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Keywords

Comparative, Analysis, Use, Web, for, Destination, Marketing, Regional, Tourism, Organisations, Chile, Asia, Pacific

Disciplines

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF THE WEB FOR DESTINATION MARKETING BY REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATIONS IN CHILE AND THE ASIA PACIFIC

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Abstract

With reports of travel purchases and reservations being one of the fastest growing segments of the Internet community (eMarketer, 2002), it is no surprise that the number of tourism operators on the Web has increased considerably over the past few years. In recent years, Australia and Chile have developed strong social and economic ties. With the introduction of direct air links between Australia and Chile in July 2002, the number of Australian business people and tourists visiting Chile and neighbouring countries increased significantly. This isn't surprising considering approximately 35,000 Chileans live in Australia (DFAT, 2005). This paper presents the results of a comparison of the use of Web technologies by Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) in the Chilean and Asia Pacific tourism industries. The Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA) (Burgess and Cooper, 2000) was used to assess the web sites of RTOs to determine the extent of adoption and level of integration of web technologies for destination marketing. A significant finding of this study is the number of RTOs sites offering Stage 3 functionality (transaction processing) in Chile compared with the Asia Pacific region. The results of the study add further support to the premise of the model, that is, in developing commercial websites, businesses in this industry sector typically start simply by establishing a presence on the Web and build on functionality over time, as their experience and expertise in the use of Internet technologies increases.

Keywords: Electronic Commerce, Regional Tourism, Destination Marketing, Internet, World Wide Web

INTRODUCTION

Research contends that the search for information used to plan travel is likely to take longer and to involve the use of more information sources than the search for information about other consumer products (Fodness and Murray, 1999; Goodrich, 2000; Legohérel et al., 2000). The information-based nature of tourism products means that the Internet, which offers global reach and multimedia capability, is an increasingly important means of promoting and distributing tourism and travel services (cf. Walle 1996). The Internet is a potentially significant means of promotion and destination marketing for many regions, particularly as the travelling public's "technology confidence" (Carter, 2002) continues to build.

The information-intensive nature of the tourism and travel industry suggests an important role for Web technology in the promotion and marketing of tourist destinations, while recent innovations in technology have provided regional tourism with a "new set of destination marketing tools." (Carter, 2002). With reports of travel purchases and reservations being one of the fastest growing segments of the Internet community (eMarketer, 2002), it is no surprise that the number of tourism operators on the Web has increased considerably over the past

few years. Globally, revenues from the online travel industry will rise to a predicted USD 13.3 billion in 2004. The travel market in the US alone is currently worth \$190 billion. By 2006 more than half of its total business will be booked online (PhoCusWright, 2003). The aim of the overall research project is to build a global picture of the use of Web technologies by Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs). Phase one of the research centred on the tourism industry in the countries and Islands of the Asia-Pacific region (Burgess and Cooper, 2000; Burgess et al., 2001; Doolin et al., 2001a; Doolin et al., 2001b; Burgess et al., 2002; Doolin et al., 2003; Burgess et al., 2003a; Doolin et al., 2003; Burgess et al., 2004). This current project extends the study to the Americas and compares the results of a study undertaken in 2005 on the use of the web for destination marketing by the Chilean National Tourism Service, SERNATUR and privately operated Regional Tourism Organisations in Chile with the 2004 findings in the Asia Pacific (Burgess et al., 2004).

The tourism industry is characterised by offering complimentary business, with a tourist typically using a range of travel products including air travel, car hire, accommodation and tour services. These services are provided by a range of different organisations. Planning of such tourism and travel services can be expedited through a well designed and organised website, ensuring that the right choices are made, resulting in a more enjoyable experience for the tourist (Rita, 2000). It can also serve as a distribution point for all the services a tourist will need to plan their vacation. Tourism destinations “emerge as umbrella brands, hence, destination marketing organisations increasingly have to identify niche markets and develop their interactivity with potential tourists” (Rita, 2000, pg.2). Rita (2000) proposes that each tourist destination must have a major website acting as a gateway providing a “one-stop” portal to the destination rather than relying on a fragmented number of individual Web sites.

In recent years, Australia and Chile have developed strong social and economic ties. With the introduction of direct air links between Australia and Chile in July 2002, the number of Australian business people and tourists visiting Chile and neighbouring countries increased significantly. This isn’t surprising considering approximately 35,000 Chileans live in Australia (DFAT, 2005). A comparison of the adoption of web technologies by countries in the Asia-Pacific region (particularly Australia) and Chile provides insight into the role such technologies play in destination marketing and ways in which RTOs can benefit from the increasing level of tourism between the two regions. The successful adoption of web technologies as a means of marketing destinations for each region in the study takes on greater significance when the economic benefits of tourism and tourism related ventures is taken into account.

Figures taken from the 2004 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), shown below in table 1 indicate Australian and Chilean global rankings for tourism demand and the average annual growth rate percentage forecasted for these countries and New Zealand for 2005-2007.

Tourism Demand	Country	World ranking	US\$ Millions
	USA	1	1,460,100
	Australia	10	94,033
	Chile	54	7,160
Tourism Growth *	Country	World ranking	Annual %*
	Malaysia	1	20.9
	Chile	68	5.5
	Australia	76	5.3
	New Zealand	120	4.3
	USA	129	4.1

Table 1: Travel & Tourism Demand 2004 US\$ Millions and The APEC Travel & Tourism Economies, Travel & Tourism Demand 2005-2014, Annualized Percent* (Source: World Tourism and Travel Council, 2004)

REGIONAL TOURISM

The Tourism industry is an important driver for regional development with the development of new opportunities contingent on the type and quality of a region’s natural assets, the management capabilities of regional tourism organisations and operators, and the degree of appropriate support from governments at all levels (Tourism White Paper 2003). Tourism also provides an opportunity for sustainable development of regions, with the tourism industry providing a wide variety of products and services, including adventure tourism, culture and

heritage, transport, accommodation, retail and hospitality. According to the Australian Government Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, domestic tourism, that is Australians travelling within Australia, delivers \$25 billion per year to regional Australia – equal to 57 per cent of total domestic tourism expenditure. Tourism related employment in regional areas generates 206,000 jobs or 38 per cent of all tourism employment (AGDITR 2005). Regional destination marketing organisations called Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) form part of the Tourism industry structure, and it is these organisations that are the focus of the current study. RTOs form an important layer between central government and the local tourism industry, with the potential for provision of a coordinated and comprehensive marketing effort. RTOs also act as a portal for visitor access to tourism operators and service providers.

Regional Tourism Organisations are typically public funded organisations with the primary function of promoting tourism throughout a region. RTOs may take many forms, however they tend to be most commonly represented in the form of Tourist Information and Visitor Centres. In a broader sense however, any organisation which promotes a region in terms of tourism related goods and services could potentially be classified as an RTO. Traditionally RTOs have acted as an initial contact point for tourists/ visitors and provide information on attractions, accommodation and services offered within that particular region. In recent years, there has been a trend towards supplementing the traditional 'bricks and mortar' RTO with a website offering services via the World Wide Web (WWW).

This capacity compliments the traditional RTO locations throughout Asia-Pacific and the Americas and provides an alternative and more feasible contact point particularly for international visitors who increasingly use the Web to research their holiday destinations before arrival. A particular benefit of web technology adoption by RTOs is seen as an increased ability for smaller businesses to compete online, enabling them to market their product to the global marketplace at a greatly reduced cost.

TOURISM IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

The Asia-Pacific has been a vehicle for the exchange of cultures, ideas, crafts, beliefs, peoples and technologies between the East and the West. In 1991 there was a renewed interest in the region with respect to cultural exchange, trade and tourism (WTO, 2004). The number of tourists travelling to the region has grown rapidly. In the increasingly competitive tourism marketplace (with beach tourism forming a considerable sector within the industry), islands in the Pacific are capitalising on the economic benefits that accrue from the development of tourism.

It is likely that the Asia and Pacific region will continue to be the focus of the worldwide tourism industry in the future. Over the last decade, tourist arrivals and receipts rose faster than any other region in the world, almost twice the rate of industrialised countries (WTO, 2004). Between 1980 and 1995, tourist arrivals in the region rose at an annual rate of 15% (WTO, 2004). The WTO (2004) projects that by the year 2010, the region will surpass the Americas to become the world's number two tourist region, with an estimated 229 million arrivals. The region is now regarded as a major generator and receiver of tourism, this is attributed to a number of factors such as: strong economic growth, increase in disposable income and leisure time, easing of travel restrictions, successful tourism promotion, and a recognition by host governments that tourism is a powerful growth engine and generator of foreign exchange earnings (Singh, 1997).

Tourism is one of the most important sectors in the economies of Asia Pacific countries. Overall, the region has witnessed a general economic recovery which has led to an increase in domestic and international tourism activities. Marketing campaigns have been more focussed towards selected markets. Many of the countries in the region have benefited from assistance provided by the WTO. For example, Malaysia's Rural Tourism Master Plan, aimed at providing guidance for controlled development of rural tourism and consultancy assistance in the areas of policy direction, infrastructure development, marketing and training.

The World Tourism Organisation (2004) reports that high growth rates can still be found in the North-East and South Asian countries, most of which have fully recovered from their 2003 losses. The strong impact of SARS on destinations of North-East and South-East Asia like China, Hong Kong and Macau, Malaysia and Singapore has largely been overcome. Despite the SARS outbreak in the region, travel to most destinations has grown by over 15% in 2003, reaching over 100% during April. The region has witnessed a renewed interest in travel to and from China, while arrivals to the Philippines and Singapore increased by almost 25%. Other factors contributing to growth in the region include expansion of the Indian economy and rising tourism levels in Australia and New Zealand (WTO, 2003).

TOURISM IN LATIN AMERICA

The World Tourism Organisation (October, 2004) reports that the period from January to August 2004 revealed an incredible resurgence of tourism in all regions. Worldwide the number of international tourist arrivals is reported to have grown by an estimated 12% compared to the same time in the previous year. Furthermore, in August 2004, the number of worldwide international tourist arrivals reached 90 million for the first time. This growth is in contrast to the previous year's depressed figures due to the Iraq war, SARS and the weakened global economy. According to WTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangialli (27 October, 2004) "tourism has recovered strongly in 2004, in particular in Asia and the Pacific and in the America's and is again on an ascent curve". Central and South America have continued to grow strongly with increases of 19% and 15% respectively.

Over recent decades some Latin American countries have experienced an important economic development due to the positive effect of tourism on the service sector. This growth rate is attributed to regional political and economic stability, favourable exchange rates and recovery of the US economy. Despite a downturn in the industry sector in the period 2002/3, Chile experienced strong growth in arrivals (+17%), second only to Uruguay with a growth rate of 29%. Factors adversely impacting growth in recent years include: slowdown of the US economy; continuous depreciation of the Chilean peso; recession; and a lack of a coherent national tourism strategic development plan. Notwithstanding, Chile is set to become one of Latin America's most promising markets, due mainly to "the energy and professionalism of its entrepreneurs, the transparency of its regulation and the predictability of its decision makers" (Euromonitor, 2004).

	2004			2014		
	US\$ bn	% of Total	Growth1	US\$ bn	% of Total	Growth2
Personal Travel & Tourism	42.6	5.9	5.7	76.1	6.3	4.0
Business Travel	15.2	---	9.5	27.2	---	4.2
Capital Investment	19.7	9.4	10.9	37.7	9.9	5.1
Visitor Exports	14.8	6.0	11.5	30.0	5.8	5.3
Travel & Tourism Demand	108.5	---	7.7	200.9	---	4.5
T&T Industry GDP	30.3	2.7	7.2	53.6	2.8	4.0
T&T Industry Employment	4,395.6	2.6	6.2	5,659.1	2.7	2.6

Table 2: Latin America – Tourism Forecasts (Adapted from Latin America Market Trends, Infoamericas)

Its increasingly diversified economy and strong economic ties with the Americas, Europe and Asia present Chile with a wide array of options for the future growth of tourism in the region. With its many different climates and its diversified and unique geography, Chile has much to offer, including deserts, high mountains, fertile valleys, channels islands and glaciers. Additionally, Chile offers visitors hotels of international standard, a largely quiet and safe environment with political and financial stability.

THE EXTENDED MODEL OF INTERNET COMMERCE ADOPTION (eMICA)

The Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (MICA) was originally developed for a study in the Australian metal fabrication industry (Burgess and Cooper 1998). The model proposes that in developing commercial web sites, SME organisations typically start simply by establishing a presence on the Web and build on functionality over time, as their experience with and expertise in the use of Internet technologies increases. In addition, as Web sites build on complexity, so will the number of functional components incorporated into the site increase. MICA consists of three stages, incorporating three levels of business process – Web-based promotion, provision of information and services, and transaction processing. The stages of development provide a roadmap that indicates where a business or industry sector is in its development of Internet commerce applications.

As sites move through the stages of development from inception (promotion) through consolidation (provision) to maturity (processing), layers of complexity and functionality are added to the site. This addition of layers is synonymous with the business moving from a static Internet presence through increasing levels of interactivity to

a dynamic site incorporating value chain integration and innovative applications to add value through information management and rich functionality.

Since the original study in 1998, MICA was applied to the government sector (Boon 1999) and tourism industry (Burgess and Cooper 2000) in Australia, resulting in its enhancement as an extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA). The central tenet of the extended model is that while businesses develop Internet commerce applications in stages as proposed by the original version of MICA, complexity and functionality vary greatly between applications, and even between businesses in an industry sector. In line with this, the extended model proposes that a number of additional layers of complexity, ranging from very simple to highly sophisticated, exist within the identified main stages of MICA. Increased levels of interactivity are evident as sites progress through each of the stages/levels of the eMICA model.

The extended model (eMICA) adds several layers of sophistication of functionality and innovation within the three main stages, in order to accommodate the wide range of Internet commerce development evidenced in industries such as tourism. Research conducted in Australia by the Centre for Regional Tourism indicates Local Tourism Associations have been concerned about how they integrate web based systems into their operations, and how they evaluate use of the web (CRTR 2004). eMICA is an ideal model for such organisations to address these concerns. The eMICA model is summarised in Table 3.

eMICA	Examples of functionality
Stage 1 - Promotion Layer 1 – basic information Layer 2 – rich information	company name, physical address and contact details, area of business annual report, email contact, information on company activities
Stage 2 - Provision Layer 1 – low level interactivity Layer 2 – medium interactivity Layer 3 – high interactivity	basic product catalogue, hyperlinks to further information, online enquiry form higher-level product catalogues, customer support (e.g. FAQs, sitemaps), industry-specific value-added features chat room, discussion forum, multimedia, newsletters or updates by email
Stage 3 - Processing	secure online transactions, order status and tracking, interaction with corporate servers and databases

Table 3: The extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA) (adapted from Burgess and Cooper, 2000, in Doolin et al. 2001a).

METHODOLOGY

The Uniform Resource Locator (URL- a pointer to a "resource" on the World Wide Web) of 286 Regional Tourism Organisation's in the Asia Pacific Region were obtained from the following directories:

- ❑ Open directory regional Asia travel and tourism website [http://dmoz.org/regional/asia/travel_and_tourism/travel_guides];
- ❑ Google directory Regional Asia travel [http://directory.google.com/top/regional/asia/travel_and_tourism/travel_guides];
- ❑ The Register of Australian Regional Tourism Associations [<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~fng/rta/>];
- ❑ Travel Australia Internet Directory [<http://www.travelaustralia.com.au>];
- ❑ Northern Territory Regional Tourism Association [<http://www.nt.gov.au/tra/shtml>];
- ❑ Queensland Tourism Industry Directory [<http://www.qttc.com.au/rta/htm>];
- ❑ Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand's website <http://www.tianz.org.nz/tia/tia01.htm#rto>

Of the 286 Web sites identified for the purposes of the study, 195 were evaluated over a two month period. A number of the sites (91) were not evaluated as the URL was unavailable (80), they were listings only (7) or were under construction (4). The remaining 195 were evaluated and then categorised according to the Stages and Levels of the extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption.

The URLs of 118 Chilean Regional Tourism Organisation's were obtained from the following search engines and directories:

- ❑ Google Internet Search Engine [www.google.com];
- ❑ Yahoo [www.yahoo.com];
- ❑ Chilean National Tourism Service, SERNATUR [www.senatur.cl]; and
- ❑ Chilean Tourism Promotion Corporation [<http://www.visit-chile.org/operadores/operadores-eng.phtml>]

ASIA PACIFIC RESULTS

Table 4, below, provides an indication of where the 195 Asia Pacific RTO sites evaluated fit into each of the stages/levels comprising eMICA.

Stage of eMICA	Number of sites	% of total
Stage 1 Level 1	0	0.00%
Stage 1 Level 2	0	0.00%
Stage 2 Level 1	5	2.56%
Stage 2 Level 2	60	30.7%
Stage 2 Level 3	113	58%
Stage 3	17	8.7%
	195	100%

Table 4: Results of the 2004 RTO Web site evaluations

Of the 195 sites evaluated, all had established more than just a presence (Stage 1). The majority of the sites (91.3%) exhibited functionality consistent with Stage 2 of eMICA (provision). Sites developed at this stage are characterised by levels of interactivity and features consistent with all three levels of stage 2 as well as both levels of stage 1 of eMICA. The levels of sophistication exhibited on the sites developed to stage 2 varied considerably across the three levels. Functionality ranged from basic to high-level product catalogues, value-add hyperlinks and low-level to advanced customer support systems (online enquiry forms, FAQs, sitemaps). Industry-specific value added features such as multimedia presentations of the unique features of the region, virtual tours, static to interactive maps, chat rooms, discussion forums, newsletters and automatic email updates were also evident.

CHILEAN RESULTS

Tables 5 and 6, shown below, provide indications of where the 118 Chilean RTO sites evaluated fit into each of the stages/levels comprising eMICA and details of regionalized Chilean RTOs and their associated eMICA stage and level respectively.

Stage of eMICA	Number of sites	% of total
Stage 1 Level 1	0	0.0%
Stage 1 Level 2	2	1.7%
Stage 2 Level 1	7	5.9%
Stage 2 Level 2	17	14.4%
Stage 2 Level 3	51	43.2%
Stage 3	41	34.7%
	118	100%

Table 5: Results of the 2004 RTO Web site evaluations

Geographic Zone	Level of adoption						Total
	Promotion 1	Promotion - 2	Provision - 1	Provision - 2	Provision - 3	Processing	
National	0	1	2	1	10	3	17
North	0	0	1	1	4	3	9
Centre	0	1	2	8	3	4	18
Centre-South	0	0	1	1	4	4	10
South	0	0	0	4	4	7	15
Patagonia	0	0	1	1	25	20	47
Rapa Nui	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	0	2	7	17	51	41	118

Table 6: Level of adoption of web technologies by geographic zone.

Of the 118 Chilean sites evaluated, all had established more than just a presence (Stage 1). The majority of the sites (63.5%) exhibited functionality consistent with Stage 2 of eMICA (provision). Sites developed at this stage are characterised by levels of interactivity and features consistent with all three levels of stage 2 as well as both levels of stage 1 of eMICA. The levels of sophistication exhibited on the sites developed to stage 2 varied considerably across the three levels. Functionality ranged from basic to high-level product catalogues, value-add hyperlinks and low-level to advanced customer support systems (online enquiry forms, FAQs, sitemaps). Industry-specific value added features such as multimedia presentations of the unique features of the region, virtual tours, static to interactive maps, chat rooms, discussion forums, newsletters and automatic email updates were also evident.

Of the 118 sites evaluated 34.7% (41) sites were offering functionality consistent with Stage 3 development (ie. processing). Sites at this stage of development offered functionality ranging from interaction with corporate servers and databases (for information retrieval) to full e-commerce functionality including secure online bookings and product sales (souvenirs and other tourism-related products).

The level of Internet adoption by Chilean RTOs should also be considered in the context in which tourism offices are regionalised. This research indicates that RTOs with a national presence (i.e. those prominent as national offices and categorized within the National Geographic Zone in Table 6) have achieved Provision Stage, Layer 3 (59%). National sites are often intended as tourism 'gateways' or portals and as such, these websites are often government funded, professionally designed, updated and maintained. RTOs at this Stage/Layer incorporate high levels of functionality into their websites. The offices located within the North Zone have reached a similar Stage/Layer (44%) as National offices, while offices within the Centre region have reached the same Stage (Provision) but have only progressed to Layer 2, rather than 3. Forty percent of the offices from the South-Centre have reached the Processing Stage and an equal percentage of offices have achieved the Provision Stage, Layer Three. Of the offices in the South zone, 46.6% are at the Processing Stage, whereas in the Patagonia zone, the offices websites are divided between the Provision Stage, Level Three (53%), and the Processing Stage (43%).

DISCUSSION

Comparing the results of the Asia Pacific RTO Web site evaluations with the Chilean study, we find a remarkable difference; the percentage of Chilean sites (34.7%) at Stage 3 as discussed above. This finding was unexpected and inconsistent with our findings from the Asia Pacific and other earlier studies. However, in both cases, over 90% of the organisations in this industry sector are at a relatively advanced stage of adoption of Internet commerce. The majority have incorporated various levels of functionality consistent with the more advanced levels of stage 2 (levels 2 and 3) of eMICA. This is consistent with the focus of this industry sector on tourism promotion and the provision of information and services that enable potential tourists to the regions to make informed travel decisions and choices.

The outcome of the research is a useful confirmation of the staged approach to development of commercial Websites proposed by the extended Model of Internet Commerce (eMICA). Further, the comparative results of the Asia Pacific and Chile studies suggest that regional tourism organisations in both areas are capitalising on the online tourism industry with relatively sophisticated stages of development on the Internet commerce roadmap.

The Web sites of the Chilean RTOs and the Asia Pacific display a more sophisticated range of functionality than earlier studies of RTOs in Australia, New Zealand, Asia and Pacific Islands (2001), and can be distinguished on the basis of the level of interactivity they offer to the consumer of tourism information and services. In fact, the eMICA model uses interactivity as the primary means of establishing the various stages of Internet commerce adoption. This study further confirms the usefulness of Web site interactivity for this purpose adding further

support to our earlier studies (Doolin et al., 2003; Burgess et al., 2002), suggesting that in the tourism industry, major milestones in Internet commerce development are:

- (1) moving beyond a basic Web page with an email contact, to providing links to value-added tourism information and the use of Web-based forms for customer interaction;
- (2) offering opportunities for the consumer to interact with the Web site through (a) value-added features such as sending electronic postcards or recording their experiences and reading others' experiences in Web-based guest books, and (b) the provision of online customer support via internal site search engines and searchable databases;
- (3) the beginnings of Internet commerce transactions with the acceptance of online bookings for accommodation, travel, and other tourism services;
- (4) full adoption of Internet commerce, where consumers are able to complete transactions online through secure Internet channels.

One finding of note in the Chilean study is the number of RTO sites that provide functionality at the transactional level (34.7%). This is an unusual finding, given that the organisations in this industry sector are mainly in the business of promoting regions, their unique features and offerings primarily through the provision of value-added information and services. RTOs interviewed during the course of an earlier study, stated that the primary reason they had not progressed to Stage 3 (full online e-commerce transactions) was the difficulty envisaged with refunding purchases for accommodation and other tourism products obtained from third party providers. The RTOs further stated that while it was a viable proposition to take bookings on behalf of its members, they did not have the facilities or experience required to deal with cancellations and refunds. On this basis, they were acting as a "referral" agency only for third party products. Those RTOs that had progressed to stage 3, were mainly operating at low transactional levels, selling souvenirs and maps of the region online. Given the departure from the findings of earlier studies, further investigation is warranted. Future levels of adoption of Internet commerce is likely to depend on the future role taken by RTOs in each region. However, there is potential for development on the supply side in facilitating the provision of more sophisticated services to tourism operators in their region (Doolin et al., 2003). This would involve the deployment of more sophisticated Internet and Web technologies, such as intranets, extranets, electronic marketplaces and mobile applications.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper has presented the results of a comparison of a study of Web adoption by RTOs located in Asia Pacific and Chile. Overall, RTOs generally displayed a high level of interactivity, consistent with their role in providing comprehensive destination marketing for geographic regions in which many individual local tourism operators lack an Internet presence. A significant number of Asia Pacific and Chilean RTOs (34.7%) offered functionality at the highest level of eMICA (processing), yet more than half of the RTOs stopped short of offering consumers the capability to complete their tourism and travel transactions online through the RTO sites. Although the level of interactivity is relatively high, an opportunity exists for Chilean RTOs to develop their websites further, providing potential visitors with the option to complete all of their travel transactions online. Progression beyond this point is likely to depend on the overall maturing of Internet commerce use by domestic and international consumers, or a change in the role of RTOs. There is still considerable room for more sophisticated development of many of the Asia Pacific websites as using the web site strictly for promotional purposes limits the capacity to exploit its potential for communication, research, product distribution, and relationship management (CRTR 2004).

The outcome of the research provides further confirmation of the staged approach to development of commercial Web sites proposed by the extended Model of Internet Commerce (eMICA). Further, the results of the study suggest that regional tourism organisations in Chile are at a relatively sophisticated stage of development and are leveraging the opportunities that the Web presents as a viable tool for promotion of the region.

Further research is required to address the following research question not addressed by the current study:

1. What distinguishes Chilean RTOs from RTOs in other regions in terms of their progression to higher levels of eCommerce functionality and sophistication?

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