

5.4 TUI AG: Interactive Environmental Website



Description of Good Practice

TUI AG, which is the parent company of some 400 tour operators, hotel companies, airlines, travel agencies and other tourism-related businesses, is Europe's travel market leader. In 1996, the company's Environmental Management Department launched its own web site (www.tui-umwelt.com and www.tui-environment.com), independent of the company's main site.

The site targets co-operating partners in TUI destinations, local authorities, municipal representatives, tourism officers, nature conservation organisations, experts in tourism and environment, travel agents, hoteliers and TUI guests (see Box 1). To make it easier to navigate the site, the information is organised by target audience, allowing each group to access information tailored to their specific needs through special micro-sites.

For example, the micro-site for TUI guests and travel agents provides comprehensive information about environmentally sound TUI hotels and the current state of nature and the environment in destinations. The information on destinations is based on annual environmental reports by TUI representatives, verified by destination representatives and the Environmental Management Department. The information on hotel management is based on annual environmental monitoring of hotels by TUI. Complementary information is provided to customers and distribution partners about current environmental projects in destinations, including information on reforestation, animal welfare, species protection, marine biology, biodiversity and climate protection. Travel agents can use the micro-site to promote environmentally sound TUI hotels and destinations with exceptional environmental initiatives.

A further micro-site is addressed to hoteliers and includes best practices for environmentally sound hotel management, with a particular focus on TUI's environmental work, such as environmental monitoring and environmental criteria for hotels, destinations and carriers.

The web site is not only a static medium for information dissemination, but also a dynamic meeting place, thanks to a voting system that allows users to vote online about subjects being discussed. Customer feedback by e-mail indicates that awareness of environmental issues is increasing.

The website provides the full range of environmental information in German and English, while summary versions are offered in French, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. The site attracts visitors from 82 countries worldwide, primarily during business hours, indicating a predominant use of the site by professionals.

The contents of the site were developed by the staff of TUI's Environmental Management Department. Until recently, the site contained only static html pages, which meant that updating pages required input from an external agency with the necessary html skills. However, the recent re-launch of the site included a transfer of the existing information into a



AN INDEPENDENT WEB SITE TARGETING ALL PARTNERS



IN 2001 THE WEBSITE WAS AWARDED THE GOLDEN UMWELT-ONLINE AWARD BY B.A.U.M AND THE GERMAN MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

database, with a content management system that allows the site to be updated and expanded in-house. The log files allow hits to be systematically analysed by time of day, access by country and access by net service providers.

Implementation

An important goal of site implementation was to make the domain name widely known. This goal was achieved by referring to the site when responding to all requests for information and preparing a two-language information brochure to explain the site's structure in detail to first-time users. Another important goal during implementation was the establishment of a feedback mechanism to improve the site.

Benefits

The interactive environmental website has proven to be a powerful communication tool with the following benefits:

- Partners, research organisations, environmental groups and journalists can access comprehensive information online about current departmental work;
- The site has enabled and strengthened communications and dialogue with TUI customers and environmental organisations in destinations;
- The site gives TUI guests the opportunity to find out more about the environment in their destinations and environmentally sound hotels before their trips;
- Feedback from TUI customers by e-mail shows that customers are being sensitised to environmental issues;
- Interaction with users helps build contacts with local people that can result in new initiatives;
- Customers' demands with respect to sustainable tourism can be identified and developed into environmentally friendly products;
- Online communication enables local people in the destinations to participate in the environmental aspects of tourism development;
- Paper consumption has been reduced, because information is provided online; and
- The site provides up-to-the-minute corporate environmental (and sustainability) reporting for stakeholders and shareholders, enhancing value and transparency.

Box 1: Goals of www.tui-umwelt.com

The goals of TUI's environmental website are to provide:

- Comprehensive information on all TUI Corporate Environmental Management activities to all target groups;
- Communication and dialogue with TUI customers, partners and environmental organisations in the destinations;
- Information to TUI customers about the environmental qualities of hotels, destinations and modes of transportation;
- An 'argument-aid' for travel agents when selling environmentally sound hotels and destinations;
- A view of TUI environmental activities as part of product quality and ethics that differentiate TUI from its competitors;
- A means of updating environmental information to complement environmental reporting for stakeholders, shareholders and financial analysts;
- An up-to-date and interactive site to sustain user loyalty and create a specific net community; and
- Support for TUI e-business and e-commerce.

Comments

In July 2001, www.tui-umwelt.com was awarded the golden 'Umwelt-Online-Award', in recognition of it being a particularly informative and user-friendly internet site on environmental conservation and sustainable development. The award is organised by B.A.U.M. (the German Environmental Management Association), with Jürgen Trittin, the Federal Environmental Minister, as its patron.