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# Tourism and Internet

- Publications / Projets de recherche - E-Tourisme -

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## **Description :**

Impact of the websites' characteristics of small tourism hosts (holidays in farms, host farmer...) on the evaluation and the behavior of internautes.

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### **Short project description :**

The evaluation, the choices, the spontaneous decisions when it comes to buy products or to look for touristic information (long distance flights, short trips, holidays' destination, attraction for new regions, good deals on week ends, unscheduled trips,...) are today strongly influenced by the Internet and the touristic websites. A first evaluation of the impact of the Internet on small local tourism hosts of the countryside has been carried out (host farmer, holidays in farms, municipal campings, small hotels,...) and highlighted that some websites' characteristics have particular impacts on the internauts. These experimental evaluation have been carried out in order to see which characteristics influenced the evaluations made by internauts. The aim of the project is to carry on these works on the evaluation of the influences so that the impact on the behavior of the internauts can be appreciated and theoretically explained and so that assistance for the conception of websites can be offered to the professionals of these industries.

## **Project goals.**

The evaluation, the choices, the spontaneous decisions when it comes to buy products or to look for touristic The applied interests of the type of research are of three kinds:

- let the commercial agents and companies of the tourism industry have a better knowledge on the strategies, the way to buy and the the kind of products people decide to buy online,
- these works would allow to give bases of online marketing and ergonomics to the webmasters in charge of the creation of websites providing information on tourism products,
- it will be possible to transfer the knowledge which would have been acquired and which have been mentioned in the first and second points in the professional training's domain, in particular in the e-commerce trainings (University of South Brittany) or in tourism trainings (University of Rennes 1).

## **Repercussion in terms of development of tools.**

These surveys oriented on the processes of decisions and on the acts of buying tourism products should help modelising the behavior of an Internaut who looks for information and decide to buy. They should also take part in the realization of the mission statement defining what websites promoting and selling tourism products are. As our works will, at first, concern pages valorizing western regional products (trips in farms, regional touristical places, local museums,...), websites modelising contents or presenting information that stimulates the Internaut's interest and his decision to buy could be offered. Besides, the goal is also to define analysis tables for the analysis of the processes implied in the decision to buy and the tourism information processing: theses tables could also be used in the analysis of other tourism websites. After being displayed, this would allow the webmasters to test the degree of suitability between the website already built and the content of the table.

## Project organization.

The project will be cut off into two sub-projects which correspond to two successive steps. Given that the disciplines mentioned above both systematically participate in each sub-project, each step will be realized through a partnership.

In a first time, the practises of the Internauts as far as buying tourism products online will be analyzed. The discussion and the evaluations they make of tourism products's websites will also be studied. A comparison of Internauts who bought or did not bought online and an evaluation of the target websites will be made. The purpose of this step is to make an inventory on the question and to determine if there is any common factors that influence the Internauts on the decision to buy or not. Mrs Christine Petr from the CREM laboratory of Rennes 1 university will be in charge of this sub-project.

In a second time, we will start to make online operations in real contexts (modification of the contents of tourism websites pages), then analyse the differents variables which are susceptible to influence the data processing (memorization, comprehension, judgement of quality, of lisibility...) and the behavior of the Internaut (other consultation, request for information, buying of the product of the service). Mr Nicolas Gueguen from the GESTIC laboratory of the University of South Brittany will be in charge of this sub-project.

## Bibliography, state of art.

Such a domain of research concerns two scientific disciplines represented by two distinct but also complementary laboratories. This complementarity allows to evaluate two important aspects of the act of buying: the valorization of the product and the process of decision of the consumer. One of the disciplines directly takes over from the marketing (analysis of the communicational contents of the websites, evaluation of the products and the websites made by the Internauts, strategic analysis of the provider offering tourism products or services...). This discipline is supported by a professor specialized in tourism marketing.

The other discipline takes over of cognition and behavior sciences (memorization and data processing, ergonomy of websites, social influence, affect towards information..) and is supported by two professors specialized in the cognition and the influence of the Internaut's behavior,

In a theoretical point of view, the literature about the communication and the marketing of leisure and tourism, but also about the social and behaviorial influence will be used as methodological and conceptual line for our researches. However, the innovating character of the thematic and the non existence of important scientific works about this particular axis of the act of buying online tourism products have to be highlighted. The fact that one of the laboratories, partner of the project, has already made works on this theme (negotiation between a customer and a tourism products' seller via e-mail) has to be mentioned. A publication as been made in a North Americain scientific magazine specialized in tourism and trip marketing: Legohérel P., Fischer-Lokou J. & Guéguen N. (2000) Doing business on the Internet: Analysis of the balance between seller and consumer during information exchange and negotiation. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 9(3), 49-64. The partners of this project therefore have an anteriority in the research on this particular domain of the Internet.