

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

19 October 2011

Question: SR28

Topic: Marketing to India and Digital Marketing

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Bushby asked:

1. **With respect to getting the sector “digital ready” and fostering improvements in Internet and Communications Technology:**
 - (a) **How many ‘unique visits’ does Tourism Australia’s website attract (as opposed to “hits” which also includes movement between pages)?**
 - (b) **is the Tourism Australia site well-integrated with State marketing websites -- does Tourism Australia review links to state government tourism sites and Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) to ensure comprehensive information flow coming into the site?**
 - (c) **How well integrated with Regional Tourism Organisation websites is the Tourism Australia website?**

Answer:

- (a) There were 14.7 million unique visitors to Tourism Australia’s (TA) consumer facing websites in 2010/11.
 - (b) TA’s websites www.Australia.com and www.nothinglikeAustralia.com feature attractions from all across Australia. Links to state and territory marketing sites are regularly reviewed and updated by TA.
 - (c) Regional tourism attractions are a large focus of TA’s websites www.Australia.com and www.nothinglikeAustralia.com. These websites contain Australian Tourism Data Warehouse listings, including details of accommodation providers, tourism services, attractions and events from throughout Australia. RTO websites are not integrated into TA sites due to agreements with State Tourism Organisations (STOs).
2. **Has Tourism Australia reviewed its website to ensure user friendly navigation so those seeking out specifics can be directed to them in a consistent way?**

Answer:

TA regularly reviews the information architecture of www.Australia.com with independent usability agencies. TA uses this information to continually update and enhance the usability of www.Australia.com and www.nothinglikeAustralia.com.

- 3. Does the Tourism Australia Website conform with Australian Government Information Management Office *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* for access by people with a disability?**

Answer:

TA requires all agencies/vendors that work on major digital design projects to adhere to all W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

- 4. Has Tourism Australia ever reported to AGIMO on its conformity with the AGIMO National Transition Strategy?**

Answer:

No. As an agency under the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, TA is not required to report on its conformity with the AGIMO National Transition Strategy.

- 5. If so, when? How often are these reports completed? If not, why not?**

Answer:

Not applicable.

- 6. Does Tourism Australia engage the Tourism Data Warehouse to ensure the best sharing of data amongst the sector's public and private sector websites?**

Answer:

Yes. TA is a major shareholder in the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse. TA's websites www.Australia.com and www.nothinglikeAustralia.com contain Australian Tourism Data Warehouse listings, including details of accommodation providers, tourism services, attractions and events from throughout Australia. This information is searchable by region and is integrated with TA's editorial content.

- 7. If there's advantage to be had in better linking Tourism Australia, State destination marketing sites and RTO sites, has the Department considered the value in a comprehensive audit of all external businesses – from event marketers to accommodation service providers, restaurants and so forth to support holiday planners?**

Answer:

The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism, on behalf of the National Long-Term Tourism Strategy's Digital Distribution Working Group, commissioned independent research of 2,000 tourism related businesses (including accommodation, restaurant, events and attraction providers) to establish the current level of online representation, capability and the barriers impeding Australian tourism operators in the uptake of digital marketing and distribution.

This research informed the development of the National Online Strategy for Tourism (NOST), a whole of government strategy to support tourism businesses to enhance their online capability. The NOST seeks to enable Tourism Australia and state tourism organisations to work collaboratively with industry to ensure Australia excels in the online promotion and distribution of tourism product to support holiday planners.

TA's websites www.Australia.com and www.nothinglikeAustralia.com contain comprehensive tourism data from across Australia to help consumers plan their holidays. www.Australia.com features a "plan your holiday tab" where users can see suggested itineraries and search tourism product listings provided by the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse, including details of accommodation providers, tourism services, attractions and events from throughout Australia. The www.nothinglikeAustralia.com site was recently updated to reference photo entries with related tourism product details.

8. Is Tourism Australia aware of

- (a) any criticism about underperformance in providing information in key target foreign languages on the internet?**
- (b) other countries (where English is the main language) providing information in target languages such as Arabic, Mandarin and Korean?**

Answer:

- (a) TA is not aware of any criticism about underperformance in providing information in key target foreign languages on the internet.
- (b) No. Both www.australia.com and www.nothinglikeaustralia.com are available in the following 16 languages: English; Dutch; Simplified Chinese (targeting Mandarin speakers); Traditional Chinese; Korean; Japanese; Taiwanese; German; French; Italian; Spanish/Latin American Spanish; Portuguese (Brazil); Indonesian; Vietnamese; Russian and Thai.

9. Is Tourism Australia aware of what our competitors are doing well in this area, for example TA's counterparts in Canada provide good content in this area, and Tourism NZ has done an excellent job in ensuring inbound tourists going there for the World Cup are provided information on events elsewhere in New Zealand.

Answer:

TA regularly reviews competitor activity and the results of this analysis are used to improve TA's digital activities. TA's digital strategy is considered best practice for a National Tourism Organisation.

10. Turning now to social media. Andrew McEvoy, you were interviewed by ABC journalist Peter Ryan about efforts to pitch to the Indian market recently.

- (a) Does Tourism Australia, actively use social media to drive traffic to its sites, to drive interest in Australia as a holiday destination, or protect Australia's reputation as a online?**
- (b) Does Tourism Australia conduct research on specific markets to inform its marketing strategy?**

- (c) **What about Blog Marketing?**
- (d) **Does Tourism Australia ensure that sites like Trip Adviser are regularly reviewed for content about Australian destinations?**

Answer:

- (a) Yes. TA has a comprehensive social media program. TA currently has the largest National Tourism Organisation Facebook page globally with 1,884,304 fans as at 5 November 2011. TA also has accounts on Twitter and Instagram. In China, TA has accounts with Weibo and QQ. TA's Facebook page and www.Australia.com are well integrated. For example, during the Dreamteam domestic promotion, TA's Facebook site was integral in driving entries to www.nothinglikeAustralia.com.
- (b) Yes. TA has a Global Insights team responsible for commissioning and interpreting consumer and market research. During 2010/11, the team conducted ongoing research on the health of 'brand Australia' in six key markets and an evaluation of the There's Nothing Like Australia campaign in eight markets. These insights inform TA's marketing strategies.
- (c) TA hosts a Visiting Opinion Leaders Program, targeting bloggers and other commentators to generate online blogs and conversations about Australia. For example, TA hosted four influential Chinese bloggers in September as part of the Cathay Pacific China Press Groups. These bloggers have a total reach of 47,407,305 daily readers and produced over 15 blog posts and 100 micro-blog posts during their visit.
- (d) Yes. TA partners with non-traditional media partners such as the social media site TripAdvisor to further reach out to TA's target audience. TA partnered with TripAdvisor to extend *There's Nothing Like Australia* communications on TripAdvisor's digital platform to inspire influential UK consumers to travel to Australia. A T-QUAL micro site is also being built on TripAdvisor's Australia website to combine customer reviews with T-QUAL endorsement to promote quality tourism products.

- 11. Last year, Austrade undertook a social media audit where they discovered significant ongoing commentary about Australia on the social media site "Orkut" and elsewhere (in relation to Indian students subjected to racism and violence in Melbourne since 2008). Did Austrade inform Tourism Australia or the Department of Resources Energy and Tourism about this?**

Answer:

TA, the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism and Austrade, participated in an inter-departmental committee (IDC) convened by DFAT to discuss the impact of negative media reports in India following attacks on Indian students. As part of this IDC, feedback of negative perceptions of Australia were shared between departments.

- 12. If so, what did Tourism Australia do with this information?**

Answer:

Following media coverage of attacks against Indian nationals in Australia, TA commissioned research to track consumer sentiment and assist in formulating the 2010/11 market strategy. Based on this research TA launched the Namaste campaign in January 2011, a comprehensive social

advocacy strategy, where Indian nationals within Australia shared their positive Australian experiences with Indian consumers. TA uses positive social media strategies as opposed to defensive strategies, to influence consumer perceptions of Australia. TA has approximately 37,000 Indian Facebook fans.

- 13. Does Tourism Australia engage with a range of social networking platforms to sell its messages, for example:**
- (a) **Australia: Facebook, Twitter**
 - (b) **India: Facebook, Orkut, Hi5 (Twitter is a close fourth)**
 - (c) **China: QQ, Xiaonei, 51**
 - (d) **Russia: V Kontakte, Odnoklassniki, LiveJournal**
 - (e) **Spain: Facebook, Tuenti, Fotolog**
 - (f) **United Kingdom: Facebook, Bebo**
 - (g) **United States: Facebook, Twitter**

Answer:

As at 5 November, TA engages with the following social networking platforms:

- Facebook: 1,884,304 fans globally, with 860,000 Australian fans; 37,000 Indian fans; 15,000 Spanish fans; 84,000 UK fans and 168,000 American fans.
- Twitter: approximately 17,000 fans globally.
- In China: 96,110 followers on Weibo.com; and 100,000 followers on T.qq.com.

- 14. Has Tourism Australia considered, in addition to its 'generic' Facebook page, a suite of 'fan pages' aimed at a few key target language and experience-focused groups?**

Answer:

Yes. For example, TA hosts specific content on Facebook regarding an Australian Working Holiday at: <http://www.facebook.com/AustralianWorkingHoliday>. This fanpage has 108,250 fans and is aimed at the Working Holiday Market in the UK.

- 15. If so, what is the estimated cost of maintaining a programme like this?**

Answer:

The cost varies according to the size of the market and the scope of activity. The majority of the cost involves resourcing the engagement with the social media platforms.

- 16. A program broadcast on ABC radio called *Don't trust the web* (18 September 2011) covered the topic of "Astroturfing". It alleged that a representative employed at an advertising agency had been caught commenting on an individual's blog spruiking the Tourism Australia Website.**

- (a) Is Tourism Australia aware of the allegation against the agency?
- (b) What was the name of the advertising agency involved?
- (c) What campaign were they advertising?
- (d) What was the company involved hired to do?
- (e) How much has the advertising agency in question been paid for its services?

- (f) What was the length of the contract?
- (g) How long after finding out about this action did Tourism Australia keep the company concerned engaged?
- (h) Is this agency in question still engaged by Tourism Australia?
- (i) Have they been engaged at all since the event occurred?

Answer:

- (a) No. TA did not authorise the activity referred to in the ABC radio program and were only made aware of these claims through this line of questioning.
- (b) The person believed to be involved in the incident was connected to the agency iProspect and had no direct relationship with TA.
- (c) The campaign referred to in the news program was No Leave No Life.
- (d) The agency was contracted for Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimisation.
- (e) TA did not contract the agency to perform the alleged activity.
- (f) Three years.
- (g) TA were only made aware of these claims through this line of questioning.
- (h) No.
- (i) No.