbles and drink all the cold beer in summer.
8. Best of all, it isn't going to cost very much.

There are quite a few cities across the country who run similar campaigns - which begs the question, why hasn't London? - and here are some of the outstanding results from Birmingham City's campaign run in 2003/04.

- They ran the campaign for one week, pre-season and they estimate, they generated a minimum of 6,000 additional visits.
- They discovered that 66% of their residents had an overnight visitor from outside Birmingham in the past 12 months.
- Extensive press and PR support from local media, including television (there's the glamour!), radio and press.

- 49% of those surveyed said they would not otherwise have visited the attractions.
- A staggering 69% of those surveyed visited later in the year as a direct result of the campaign.
- 81% agreed the campaign had made them more aware of what is on offer in the city.
- 97% said they would recommend venues and attractions they had now visited to their friends and relatives.

Get lobbying. Get onto your local council, regional tourist board, or start calling in some of those favours. These projects take considerable time and partnership working, and I hope to be to report a positive outcome in Tower Hamlets campaign early next year.

Mary Tebje
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upcomm™ update

For those of you who read, learn and inwardly digest every word that is written in our articles here at The Tourism Network (which of course is everyone) you'll have been aware of the new mobile phone technology we introduced some months ago called upcomm™.

With just one click your advertisement, information, events, e.ticketing, bookings, audio clips, video, opening hours, virtual tour, in fact anything you can imagine appears instantly on your camera-phone screen - from anywhere in the world 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

By the end of 2005 it will be available on 80% of smart technology camera-phones. This simple but ingenious application is already taking off in Finland, where the product was designed and developed over the past 10 years. As recently reported in the Sunday

Times, in the UK alone (2004) there were 48.7m users, of which 28.5% had a phone camera. That's a remarkable 14m people, and growing annually, nearly half of mobile phones sold in Britain now include a camera!

So why is it important for tourism? Well, as the upcomm™ logo says, "ignite your imagination".

A printed code (or uplink™) which can be as small as 1 cm x 1 cm is linked securely to whatever web, wap or domain name you choose. This makes it a direct and immediate link to whatever you provide at that address. This could be a rolling events calendar, a virtual tour of hotel rooms, seat availability and booking at the theatre, ticket booking for a rail journey or travel information, downloading a free tube map, information and extended information on your product or service, real time updates or advice.

It's very easy to use, for businesses and the public. All they need to do is just point - and the phone does the rest, immediately receiving the relevant information for the user to see.

The BBC have recently used it for extended information on coastal walks around the UK recently, and upcomm™ uplinks are soon to appear on the front page of Finland's FT giving real time news in a media that was always a day behind. Importantly, this is an area where the tourism industry could see the greatest benefit with real time access to information. No more out of date ads, books, guides, signs, posters, leaflets - just click and get right up to speed.

The upcomm™ programme is available to download free of charge (a list of current phones is featured on the site) at - www.upcomm.net

There, you'll see two examples illustrating just how easy and effective the application

can be - try it for yourself and we'll ensure we keep you informed, through The Tourism Network, on this new technology as you see it appear more and more in everyday use.



“IGNITE YOUR IMAGINATION”

Mark Hendriksen
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SHINE Awards

Women represent over 60% of the UK travel. The SHINE Awards™ were set up in 2004 to recognise and celebrate the accomplishments of women in travel, tourism and the hospitality industry. By recognizing outstanding women, these awards aim to highlight the distinctiveness, the innovation and the effectiveness of their contribution to the industry while highlighting the importance of continuous professional development.

There are six different categories recognising individual effort and outstanding achievements by women working in both the public and private sectors and in the same time provide role model and inspiration to all women in the industry: Business Woman of the Year Award; Young Achiever of the Year Award; Business Owner of the Year Award; Public Sector Woman of the Year Award; Business Expert of the Year Award; The 'SHINE' Woman of the Year Award.

Nominations for the 2006 Awards are now open and close on Friday 23rd December. Nomination's form and information are available on the SHINE Awards™ website, www.shineawards.com

Dream working holidays?

I was recently sent a link to a website that really made me smile.

We often talk about creating niche products for which we can charge a premium and this is a great example. It takes advantage of several trends but particularly the fact that so many people would like to change their lives yet are cautious about doing so.

Vocation Vacations lets you try out another career for a day or so before you make that scary leap. They charge pretty heavily for the privilege. If for example, you fancy a couple of days working with my brother-in-law at his hotel in Chicago, it'll cost \$800 and that doesn't even include accommodation. One way of recruiting keen staff I suppose!

www.vocationvacations.com/DreamJobHolidays/hotel-monaco.php

There are a few UK examples on the site but it could definitely do with more. At present the UK hospitality industry seems to be represented by a pub in West Sussex.

If you'd like to make some money out of people's fascination with the "glamour" of the tourism industry (or maybe just rid them of their delusion), this could be the way forward. You can suggest your organisation via the site.

www.vocationvacations.com

Making training more tempting

Can't decide whether it's worth investing in training or need to know what's right for you and your staff?

One of the most often cited reasons why businesses don't invest in training is the cost. So as part of one of our ESF-funded projects, we've put together a toolkit that helps you to work out whether training is really worth the money. The toolkit also includes a training needs analysis tool so you can assess exactly what it is you need.

The toolkit is free to download and if you want to complete the training needs analysis section, you can return it to us (sorry, London-based businesses only) and we'll send you a proposal telling you what training is actually available - much of it at low cost. We aren't selling our own training workshops at the moment so you can be certain that the information we send to you is independent and appropriate.

Download the toolkit now by simply going to <http://www.tourismtraining.info/toolkit.pdf>

Have the last word... for free

Even though international phone charges are now pretty cheap, the prospect of free phone calls is currently attracting a lot of attention. If you haven't already heard of Skype, you'll likely to hear a lot more about it very soon.

Free phone calls, great line quality and easy to use - this new technology can not fail to impress. Since e-Bay's announcement that they would buy the company, Skype's aggressive development looks even more assured.

How does it work? The basic computer-to-computer service allows users to speak, to send instant messages or to send files to one another from their computers via the Internet at no cost. Skype users need to download the Skype software which is free and simple to use.

If you make and receive international phone calls, it's worth taking a look at the Skype website for more information www.skype.com.

The Tourism Network Handbook

Our handy new Tourism Network Handbook costs just £10. It's FREE to London based businesses employing less than 250 people.

Its contents include:

- information about who does what in the tourism industry and how it all fits together
- a round up of industry bodies, statistics, where to get more information and recent research
- useful support organisations and trade associations
- industry and training jargon buster
- details of tourism training - what's available, from which organisations and how to benefit
- promotional calendar, public and religious holidays around the world, key industry events, conferences, and trade shows.
- how to be compliant - key industry legislation and what courses can help you comply

Email susan@tourismnetwork.org to obtain your copy now.

Some of The Tourism Network's events are part-funded by the London Development Agency and European Social Fund.

We are also working in partnership with People 1st.

