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VisitScotland.com Effectiveness Study

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VisitScotland.com Effectiveness Study - September 2009

Report submitted to VisitScotland.com

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Executive Summary

This report is a culmination of a comprehensive piece of research that studied the effectiveness of Visitscotland.com on a longitudinal basis over an eight month period from January 2009 up until August 2009. The purpose of the research is twofold. Firstly, the main purpose of the study was to evaluate how effectively VisitScotland.com serves its many stakeholders from a wide variety of perspectives. The second reason for conducting this research was to validate an expert system created specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of Destination Management Systems (DMS) from Macro, Meso, and Micro viewpoints.

This report is divided into two main sections. The first section contains Macro level measurements which outline, in general terms, how well Visitscotland.com is achieving it's goals. The second section details how effectively each area of the website is working (Meso Level) and, more importantly, provides actionable (Micro level) metrics which highlight what needs to be improved to increase the overall effectiveness of the DMS.

Prior to the commencement of this study a prior piece of research used a Delphi study to develop and evaluate a comprehensive set of criteria for measuring the effectiveness of a Destination Management Systems (DMS) based website and, consequently, incorporated these criteria into an expert system that was used to measure and improve the effectiveness of a DMS. The expert system that resulted is comprised of 12 critical dimensions of destination website effectiveness (Effectiveness Funnel - Page 53), broken down into 105 individual actionable criteria which were evaluated using a total of 412 separate objective metrics.

This study began by investigating the best possible methods of feeding these inputs and did so by examining every single metric in the evaluation framework and deciding on the most appropriate technique for collecting the data required to calculate it. At a very early stage it became blatantly obvious that examining a DMS based website from one particular perspective could not provide a comprehensive overview of the system and that a combination of perspectives and inputs were required. The sources used to calculate these metrics included data gathered from a customer side survey (146 responses), an accommodation provider survey (822 responses with a very high response rate of 33.8%), a DMS survey completed by the management of Visitscotland.com, an eMetric evaluation and one other perspective which includes a website evaluation and other elements. The breakdown of these inputs is illustrated in the system inputs section on page 54. None of these perspectives should be viewed in pure isolation as there are clear relationships within the critical thinking that form the basis for the use of each and every input.

The overall effectiveness of VisitScotland.com as a tool for the marketing and distributing of Scotland as a destination to its prospective customer is 61.2%. While some of the areas of the website are obviously working effectively, such as acquisition (99.7%) and website performance (82.8%), other areas need some serious attention. These areas can be substantially approved by focusing on the Meso and Micro level metrics featured throughout this report. Finally, this report is only intended for internal distribution within the VisitScotland organisation.

Moratorium Placed on the Findings