BENCHMARKING DESTINATIONS VIA DMO WEBSITES: A METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS

Introduction

In the past decade, the Internet has been recognized as an increasingly important communication medium and market space (Rayman-Bacchus & Molina, 2001). In comparison to other media forms, the Internet is viewed as less costly, less cluttered, and potentially more effective (Shimp, 1997). With the rapid growth of Internet penetration into American households, online information search and purchasing has become more accessible, reliable, and convenient for consumers. It is suggested that the Web is bringing customers into a new era in the marketing communication environment (Varadarajan & Yadav, 2002).

The tourism industry has long been actively involved in and benefited from electronic commerce (Proll & Retschitzegger, 2000), and travel has been considered the most important product/service category on the Web in terms of the volume of e-commerce (Gretzel, Yuan, & Fensenmaier, 2000). A recent market report (www.emarketer.com, 2005) indicated that online travel spending in the U.S. in 2004 was $50.9 billion, an increase of 26 percent over 2003. This accounted for 43.4 percent of the total U.S. online purchases. Furthermore, over 50 percent of tourists' travel decisions can be attributed to web-based advertising and promotion (Petrick, Sirakaya, & Park, 2004). As the Web has become a major component in the tourism industry, a variety of methodologies and criteria have been developed and applied to evaluate websites across different sectors of the tourism industry (O'Leary, Lehto, Cheng, & Oh, 2004).

Of particular interest is the websites of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) (e.g., Rayman-Bacchus & Molina, 2001; Cano & Prentice, 1998; Doolin, Burgess, & Cooper, 2002; Efferson, 2000; WTO, 1999). It has been recognized that destination websites are different from most other categories of websites such as online travel agency sites and company sites, due to their dual role in both travel booking and planning (TIA, 2003) and their (generally) non-profit nature. With fairly limited budgets, DMOs have been investing substantial resources to their websites. Although the specific cost of website design and maintenance is hard to calculate, it is estimated that yearly expenses on one website is around $180,000 (Tierney, 2000). Overall, with DMO's websites drawing increasing investment and attention, a need for new methods for evaluating the effectiveness of destination Internet marketing efforts has emerged.

One method that has been shown to assist with evaluation efforts is benchmarking. As a quality management and improvement technique, the concept of benchmarking stems from Deming's management theory and emerged in business practices in the 1980s (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2004; Kozak, 2002). To date, benchmarking has been extensively practiced and researched across different industries. However, few attempts have been made to benchmark destination website effectiveness, notwithstanding the obvious practical importance. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to establish a methodology for conducting benchmarking analyses of destination tourism websites, with particular focus on the identification of universal dimensions of destination marketing measurement.

Literature Review

The Concept of Benchmarking

Benchmarking is defined as the continuous measurement and improvement of an organization's performance against the best or better in the same or in a different industry, to obtain information about new methods or practices (Kozak, 2002; Kozak & Rimmington, 1999). Building upon "performance comparison, gap identification, and change management process" (Kozak, 2002, p. 499), benchmarking allows businesses to seek best practices by comparing one's own performance to others', and has hence gained tremendous influence and wide acceptance since the 1990s. Past research has revealed that benchmarking can aid organizations in learning about their own strengths and weaknesses, the best practices or processes that help others achieve world-class performance, and the amount of change that will be needed in order to set realistic goals to guide their planning efforts (Evans & Lindsay, 1993; Cross & Leonard, 1994).

While various approaches to benchmarking have been identified, the main categories are: internal, external, and generic (functional) (Zairi, 1992). "Internal" benchmarking compares two-way communications and the sharing of opinions between departments within the same organization or between organizations operating as part of a chain. "External" benchmarking refers to comparison with both competitors and others who are not in direct competition, but operating in the same industry. Finally, "generic" benchmarking attempts to seek world-class excellence by comparing not just against competitors, but against the best

organizations operating in similar fields, performing similar activities, or having similar problems in a different industry.

From another perspective, Bogan and English (1994) proposed three distinct types of benchmarking: process, performance, and strategic. Process benchmarking focuses on discrete work processes and operating practices, such as customer complaint processes, recruitment processes and so on. Performance benchmarking targets quality output and price elements, such as customer satisfaction, product quality, etc. Finally, strategic benchmarking examines and identifies winning strategies that could assist companies in competing successfully.

Destination Benchmarking

Benchmarking has been utilized in a variety of tourism related industries and sectors, such as public leisure provision (Ogden & Wilson, 2001), parks (Rutherford & Wilson, 2003), international conferences (Gardini & Bernini, 2002), museums (Remich, 2002), and sports marketing (Carlson, Rosenberger, & Muthaly, 2003). Within the tourism industry, benchmarking has been adopted as a useful managerial tool for generating innovation (Mandou, 2002), improving service standards and raising productivity levels among small tourism businesses (Battersby, 2003), increasing hotel competitiveness (Pyo, 2001; Marvel, 2004), and so on. Most benchmarking practices and studies in tourism have been largely restricted to individual operating units and business levels (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999). Due to their complicated nature and various components contained,

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destinations as a benchmarking object have been somewhat ignored (Kozak, 2002).

More recently, a handful of studies have attempted to showcase benchmarking at the destination level (Fuchs & Weiermair, 2004; Kozak, 2002; 2004; Kozak & Nield, 2004; Wober & Fesenmaier, 2004). Kozak's (2002) case study on Mallorca and Turkey examined the extent to which benchmarking could be applied to tourism destinations. Major destination dimensions benchmarked included accommodation services, facilities and activities, local transport services, hospitality and customer care, destination airport facilities and services, hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness, prices, and language communication. Kozak (2002) suggested that benchmarking could be regarded as a learning experience from the good practices of others, whereas its application to destinations could be limited due to cultural, political, economic, and practical factors.

Fuchs and Weiermair (2004) extended the existing benchmarking approach by linking it to tourists' satisfaction measures. They adopted Kano's (1984) model, which suggests quality attributes may be grouped into three categories (basic, excitement, and performance factors), each exerting a different impact on customer satisfaction. Nineteen destination attributes (e.g., bookings and reservations, mobility within destination) and 7 tourism value-chain domains (e.g., accommodations, attractions) were identified as most relevant for measuring tourist satisfaction in Alpline summer destinations. Both Vavra's (1997) two-dimensional Importance Grid and Brandt's (1987; Brandt, 1988) Penalty-Reward-

Contrast analysis were employed to explore Kano's (1984) three-factor structure of tourist satisfaction.

Overall, existing destination benchmarking studies have revealed that a holistic comparison of marketing performance can be utilized to assist destinations in evaluating the nature of their competition. Moreover, such comparison would help identify new market opportunities by reflecting on how others are performing (Goodall, 1990). A destination benchmarking program should therefore involve consideration of all facilities and services that affect tourists' experiences. Thus, it has been suggested that the most important part of destination benchmarking is the identification of generic destination dimensions to measure (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999).

Tourism Website Studies and Benchmarking

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding tourism websites. A significant portion has focused on exploring the role of websites in tourism marketing (e.g., Rayman-Bacchus & Molina, 2001; Cano & Prentice, 1998; Doolin, Burgess, & Cooper, 2002; WTO, 1999). There appear to be two major trends in extant website studies: one line of studies has focused on the design, content, effectiveness, and other quality indicators of websites (Cai, Card, & Cole, 2004; Cano & Prentice, 1998; Doolin, Burgess, & Cooper, 2002; Efferson, 2000; Morrison, Taylor, & Douglas, 2004; O'Connor, 2004; Perdue, 2001). Most of these studies have considered website design and promotion as a marketing strategy, with the underlying assumption that website effectiveness relies on its functions. For instance, Cai *et al.* (2004) evaluated twenty U.S. tour operators' websites

focusing on tours to China. Target websites were reviewed and assessed on a total of 31 features, such as online reservations, availability checking, FAQs, important organizational contacts, and so on. Results indicated that the content delivery performance of the websites was low, and many important features were yet to be included.

The other stream of research has looked beyond websites per se, and has investigated the uses of websites, what visitors are looking for, and most importantly, whether and how the websites influenced travel decisions. The focuses of this group of studies are thus the consumption characteristics and information usage of website users (Bonn, Furr, & Susskind, 1999; Sigala, 2004; Susskind, Bonn, & Dev, 2003; TIA, 2003; Tierney, 2000; Weber & Roehl, 1999), which reflect the effectiveness of websites. For instance, Tierney (2000) suggested a three-phase, Internet-based survey to investigate the effectiveness of tourism websites. Phase One (pre-trip) is focused on why respondents visit the website, how do they find it, their satisfaction with the website, and so on. Phase Two (post-trip) is conducted 3-4 months after Phase One, asking respondents whether they actually visited the destination, and how the website influenced their decision. Phase Three (another pre-trip) is similar to Phase One, but includes more questions on website usefulness.

While many aforementioned studies have focused on assessing either features or consumer-reported usefulness of websites, benchmarking the profile of competing websites' users may provide a new perspective of website design and evaluation. Website benchmarking research has been conducted in contexts like

hotels and restaurants (Collins & Murphy, 2002; Wober, 2001; Wober, 2002; Wober, Scharl, Natter, & Taudes, 2002), sports teams (Carlson, et al., 2003), and geographic regions (Aaberge, Grotte, Haugen, Skogseid, & Olnes, 2004). However, few attempts have been undertaken to develop a sophisticated benchmarking method for destination Internet marketing.

In summary, many states have placed extra resources in developing web-based materials for marketing to tourists. Benchmarking, if properly implemented, can help with both the marketing and management of a destination and can also be utilized to compare a destination to others and to quantify differences, including measurements of effectiveness and efficiency. These measures can be used to document why those differences exist and identify steps to target future performance levels. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to establish a methodology for conducting benchmarking analysis of state tourism websites, and to discuss the implementation of the benchmarking process.

Methods

The present project started as a website evaluation study for the state of Texas, U.S. in 2001. As more states indicated interests in being involved, the researchers recognized it as a great opportunity to conduct a benchmarking study.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was utilized to develop the benchmarking procedures. NGT is a structured group decision-making tool used for the generation of a good number of alternatives relevant to group issues, problems and concerns (Blackwell Encyclopedic Dictionary of Organizational

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Behavior, 1995). The technique allows for individual thinking and contribution in a group format, and has been found to be particularly effective in soliciting group participation and forming a more accurate consensus (Anderson & Fagerhaug, 2000; Roth & Schleifer, 1995). Moreover, with few similar studies conducted for reference, it was believed that a NGT procedure among experts would be appropriate for the current exploratory study.

Anderson and Fagerhaug (2000) described a general NGT session as follows. First, a team of experts should be invited together by a facilitator. Each team member should generate ideas regarding certain problems and write them on index cards (one card per idea). The facilitator should collect all cards, and post them on a chart with one letter assigned to each idea. Team members should then briefly discuss these ideas and eliminate redundant ones from the chart. Each member should then select up to five ideas he or she perceives to be important and list them on a separate ranking card. Next, everyone should individually rank the items by assigning a score to each idea (for instance, from "5" as the most important or best idea, to"1" for the least important or least effective idea). Finally, the facilitator should collect the ranking cards and calculate the total score for each idea. Idea(s) receiving the highest total score(s) are the team's consensual or prioritized solution(s).

In the present study, ten states participated in the NGT process as a team, and researchers from a southwestern research university in the United States served as the facilitator. Directors of research, or a representative for each state's department of tourism were asked to generate questions that they felt were

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relevant to analyzing their tourism websites (from their point of view, and their competitors'). Once all ten states submitted their list, a master list was compiled, and sent back to the state representatives. Each representative was then asked to state which questions they thought were important, and which questions were not. Also, states were requested to submit ten attributes of their state (i.e., leisure activities that the state featured) that they would like to be evaluated, in comparison to the other states. The lists were again compiled. Questions that more than six states deemed as unimportant were dropped, while all of the desired attributes to measure were retained. The list of questions was sent back to the states, and they were again asked to suggest which questions were most important to them, and which questions were not important (given three options: very important, somewhat important or not at all important).

A final round was conducted in order to gain consensus on how to measure demographics and which items states would want under the question: "When visiting a state-sponsored travel website, what information would you hope to find?". This procedure resulted in 26 questions (See Table 1a), and 15 attributes (See Table 1b). The resultant questions include: respondent's past experiences with the state, the timing of their website visit, their top destination choice, desired trip type, estimated travel expenses, activities interested in, online purchase behaviors, reasons for the website visit, and demographic information. Once the questionnaire was created, each state placed links on their homepages to lead to the survey, so that they could continually receive feedback on their website.

INSERT TABLE 1a ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 1b ABOUT HERE

Through this process, it was also determined that it would be relevant to examine whether or not people that used the website, actually visited the state whose website they were using, and the reasons behind their decisions. Following the same procedures mentioned above, two additional surveys were developed: one for website users who had visited the state (within six months of using the website) and one for non-visitors (See Table 2a & 2b). Resultant questions for the "non-visitor" survey include: image of the state, desired activities when traveling, desired information on a state tourism website, future travel intentions and demographics. The resultant "visitor" survey asks questions regarding: the influence of the website on their travel decision, tripographics, economic impact, desired information on a state tourism website, trip satisfaction, future travel intentions and tripographics.

INSERT TABLE 2a ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 2b ABOUT HERE

In order to collect data for the visitor and non-visitor surveys, email addresses are collected from respondents to the initial survey. Exactly six months

after completing the initial survey, they are sent an email, asking them whether or not they have visited the state (whose website they had visited previously) in the past six months (since their visit to the website). The e-mail asks potential respondents to click whether or not they have visited the state (via two separate links; one for "visitors" one for "non-visitors"). The link leads them directly to the appropriate survey (visitor or non-visitor for the correct state). Data from the initial survey has been continually collected since January 1, 2002, while data from the two follow-up surveys have been collected since July 1, 2002.

To date, the state tourism website benchmarking study has involved more than 20 states in the United States, and its city (CVB website) version has recently been started. At the end of each year, one round of the NGT process is conducted, to collect feedback from all participating states and to update the survey questions. In the year of 2004, 99,306 responses were collected from 16 state websites from the Phase One survey, and 2,453 non-visitors and 3,323 visitors responded to the Phase Two survey.

Findings

This section presents some descriptive findings of the present study. While the primary focus of this paper was to develop a method (and survey instruments) for benchmarking destination, the authors found it necessary to provide some results, to better illustrate the benchmarking process. Although states involved in this study were benchmarked on a variety of attributes (for instance, the 26 questions used in Phase One), and the benchmarking process is a continuous process, we will only present a portion of our findings from the Phase One survey

in 2004 as examples, due to space limits and confidentiality issues related to the project. Hence, findings presented here did not represent the full scope and dynamic nature of the study.

The following examples reflected how behavioral patterns of potential visitors to different state websites were benchmarked. To make this analysis more relevant to states being benchmarked, we used Questions 3 ("Are you planning a visit to or within (STATE NAME)") and 13 ("Why did you visit our Web Site?") as screening questions. Specifically, only active state travel planners (i.e., visitors who planned to visit the state within 6 months, and who explicitly indicated that they visited the state website "to plan a trip to" the state or "to see what there is to do" for a trip to the state they have already decided) were included in the analysis. Thus, web browsers and website users who had no specific travel plan to the states were removed from further analysis. This reduced the sample size from 99,306 to 55,431 (see Table 3 for a breakdown). For purpose of the present paper, and considering the vast variation in sample size for each state (in a typical year, the number of responses different states get may ranged from a couple of hundred to tens of thousands), only descriptive results were provided (similar to Efferson, 2000; Tierney, 2000). Additionally, the state names had to be kept anonymous.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Table 4 reported the demographic profile of the sample used. The majority of respondents were female (58.4%), most had at least some college education

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(58.1%), were married (69.7%), and between 18 to 54 years old (74.6%). About two thirds (65.3%) of the respondents have a household income of $35,000 to $104,999.

<center>INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE</center>

Example 1

Table 5 presents the types of trip respondents were planning (Q5. "What type of trip are you planning?" in Phase One survey). For all sixteen states involved, family vacation, VFR (visiting family, friends, and relatives) and weekend getaway were the most common types of trips planned. To better position states via types of trip their website users planned, a correspondence analysis was performed (See Figure 2, χ^2=3663.2, p<0.001, inertia=0.071). As can be seen, States 2 and 3 seemed to appeal more to business travelers, while States 14 and 6 might fit better as VFR destinations. Further, State 13 seemed to have more potential website users planning weekend getaways, while website users tended to consider State 10 a vacation destination.

<center>INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE</center>

<center>INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE</center>

Example 2

Table 6 displays findings regarding the question "What do you estimate your daily expenses will be?" (Q7, Phase One). The correspondence analysis results (see Figure 2, χ^2=2394.4, p<0.001, inertia=0.045) seemed to suggest that

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State 13 attracted more travelers with smaller spending budgets (i.e., planning to spend $50 a day or less), while State 11 seemed to fit better to high-end markets (i.e. travelers with daily expenditure of $251 or more).

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Example 3

Table 5 reports respondents' sources of information for state websites (Q10, Phase One, "How did you find our website?"). To better illustrate the states' position, again, we performed a correspondence analysis (see Figure 3, χ^2=4829.0, p<0.001, inertia=0.096). Results revealed that website users of State 6 relied heavily on word of mouth, while those of States 3, 5, 10, and 2 were more likely to use search engines to find state tourism websites. Moreover, it was found that States 7, 12, and 14 were relatively isolated from the other thirteen states in terms of furnishing website information for potential travelers.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Benchmarking has been widely accepted as a useful management tool in destination competition. Since numerous states have placed extra resources in developing web-based materials for marketing to tourists, evaluating destination marketing performances via web surveys seems to make conceptual sense and provides operational feasibility. It is believed that the present study, based on practitioners' inputs, provides a useful framework for destination website benchmarking.

The state tourism website benchmarking survey has also achieved success in both practical and academic terms. With the use of this external / performance benchmarking process, the participating states have been able to obtain vital information regarding their own and their competitors' websites, website visitors, actual visitors to their state and non-visitors to their state. With this information, state tourism directors are better equipped to: position themselves against their competition, create a more desirable website, better understand the reasons why people don't visit their state after visiting their website, and the travel behaviors and preferences of people who do visit their state after visiting their website. For instance, in Example 1, different states seemed to appeal to different segments of the market. Accordingly, some states may choose to strengthen their current position in potential travelers' mind (e.g., States 2 and 3 for business travelers, State 10 for vacationers). Other states may need to reposition themselves to develop new markets (e.g., State 13 may plan to attract more long-haul tourists).

Still other states, which have not built an established image in travelers' mind, may need to position themselves more clearly.

Results of the project also allow for comparisons between different customer groups, such as visitors versus non-visitors (Li, Petrick, & Skadberg, 2004), or first-time versus repeat visitors (Li, Cheng, & Petrick, 2005), in order to better understand their tripographics, motivation, and travel experiences. For instance, data generated from this project helped Li et al. (2005) find that first-timers were more active travel planners. Their travel planning behavior, as well as their travel consumption patterns, seem to be "tourism/travel" oriented, meaning that most of their decision activities and money are spent on travel arrangements (i.e., travel and accommodations). In contrast, repeaters seemed to rely on their own experiences to make travel decisions, and their visits are more "recreation/activity" oriented. In other words, they travel less within the destination, have more specific plans for what to do on site, and are more cost sensitive.

Additionally, this process gives the state tourism directors timely feedback regarding longitudinal changes by season, and over time. Initial results have revealed that while visitor behavior is changing over time, changes between seasons are more dramatic than changes from year to year (comparing the same season). By monitoring these subtle changes, DMOs are now able to project these trends into the future, in order to alter their websites to best serve their website users.

From the researchers' perspective, how to benchmark destinations' Internet marketing performances presents an interesting research challenge. The website

benchmarking process has been found to provide useful data and metrics for tourist behavior studies, and will evolve over time. Information collected from this process can be used to research specific issues such as travel motivations, vacation decision-making, travel trends, and tourist behavior. It also has created relevant baseline information for future research needs (e.g., the project has longitudinally recorded key tourist behavioral indicators such as website users' estimated daily travel expenses, visitors' satisfaction level, visitors and non-visitors' probability of visit in future, and so on).

Further, this study exemplifies a successful effort to combine academic and practitioners' interest and strengths into one project. Destination marketers' informational inquiry justifies the continuance of this project. Researchers lead the efforts, guide the NGT procedure, and provide insights from an academic perspective. Overall, this study follows a research framework developed with exploratory theoretical concepts (i.e., destination benchmarking) and industry needs. Thus, in this project, the academics-practitioner relationship does not fall into the traditional consultant-client pattern. It is more like a partnership, with both parties as co-producers of the project.

An interesting phenomenon revealed during the process is the so-called "network externality" effect, in that the value of this project has increased as more partners have joined the program. In other words, there could be a "threshold" or "critical mass" of partners for conducting benchmarking studies.

Limitations & Future Research

As with all scientific inquiries, the present study has limitations. First and foremost, results from this project suffer coverage error in online samples (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2004). Hwang and Fesenmaier (2004) suggest that this bias comes from several sources: First, the self-reported responses are provided on a voluntary basis, which inherently bias certain populations who either preferred the survey objects (i.e., travel), or the online survey method per se. Also, it is noteworthy that there is still a significant portion of the general population who do not have access to the Internet. As a result, better-educated, higher-income, and younger persons have a better chance to be presented and respond to the surveys. Further, there is no general and reliable sampling frame for conducting online surveys. In our case, an individual may visit one or several of the participating state tourism websites, provide the researchers with different email addresses, and then submit duplicated responses without being detected. Tierney (2000) also warned of the severe methodological challenges (e.g., low response rate, non-response bias) Internet-based surveys are facing. Further studies are needed to identify the influence of coverage errors and non-response bias.

This study further suffers from technological limitations. Several steps of the current project, including sending emails for the Phase Two survey, data analysis, and report generation have been conducted manually on a predetermined temporal basis. Project partners have indicated that real time comparison with specific competitors may be more desirable. It has also been suggested that matching respondents' responses from the Phase One and Phase

Two surveys would provide important information to practitioners. However, to protect respondents' anonymity, the present study does not allow the researchers to collect any identifying information, and hence limits our ability to accurately match the responses. As a result, following the same research design, the authors have recently created a new survey system with state-of-the-art technology, which solves these problems. In the new system, state tourism directors are provided direct access to the data, which allows real-time comparison with other states. Reminding emails are now sent automatically to those who agree to participate in follow-up surveys, and same individuals' responses in both phases can now be matched.

One of the strengths and weaknesses of this study is that practitioners (i.e., state tourism directors involved in the NGT process) played an active role in designing the questionnaires. By doing so, the questions asked and variables measured have increased practical value. It is our belief that involving practitioners input in academic research design, or pursuing a theory-in-use approach (Zaltman, Lemasters, & Heffring, 1982), assists in generating fruitful and meaningful results. Admittedly, this also results in the constructs being measured and the wording of questions to be somewhat inconsistent with existing literature, which presents another limitation of this study.

As for future research, it is clear that current studies on destination benchmarking and website evaluation are still rather fragmented. Efforts are needed to converge the two research streams, which may provide interesting insights into destination website benchmarking.

As indicated, there are at least two lines of research in website-based studies, with one line focusing on website content and features, and the other focusing on tourist characteristics. Logically, customer-reported usefulness of one website should be largely decided by the design and quality of the website. There is obvious conceptual association between the two research lines, which warrants further investigation.

Finally, as Tierney (2000) suggested, it is necessary to verify destination website performance standards. Such standards should help clarify performance gaps, which is one purpose of the benchmarking process.

Conclusion

Previous studies in non-tourism fields have revealed that benchmarking is an important performance management strategy, and that the Internet could enhance the success of benchmarking research and application (Gunnasekaran, 2001). The present study, from a tourism perspective, created a feasible tool for benchmarking destination Internet marketing performance via a web-based survey. The methodology used to create the questions, and the resultant feedback from the website users could be used in future similar studies. It is believed that benchmarking, if properly implemented, can help with both the marketing and management of a destination. It can also be utilized to compare a destination to others and quantify differences, including the measurement of effectiveness and efficiency. These measures can be used to document why those differences exist and identify steps to target for future performance levels.

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Table 1a. Question List of Phase One Survey

Q1. Are you a resident of (STATE NAME)?
Q2. Have you ever traveled to (STATE NAME) before?
Q3. Are you planning a visit to or within (STATE NAME)?
Q4. If you are planning a trip, which state is your first choice for your next trip?
Q5. What type of trip are you planning?
Q6. What do you plan to travel on that trip?
Q7. What do you estimate your daily expenses will be?
Q8. Which types of activities are you interested in participating in on your trip? (Check all that apply)
Q9. Of the following, what types of travel reservations have you made online?
Q10. How did you find our website?
Q11. While visiting our website did you request a vacation guide?
Q12. When visiting a state-sponsored travel website, what information would you hope to find?
Q13. Why did you visit our website?
Q14. How important is our website's information for making your travel plans?
Q15. Would you like us to email you when we have special travel offers?
Q16. May we contact you in six months for a post-trip follow up survey?
Q17. If you answered "yes" to Questions 15 and/or 16, please include your email address:
Q18. What is your gender?
Q19. How many adults are in your household?
Q20. How many children are in your household?
Q21. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have completed?
Q22. Where is your permanent residence?
Q23. What is your age?
Q24. What is your current marital status?
Q25. What is your household income?
Q26. What is your zip code?

Table 1b. Major Attributes / Activities Being Benchmarked*

1	Visit Attractions
2	Night Life
3	Watch Sports
4	Shopping
5	Nature Activities
6	Visit Friends & Family
7	Cultural Activities
8	Skiing
9	General Sightseeing
10	Play Golf
11	General Entertainment
12	Play Sports other than Golf
13	Outdoor Recreation
14	Casino Gaming
15	Dining

* Answer options provided for Q8 in Phase One Survey, Q7 in Phase Two Non-visitor Survey, and Q11 in Phase Two Visitor Survey

Table 2a. Question List of Phase Two Survey (Non-Visitor)

Q1. Did you visit any state(s) instead of (STATE NAME) since visiting our website? If you did, please select them from the drop-down list.

Q2. If (STATE NAME) was not your choice for your vacation, which answer(s) best explains why?

Q3. Which of the following best describes how our website affected your decision to travel to (STATE NAME)?

Q4. When you think of (STATE NAME) which of the following best describes your feelings toward it as a vacation destination:

Q5. Within the next two years, the probability that you will take a vacation in (STATE NAME) is:

Q6. What additional information would you like to see on the (STATE NAME) website? (Check all that apply).

Q7. Which type of activities are you interested in participating in on your trip? (Check all that apply)

Q8. What is your gender?

Q9. Which of the following best describes the amount of education you have completed?

Q10. Where is your permanent residence?

Q11. What is your age?

Q12. What is your household income?

Table 2b. Question List of Phase Two Survey (Visitor)

Q1. Which of the following best describes how our website affected your decision to travel of (STATE NAME)?

Q2. Did the website influence which destination(s) in (STATE NAME) you visited?

Q3. What information on the website was most valuable to your on your vacation?

Q4. Did the website show you activities, events and places to visit that encouraged you to stay longer in the state?

Q5. How useful was the website in planning your vacation?

Q6. What additional information would you like to see on the (STATE NAME) website?

Q7. How accurately did the website represent the part of (STATE NAME) you visited?

Q8. Approximately how much did your travel party spend on your most recent trip to (STATE NAME)?

Q9. How many people were in your travel party?

Q10. How many days/nights did you stay in (STATE NAME) during your visit?

Q11. Which type of activities are you interested in participating in on your trip? (Check all that apply)

Q12. How did you travel to (STATE NAME)?

Q13. How far did you travel to reach your destination in (STATE NAME)?

Q14. Where did you stay while in State?

Q15. What was the PRIMARY purpose of your trip? (Check only one)

Q16. Which of the following influenced your decision to visit (STATE NAME)? Check all that apply)

Q17. How often do you vacation to or within (STATE NAME)?

Q18. Within the next two years, the probability that you will take a vacation in (STATE NAME) is:

Q19. Thinking just about each of the following aspects of your visit to (STATE NAME), how satisfied are you with each of them?
     Attractions
     Transportation
     Accommodations
     Restaurants
     Entertainment
     Overall experience

Q20. Which of the following best describes how positively or negatively you will talk to others about (STATE NAME) as a leisure travel destination?

Q21. What is your gender?

Q22. Which of the following best describes the amount of education you have completed?

Q23. Where is your permanent residence?

Q24. What is your age?

Q25. What is your household income?

Table 3 Sample Size

States	# of Responses)
State1	92
State2	18352
State3	456
State4	894
State5	227
State6	173
State7	1707
State8	389
State9	1953
State10	1451
State11	14012
State12	430
State13	9285
State14	639
State15	4965
State16	406
Total	55,431

Table 4 Demographic Profiles

Gender	Male	41.6%	Income	Under $25,000	6.9%
(N=53,930)	Female	58.4%	(N=44,795)	$25,000 to 34,999	9.3%
Education	High school or lower	13.7%		$35,000 to 54,999	21.3%
(N=53,136)	Some college	28.3%		$55,000 to 74,999	20.3%
	College Graduated	32.5%		$75,000 to 104,999	23.7%
	Some or Completed Graduate School	25.6%		$105,000 to 124,999	7.8%
Age	Under 18	0.6%		Over $125,000	10.8%
(N= 52, 883)	18 to 34	24.6%	Marital Status	Married	69.7%
	35 to 44	23.3%	(N=52,822)	Single	21.2%
	45 to 54	26.7%		Separated or Divorced	7.4%
	55 to 64	18.2%		Widowed	1.7%
	65 to older	6.6%			

Table 5. Types of Trip Respondents Were Planning

	Honeymoon	Vacation	Convention	Business	Family/friends	Business/pleasure	Weekend getaway	Other	Total
State1	3.30%	47.80%	0%	2.20%	14.10%	4.30%	17.40%	10.90%	100.00%
State2	1.50%	58.00%	1.10%	3.20%	14.30%	6.90%	9.00%	6.00%	100.00%
State3	1.50%	57.20%	0.70%	3.50%	18.00%	5.30%	9.00%	4.80%	100.00%
State4	1.00%	44.20%	0.60%	0.40%	17.70%	4.20%	24.00%	7.90%	100.00%
State5	1.30%	50.00%	0.00%	0.90%	11.10%	4.00%	18.60%	14.20%	100.00%
State6	0.60%	49.70%	0.60%	1.70%	19.10%	8.10%	12.10%	8.10%	100.00%
State7	1.80%	51.20%	1.10%	2.20%	17.80%	5.20%	14.70%	6.00%	100.00%
State8	2.60%	33.90%	1.00%	2.80%	20.80%	5.70%	22.90%	10.30%	100.00%
State9	1.10%	46.70%	1.00%	1.40%	15.40%	3.30%	24.30%	6.70%	100.00%
State10	1.00%	65.00%	0.50%	1.00%	10.80%	5.80%	8.70%	7.20%	100.00%
State11	2.80%	66.50%	2.20%	2.30%	6.20%	5.40%	8.90%	5.70%	100.00%
State12	0.90%	43.60%	0.50%	1.40%	19.10%	4.00%	23.50%	7.00%	100.00%
State13	1.30%	55.40%	0.30%	1.20%	10.00%	2.50%	23.50%	5.80%	100.00%
State14	0.50%	50.50%	0.50%	1.60%	19.70%	5.00%	11.50%	10.70%	100.00%
State15	1.30%	51.10%	0.60%	2.00%	17.80%	5.10%	15.80%	6.30%	100.00%
State16	1.70%	86.10%	0.50%	0.70%	3.00%	1.50%	2.70%	3.70%	100.00%
Average	1.51%	53.56%	0.70%	1.78%	14.68%	4.77%	15.41%	7.58%	100.00%

Figure 1. Type of Trips Planned:
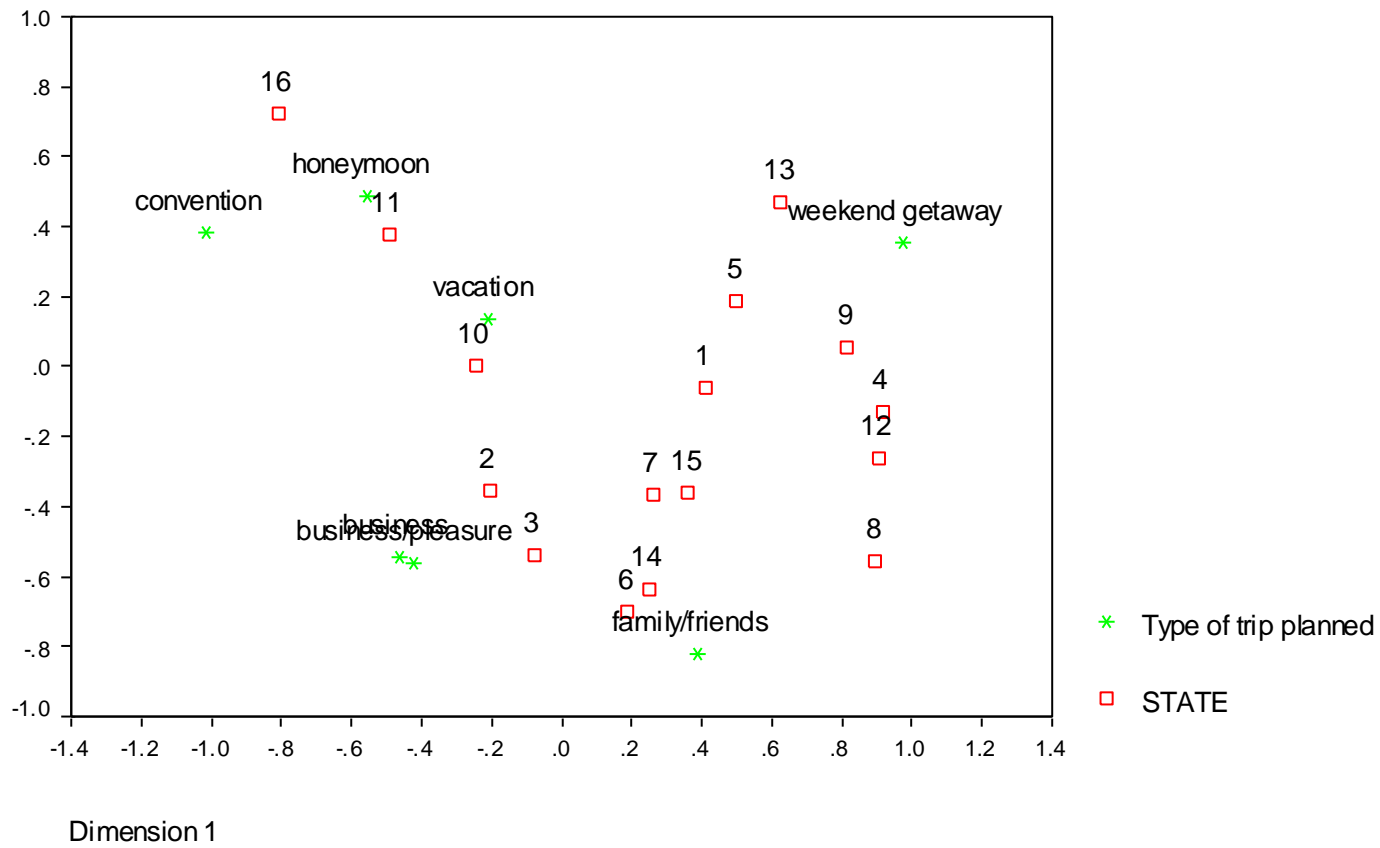
A Correspondence Analysis

Table 6. Respondents' Estimated Daily Expenses

	Under $50	$51 to 100	$101 to 150	$151 to 200	$201 to 250	$251 to 300	Over $300	Total
State1	12.20%	37.80%	16.70%	16.70%	7.80%	5.60%	3.30%	100.00%
State2	8.50%	26.70%	23.70%	17.90%	9.00%	5.40%	8.70%	100.00%
State3	7.20%	24.40%	21.70%	18.80%	13.00%	5.40%	9.60%	100.00%
State4	10.10%	27.30%	23.10%	18.50%	8.70%	4.80%	7.60%	100.00%
State5	4.30%	27.90%	26.90%	19.70%	9.10%	5.30%	6.70%	100.00%
State6	7.20%	29.90%	28.10%	13.80%	6.00%	6.00%	9.00%	100.00%
State7	8.20%	27.40%	23.10%	17.00%	9.70%	5.60%	9.00%	100.00%
State8	14.10%	29.80%	20.40%	13.10%	7.80%	5.70%	9.10%	100.00%
State9	9.40%	32.90%	26.40%	15.20%	7.70%	4.00%	4.50%	100.00%
State10	6.00%	26.90%	27.50%	17.60%	9.30%	4.90%	7.90%	100.00%
State11	4.90%	22.30%	23.70%	18.50%	10.90%	7.30%	12.30%	100.00%
State12	11.50%	31.10%	21.60%	18.80%	8.70%	2.10%	6.10%	100.00%
State13	17.60%	34.90%	20.90%	12.20%	5.90%	3.10%	5.40%	100.00%
State14	8.30%	28.50%	22.70%	18.90%	9.30%	5.20%	7.00%	100.00%
State15	9.90%	26.50%	24.10%	18.70%	9.70%	5.10%	6.10%	100.00%
State16	4.80%	19.80%	25.70%	22.60%	13.70%	5.30%	7.90%	100.00%
Average	9.01%	28.38%	23.52%	17.38%	9.14%	5.05%	7.51%	100.00%

Figure 2. Projected Daily Expenditure:
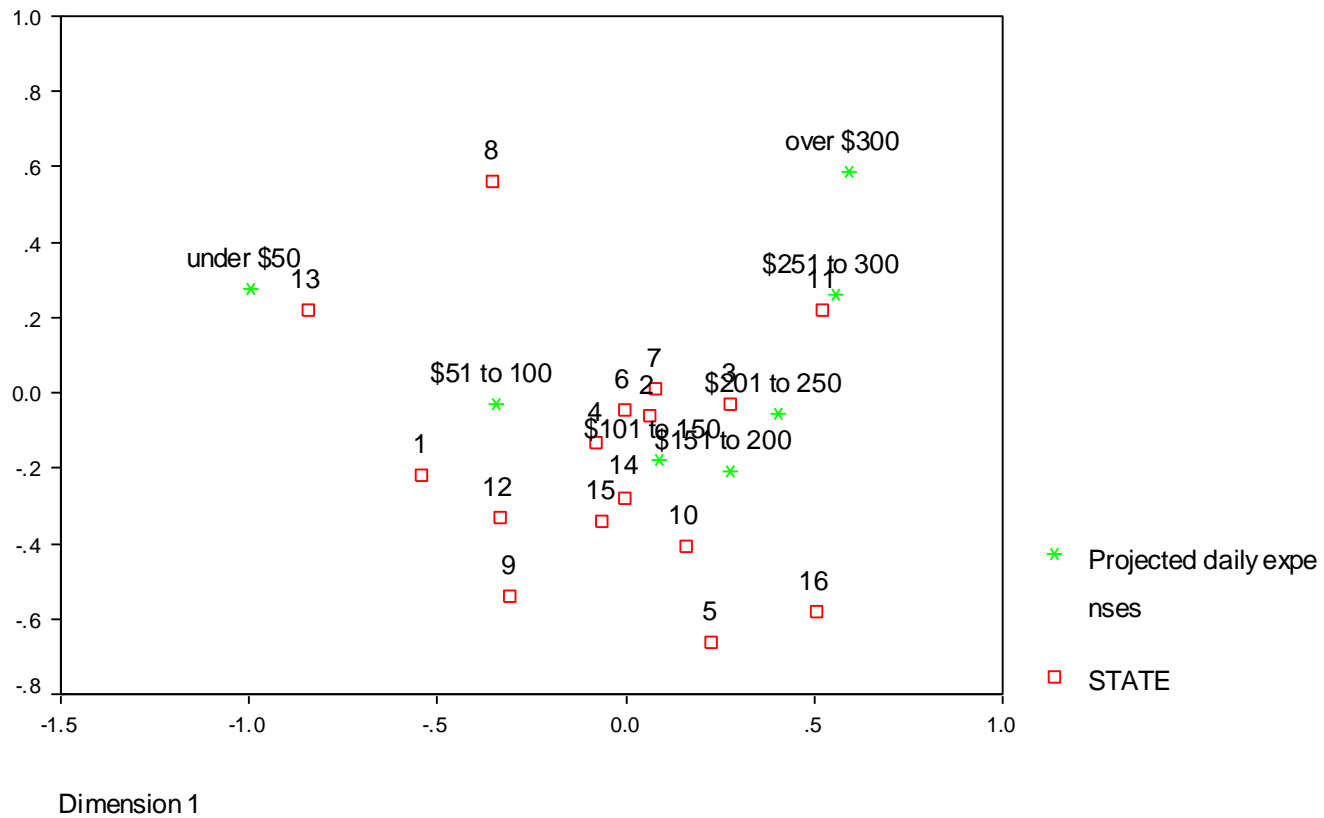
A Correspondence Analysis

Table 5. Sources of Information on State Websites

	Search engine	magazine	newspaper	Brochure	Word of Mouth	Web link	TV	Radio	Other	Total
State1	51.60%	3.30%	1.10%	0.00%	1.10%	23.10%	4.40%	0.00%	15.40%	100.00%
State2	68.10%	4.60%	1.10%	1.20%	1.60%	15.60%	0.70%	0.20%	7.00%	100.00%
State3	65.70%	3.70%	1.50%	2.00%	0.90%	14.90%	1.30%	0.40%	9.50%	100.00%
State4	40.70%	8.30%	2.80%	3.50%	3.90%	18.30%	9.90%	1.40%	11.20%	100.00%
State5	64.00%	6.70%	1.30%	0.40%	1.30%	16.90%	0.40%	0.40%	8.40%	100.00%
State6	51.80%	5.90%	2.40%	5.90%	2.40%	14.10%	3.50%	0.00%	14.10%	100.00%
State7	43.70%	5.20%	8.60%	3.90%	2.90%	18.10%	0.80%	0.40%	16.40%	100.00%
State8	56.10%	5.40%	1.80%	2.80%	3.40%	18.60%	4.90%	0.30%	6.70%	100.00%
State9	35.10%	9.20%	6.30%	2.60%	2.90%	18.40%	10.30%	1.20%	14.00%	100.00%
State10	63.90%	7.10%	1.00%	1.00%	2.10%	15.20%	0.60%	0.10%	9.00%	100.00%
State11	55.40%	5.40%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	19.90%	6.10%	0.30%	8.40%	100.00%
State12	30.20%	5.30%	9.10%	5.10%	5.10%	23.30%	5.10%	2.30%	14.40%	100.00%
State13	67.20%	2.90%	1.10%	2.30%	2.80%	14.80%	0.30%	0.20%	8.30%	100.00%
State14	32.20%	12.30%	3.20%	1.90%	3.80%	17.40%	15.00%	2.40%	11.70%	100.00%
State15	66.90%	3.10%	0.70%	0.90%	1.90%	15.00%	4.00%	0.20%	7.30%	100.00%
State16	57.70%	9.20%	1.00%	3.00%	1.00%	15.70%	1.20%	0.70%	10.40%	100.00%
Average	53.14%	6.10%	2.78%	2.38%	2.41%	17.46%	4.28%	0.66%	10.76%	100.00%

Figure 3. Sources of Information on State Websites:

A Correspondence Analysis