MYSWITZERLAND.COM: ANALYSIS OF ONLINE COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

ALESSANDRO INVERSINI,* CHRISTOPH BRÜLHART,† and LORENZO CANTONI*

*Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano, Switzerland
†Swiss National Tourist Office, Zürich, Switzerland

This research investigates the current state of technology adoption of a popular tourism destination: Switzerland. This case study has been elaborated leveraging on existing literature, public documents, and private statistics; it describes the importance of technology-mediated communication and promotion within the Swiss National Tourism Board, highlighting the achievements and envisaging the future steps. Thanks to an online communication model, the website of the Swiss Tourism Board (MySwitzerland.com) has been investigated, taking into account the following dimensions: content functionalities, graphical user interface, people who administrate, people who visit the website, and information market. The analysis shows the importance of the online channel and the technology adoption of this destination management organization.

Key words: Destination management organization (DMO) online communication; Destination management systems; Switzerland

Introduction

Tourism has always been described as an information-intensive domain (Poon, 1993), where the information exchange is extremely important for the whole industry (Gretzel, Yu-Lan, & Fesenmaier, 2000; Sheldon, 1997). In fact, tourism is one of the domains in which new media and especially the Internet are having a major impact (Buhalís, 2003). The Internet has dramatically changed the interaction between tourists and tourism destinations, and it has become the primary medium used by destination management organizations (DMOs) to communicate with prospective travelers. During the last few years, both the means of purchasing tourism goods (Werthner & Klein, 1999) and the means through which tourists gather information (Buhalís, 2003) and comment on their travel experience (Gretzel & Kyung, 2008) have been dramatically changed. According to Choi, Letho, and O’Leary (2007), destinations’ official websites provide information for tourists promoting and marketing the country image (Choi et al., 2007). DMOs are vigorously working on their online communication, ag-
gregating different kinds of functionalities to support visitors in their predecision stage, offering information on accommodation, flights, weather forecasts, maps, and attractions; after the decision to visit that particular destination has been made, visitors do refer to more specific websites (Choi et al., 2007).

The Swiss Tourism Board (ST) operates in the online sphere mainly with a website named My Switzerland.com. The website acts as the central hub of the online communication strategy of ST, enabling marketing and sales activities; moreover, contents can be adapted and published on partners’ websites and/or distributed via other applications/channels (such as the iPhone application). Data flow is clear and structured: data are provided by ST and other stakeholders (e.g., destinations, tourism partners, etc.) in a system called STNet DataNetwork, checked for quality, and then approved and published.

DMOs usually operate on the Internet through a system called destination management system (DMS) (Buhalis, 2003; Buhalis & Spada, 2000; Chen & Sheldon, 1997), which has been described as an information system, distribution channel, strategic management system, or interorganizational information system (Bedar, Louilletb, Verner, & Jolya, 2008). DMS operates as a hub connecting internal resources of the destinations with external ones (Inversini & Cantoni, 2009), stressing the marketing role of the destination toward the tourists. DMSs arose in the early 1990s (Archdale, Stanton, & Jones, 1992); they are defined as complex systems that facilitate the management of a wide range of requests from different users and stakeholders of a DMO (Buhalis, 2003). Thus, ICTs enrich the accessibility of a vast amount of information (in terms of quantity and quality) presenting options, costs, and experiences to tourists (Sheldon, 1997). DMOs are using the ICTs, and especially the Internet, to facilitate the tourists experience before, during, and after the visit (Gretzel et al., 2006) as well as to coordinate all the partners and various related industries involved in the production and delivery of tourism goods. Different authors have tried to describe the key features of DMSs. Kaplanidou and Vogt (2006) identified three major characteristics shaping the usefulness of a DMS: (i) content, (ii) navigation, and (iii) accessibility. Park and Gretzel (2007) screened more than 150 published papers (January 1997–September 2006), and identified nine success factors for a DMS: (i) information quality, (ii) ease of use, (iii) responsiveness, (iv) security/privacy, (v) visual appearance, (vi) trust, (vii) interactivity, (viii) personalization, and (ix) fulfillment. Rita (2000) argues that from a managerial perspective, a DMS should assist the corresponding DMO within three major functions: information provision, marketing and promotion activities, and market research. In any case, clearly one of the most common public representations of DMSs (at least of what is visible to the end user and related to the front-end communication) is the destination’s website. Actually, destinations’ websites are front-end applications built on dynamic pages created from the data collected in the DMS at different level.

Understanding the intrinsic nature of a website has been a challenging task for researchers over the last decades. Hoffman and Novak (1995) proposed a classification of websites based on a set of six functions that can be accomplished: (i) online storefront, (ii) Internet presence, (iii) content, (iv) mail, (v) incentive site, (vi) search agent. Hoger, Cappel, and Myerscough (1998) stated that a website of a company is essentially a promotional tool that leverages its capacity to promote awareness, provide customer support, sell products and services, sell advertising space, and offer electronic information services. O’Neill, Lavoie, and McClain (1998) underline that the term “website” has also been used to indicate “a cluster of pages,” which composed “a unique node on the web.” In early 2000 websites started to be considered not only as a “hobby for Information System people” but as a communication vehicle (Van der Geest, 2001). Focusing on the tourism domain, Pan and Fesenmaier (2000) tried to explore the communication flows that are recognizable in a tourism website; the study first identified the possibility for a website to create a two-way communication among tourists and tourism service providers through information exchange. Second, the possibility was pointed out that a web visitor could obtain large quantities of information from a website; in addition, the information regarding visitors’ behavior can be stored in the server’s log files. In the model presented by Pan and Fesenmaier (2006), website communication flow between companies and tour-
ists has long been unilateral. The importance of the communication flows has also been highlighted by Cantoni and Tardini (2006). A website is composed not only of a given set of contents and functionalities (although they are very important), but rather, two different groups of people—the administrators and the end users—also play a critical role in the whole website value and development chain. In order to establish a comprehensive base for analysis, this research builds upon the Web Site Communication Model (WCM) (Cantoni & Tardini, 2006) (now called also Online Communication Model; Cantoni & Tardini, 2009) in order to understand not only the functionalities of the considered website but also to explore the communication issues and communication flows connected with the purely technological aspects. Thus, the main WCM elements are presented and discussed here, with particular attention to its characteristics of communication completeness and flexibility. WCM is built essentially on four key elements/pillars, two of which deal with “things” (1 and 2) while the other two deal with “persons” (3 and 4):

1. Contents and services offered through a website. This pillar refers to the universe of possible content and functionalities present on a given website. As highlighted by Lizzi, Cantoni, and Inversini (2011), the best website in a given domain is not the one that incorporates all contents and services available, but rather the one that offers a healthy balance between content and service with respect to the communication objectives of the website.

2. Accessibility tools, such as the interface, hardware, and software. This pillar refers to the universe of instruments and components that make contents and services accessible. The analysis at this level mainly concerns the efficiency of the website as a whole: from the time taken to satisfy a request (e.g., the response of the server and/or database) to the visual interface (e.g., usability and accessibility).

3. Publishers: the website back office. This pillar refers to the organization, responsibilities, and communication flows within the back end of the website. Organizational issues and responsibilities are here analyzed together with team communication (Cantoni & Piccini, 2004).

4. End users: actual website users. This pillar refers to the universe of publics interested in the website. Analysis of the publics as well as promotional issues are analyzed here in detail.

The WCM is developed from the perspective that the website is not only a mere technical instrument but also (or even primarily) a human activity. In addition, it is not something standing alone. Aside from these four pillars of the web communication model, there is a fifth element: the ecological context, which refers to the relationships between the website and its external environment—the web as a whole (Cantoni & Tardini, 2006).

Structure of the Case Study

The WCM (Cantoni & Tardini, 2006) described above will be used within this case study as a compass to analyze the online communication of ST through its website MySwitzerland.com. The content of the case study has thus been organized using the following five categories (i) Contents and Functionalities; (ii) Interface; (iii) Publisher/Administrators; (iv) End Users/Publics; (v) and External Environment/Relevant info-market. A series of resources has been used to gather sufficient and meaningful data. Starting from the Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2010 Conference (ENTER2010) keynote presentation by Lycien Jantos and Christoph Brülhart, two official ST reports have been used as knowledge base: (i) Medium-term Planning 2011–2013 and (ii) Business Plan 2010. Additionally MySwitzerland.com Google analytics web statistics (1-year time frame), eCRM 2010 statistics, Facebook group statistics, and iTunes Connect statistics (Apple applications) have been integrated into the research (plus public available data). Finally, two semistructured interviews with the online managers have been also used as a knowledge base.

Swiss Tourism Board Organization Description

ST is a complex organization whose main aim is marketing products and services for Swiss tourism in a given number of markets. ST is divided into six different units: (i) markets and meetings; (ii) portal management, eMarketing, and IT; (iii) corporate communication, media and market research; (iv)
marketing and strategic partnerships; (v) business development; (vi) finance, controlling, and human resources. The online communication department belongs to the second unit, and is also divided into six different work groups: (i) web production and data network; (ii) online marketing and eCRM; (iii) partner websites; (iv) e-business solutions; (v) information technologies; and (vi) mailing house. Among these mentioned work groups, the one that is having more and more relevance in terms of planned investments and impact is eMarketing (Table 1), which is part of the so called “4 wheel drive” (Fig. 1). The “4 wheel drive” describes the marketing initiatives and sectors of ST:

1. eMarketing comprises the targeted development of customer addresses to be incorporated into a direct needs-oriented communication strategy [customer relationship marketing (CRM)] as well as the operation of an Internet presence and promotion.

2. Promotion covers all the elements of a balanced marketing mix, from advertising to events.

3. Key media management (KMM) is a communication tool of great importance for several reasons, including the regular production of worldwide news suitable for the media. Particular emphasis is placed on quality, addressing new visitor segments, and the integration of existing campaigns.

4. Key account Management (KAM) involves support for strategic tour operators and meeting planners with the aim of improving Switzerland’s “on-the-shelf” presence.

Direct customer communication (promotion, media work, eMarketing) takes priority in nearby markets. ST defined five main pillars for the online promotion: (i) display advertising; (ii) content cooperation; (iii) search engine optimization; (iv) search engine marketing; and (v) CRM and social media marketing. While the first four pillars are required in order to drive prospective tourists’ awareness and create interest in the destination, the last pillar is used to assess satisfaction once the experience has finished (Fig. 2).

According to the Swiss Tourism Board (2010):

The degree to which individual information and advertising media influence a visitor’s holiday choice has been calculated (Table 1). The Swiss Tourism Board share was determined for each visitor market and calculated in relation to the tourism turnover, so Swiss Tourism Board’s share can be shown as a specific percentage of overnight stays and turnover. The effectiveness of Swiss Tourism Board marketing tools should increase on a targeted basis, so as to raise the degree to which Swiss Tourism Board influences the overall tourism market. The data from the next effectiveness measurement will be available in 2011. The actual total of 18.3% corresponds to 13.4 million overnight stays or turnover of CHF 2.7 billion (estimated overnight stays: 1.5% growth in overnight stays between 2010 and 2013).

Table 1
Marketing Initiatives and Sectors of ST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Obj. 2009</th>
<th>Obj. 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eMarketing</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media work (KMM)</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operators and travel agents (KAM)</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Switzerland Tourism (2010, p. 26).

Figure 1. “4 wheel drive” of ST. Adapted from Switzerland Tourism (2010, p. 25).

eMarketing is a crucial issue for the whole of ST. Analysis using the “4 wheel drive” marketing strategy enables inferring the importance of it: eMarketing is foreseen to increase its impact on the final consumers, while the other “wheels” are expected to have a small growth (KMM) or to lose some points (Promotion and KAM). Finally, as regards the budget, the overall DMO expenses in 2009

were CHF 92.6 million; marketing expenses counted for CHF 62.6 million, while eMarketing accounted for about 5% of the overall marketing budget. Overall expenses for Portal Management and eMarketing were approximately CHF 3.5 million (3.2% of the overall budget).

**Market**

ST’s market is divided into four main markets: (i) Priority markets, where there is a national presence and an integrated and comprehensive marketing strategy (Switzerland, Germany, UK and Ireland, France, Italy, US, Netherlands, and Japan); (ii) Active markets, where there is a national presence, which is currently in development (Belgium, South Korea, Canada, Australia Austria, Poland, Sweden, and the Czech Republic); (iii) Strategic growth markets, described as above-average growth opportunities and potential (China, Russia, India, Spain, and the Gulf States); (iv) Development markets, where there is a comprehensive collaboration with Swiss embassies and chambers of commerce (Brazil, Israel Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, and Thailand) (Switzerland Tourism (2010)). Online marketing is slightly different in terms of target publics: MySwitzerland.com is designed for Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France, UK, the Netherlands, Spain, and US. These markets are responsible for 85% of the total traffic on the website.

**Current IT Adoption**

The Portal Management, eMarketing and IT department manages a website with 12.8 million pages indexed by Google.com (queried on Google.com on October 2010), coordinating 63 destinations’ websites (both at regional and city levels), and using different channels for the online communication and promotion (e.g., social media, mobile, etc.). Partner websites (Fig. 3) such as zermatt.ch, valais.ch, regionduleman.ch, adelboden.ch, zuerich.com, basel.com, and berninfo.com dramatically increased in recent years: starting from 2001 ($n=1$), the number of partner sites reached 63 by 2010. MySwitzerland.com partners collaborate in content creation and syndication.

**Problem Definition**

MySwitzerland.com aims at promoting the Swiss brand in different markets, raising place awareness of Switzerland and helping prospective tourists plan their holiday in the country. Websites and online communication goals are set annually based on (i) visits and (ii) addresses collected (Switzerland Tourism, 2009). On the one side, concerning website visits, Business Plan 2010 states:

Switzerland Tourism maintains a globally leading, modern internet presence. Expansion of our inter-
net communication and a targeted, proportional increase of eMarketing in the overall marketing mix will enable Switzerland Tourism to inform more and more customers via the Internet, thereby raising the effectiveness level of MySwitzerland.com. In 2010, 20.8 million visits will be made to MySwitzerland.com. (Switzerland Tourism, 2009, p. 50)

Thus, it is possible to understand the importance of online marketing, which is a core asset for ST, where the key performance indicator is the number of visits to the website. On the other side, concerning eCRM and mailing list subscriptions, the same report states:

The customer loyalty and communication system (eCRM) is the central electronic communication tool at Switzerland Tourism. The eCRM is operated centrally, and further automated processes will be introduced. The eCRM offers targeted, direct and cost-effective communication with visitors to Switzerland. On our way to 1 million addresses of visitors and interested parties, we shall reach 870,000 in 2010. By integrating sources such as brochure orders, contact forms, competition participants, eMail inquiries, reservation confirmations and hotel rates, the stock of eMail addresses in the eCRM will rise from 780,000 to 870,000. 35,000 new subscribers to the Newsletter will be generated from the e-mail address stock through targeted campaigns. The address stock will grow to a total of 410,000 subscribers. eCRM will be used to strengthen customer loyalty in these markets: Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Netherlands, North America, Austria and Spain. (Switzerland Tourism, 2009, pp. 50-51)

Online Communication Analysis

**Contents and Functionalities**

Content is the major asset for MySwitzerland.com; not only texts but also images are relevant. On the website there are three types of content:

1. The regions’/stakeholders’ core content: sourced from touristic partners (through the data network) and accounts for approximately 40% of the overall content. Content is inserted by 500 tourist offices, hotels, etc., according to the agreement they have with the DMO. They can insert three types of information: information about the structure, current information/updates, and news/events. Stakeholders access the data network (the data storage system) to upload their contents. This content is reviewed by ST within 24 hours. Thanks to this strategy, MySwitzerland.com possesses the most extensive calendar of events in Switzerland; nearly 98% of the pieces of information on the data network are published on MySwitzerland.com. Such a distributed publishing organization is vulnerable to occasional redundancies (i.e., when more than one player submits a document for the same event); in such cases, regional organizations are considered the most authoritative sources.

2. ST custom content: accounts for approximately 50%. ST produces its own proprietary content (e.g., a summer vacation product page). This content is created and managed by an internal editorial team, namely the content management
team, which is part of the business development unit. This content does not belong to the data network: it is created and approved internally before going online.

3. Promotional content: accounts for 10%. Tourism companies can buy banners and advertisements on MySwitzerland.com, which are published either on the websites and in the newsletter.

The booking system should be highlighted as a core functionality of the website. It is managed by the Switzerland Travel Center (STC), a company owned by ST together with SBB, the Swiss Railway Company. Commissions are very low at around 5–10% (with part of the commission routed directly to MySwitzerland.com). The booking engine is integrated within the website as a white label booking engine; on average, there are 15 transactions per day.

Interface

MySwitzerland.com is based on a proprietary technology (DMS, named G-Admin) designed and developed by a company based in Zurich (CH) named PIXELTEX (pixeltex.ch); the website that is available to date (2010) was renewed in 2006 and a usability test by ETHZ (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich) was performed in 2006. A new release of the website—with minor changes, mainly graphical ones—is foreseen by 2012. The DMS works on a double interface: stakeholders such as regional destinations or cities (and even the ST itself) insert contents on the STNet Datanetwork (Fig. 4) through the G-Admin interface (Fig. 4, step 1); the content is then approved by the portal managers (Fig. 4, step 2), goes live on the portal, and is also syndicated on partner websites and mobile applications (Fig. 4, step 3).

Information is spread directly and indirectly on different online channels. Direct channels are the MySwitzerland.com website, partner websites and the Apple iPhone/iPod/iPad platforms. For the latter delivery channels, MySwitzerland.com recently released various thematic applications: a snow report, a hiking application, an events application, a lake swimming application, and seven city guides (CH7 project). Furthermore, social media can be listed as indirect online channels, ranging from facebook.com to twitter.com and youtube.com, where MySwitzerland.com built a channel in 2007 with 242 subscribers. The video contents include the online campaigns launched by ST.

Administrators

ST does not have programmers within the Portal Management, eMarketing, and IT department, but only project managers coordinate the work of ex-

![Figure 4. MySwitzerland.com content flow.](image)
ternal stakeholders, such as Pixeltex.ch, to reach the projects goals. As regards the data, ST does translate the most important contents and events into six different languages: German, French, Italian, English, Dutch, and Spanish. Internal communication flows are managed thanks to a private wiki (built with open source Media Wiki), which encompasses the following areas of information: (i) Quality & Environment; (ii) Media Clippings; (iii) Market Research News; (iv) Departments; (v) Markets; (vi) ST Tools.

**Target Publics**

In general terms, the publics of the MySwitzerland.com website are the ones identified in the Business Plan 2010: Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France, UK, the Netherland, Spain, and the US.

To describe them in greater detail, two analyses have been performed, considering (i) eCRM and newsletter, and (ii) log files. According to the Business Plan 2010, the eCRM is “the central electronic communication tool at Switzerland Tourism and . . . it offers targeted, direct and cost-effective communication with visitors to Switzerland” (Switzerland Tourism (2009); in 2010 a total of 5,739,176 newsletters to 471,491 active addresses in 10 markets were sent with an opening rate of 20.5%, and a click rate of 36.6%, for a total of 1,175,360 open rate and 429,780 click-throughs.

Figure 5 shows the architecture of the eCRM system of MySwitzerland.com; data about prospective travelers are gathered in different ways (email enquiry, brochure orders, online and phone reservation); all these pieces of information concur in creating the eMarketing system with the dynamic profile creation and eMail campaign management. Every campaign created by ST is then put into the system and dispatched to the relevant profiles.

eCRM is not the only way to direct traffic to MySwitzerland.com. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) campaigns are also relevant within the promotional process: as regards SEO, in 2009, 215,000 search terms generated visits on MySwitzerland.com from organic searches; in fact, very few keywords (0.5%) are responsible for a full two thirds of all those visits. As regards SEM, MySwitzerland.com works mainly with Google; in 2009, it managed 35,781 active keywords on nine markets, generating 1,583,039 visits to the website.

The traffic analysis performed with Google Ana-
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lytics (November 1, 2009 to October 31, 2010) showed 27,342,676 visits done by 17,748,826 absolute unique visitors, for a total of 116,552,211 page views (average time spent on the site 3.35 minutes; average pages/visit 4.26). While 61.3% were new visitors, 38.7% were returning visitors. Visitors came from within Switzerland (about 12 million visits), from Germany (more than 2.7 million visits), and from Italy, France, Japan, and the Netherlands (more than 1 million visits each), followed by US, UK, Spain, and Belgium.

According to Alexa (which usually provides a quite North American perspective), relative to the general Internet population, male visitors are underrepresented, while females are overrepresented; cohorts between 35 and 64, as well as people who went to graduate school are also above average. A special mention should be done about access via mobile devices: even if it still accounts for a small percentage of the overall visits (1.6%), the number constantly increased during the study period, with a predominant presence of iPhone/iPad/iPod, followed by Android, SymbianOS, and BlackBerry.

The website was reached directly by 16.3% of the visits, while referring sites accounted for 25.1% of visits and search engines for 53.3% (the remaining sources were not identified); within this last area, Google provided more than 13 million visits (approximately 1.8 million through AdWords, the rest via organic results), while Yahoo! brought more than 500,000 and Bing about 200,000. Events and hotel booking pages in the German language ranked number one and two among the most visited pages.

External Environment

MySwitzerland.com ranks 16,972 on Alexa Traffic worldwide (192 among Swiss websites), and enjoys 2,769 back-links (about 2,490 are indexed by Google—data gathered on October 2010); it has very good positions on search engines for Swiss tourism-related keywords.

Furthermore, the Switzerland Travel Academy offers an electronic learning (eLearning) platform, training members (mainly travel agents and tour operators) on practical information regarding how and where to travel in Switzerland, thus supporting them in planning and marketing trips to Switzerland. Thanks to computers and the World Wide Web, eLearning content is available anywhere at any time, offering a highly flexible learning experience, personalized and customized. Furthermore, electronic delivery allows for immediate feedback and gratification—helping to motivate travel agents to become a Certified Specialist. Localized courses are available for Australia, China, Gulf Countries, India, Russia, Ukraine, the US, the UK/Ireland, and Germany; for all other markets, an international course is available. The responsibility of administering the courses belonged to MySwitzerland.com, but in the last months has been moved to the single markets, which are now responsible for the specific courses.

Lastly, social media presence was analyzed. Contents by ST are present on twitter.com, youtube.com, and facebook.com.

- **twitter.com**: Switzerland Tourism is very active on different channels, with a total of 1,100 followers.
- **youtube.com**: the personalized channel was created in 2007; to date (November 2010) the channel counts 338 videos, for a total of 725,398 views.
- **facebook.com**: group counts 4,522 monthly active users with 1,722 daily post view rate. Users connect to this facebook.com group mainly from the following countries: Switzerland, Germany, US, Austria, Italy.

Experiences

The Swiss Tourism Board is certainly a very interesting case of ICT adoption at the tourism destination level. This is demonstrated by the data shown in this article and by the constantly growing importance that the online sphere is acquiring within the Swiss tourism promotion.

Critical Success Factors

Although the MySwitzerland.com numbers (e.g., end users, eCRM contacts, etc.) are really remarkable, there is a need, also recognized by ST managers, to challenge themselves on different levels. Critical success factors (CFS) are today measurable in terms of number of visits to the website and number of addresses collected with the eCRM sys-
tem, yearly objectives that have been constantly met. Additionally, the Swiss tourists network has been expanded. As in Cantoni and Di Blas (2002), a company can have three main goals while going online:

1. To have a presence: Most companies today have a website, and not being listed by the search engines could mean forfeiting potential clients only because the company address or telephone numbers is not in the Internet.
2. To operate: Companies can choose to create online services to somehow operate in a B2B or B2C form in order to sell their product/service or to market it with prospective clients.
3. To integrate: Companies can exploit the Internet fully integrating online communication within their communication and business strategies.

MySwitzerland.com is doing a very good job in creating image awareness through the website, but it has to reach the next level, integrating tourism business objectives within its online communication. Next year’s strategy will be designed, and new and challenging objectives will then be established: one of the possible communication goals will be to push reservations on the website to grant tourism and hospitality managers a new and effective selling channel.

Lessons Learned

As regards the lessons learned, firstly it is important to highlight the central role of the DMS together with the STNet Data Network to manage the great amount of data and information that are concuring in creating the online communication of MySwitzerland.com. The constant increase of the number of regional destinations websites connected with the STNet Data Network shows on the one side the usefulness of the designed solution and on the other side the ever increasing need of regional destinations to get displayed within the network of the national website. Secondly, the use of WCM (Cantoni & Tardini, 2006) for the analysis demonstrated the relevance of “persons” (i.e., pillars 3 and 4) with respect to “things” (i.e., pillars 1 and 2) within the online communication as a whole. In fact, granted the technological effort done few years ago, the actual major effort of ST with their website MySwitzerland.com is dedicated to the ad

ministration and promotion, where investments on eMarketing are constantly growing. On a third level it is important to highlight the importance of reference publics: while initiatives such as the eCRM, the display advertising, and the web2.0 are focused on the end users, MySwitzerland.com also takes care of travel agents and tour operators, giving them online courses divided by markets. Finally, what emerged during the two meetings with MySwitzerland.com online managers was their constant need for fresh ideas and strategic directions. As demonstrated by last year’s strategy, with the introduction of social media marketing and Apple mobility applications, MySwitzerland.com proves to be a dynamic and ever-changing company where technology advancement does matter. In any case, the philosophy of “Less is More” (Schwartz, 2005) is pervading the whole online strategy. MySwitzerland.com is not trying to occupy every online channel to promote the Swiss Tourism brand, but it is concentrating its efforts on the most important channels without losing focus on the main website and on the products and services to be granted to partners.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ST is a company where the importance of technologies and eMarketing is recognized and valued. The importance of such a channel is demonstrated by the budget granted for online activities and by the number of end-users and prospective travelers constantly looking for online contents produced by the destination. Modernization and currency of the technology adopted, together with a realistic use of the online communication channel, are the key issues and success factors of the Swiss DMO online communication.

Future challenges regard the adoption of different levels of business integration in order to fully exploit the online channel—also for commercial purposes—leveraging on previous experience and learnings.

Biographical Notes

Dr. Alessandro Inversini holds a Ph.D. in Communication Sciences from Università della Svizzera italiana, (Lugano, Switzerland). Dr. Inversini is director of ticinoinfo sa a public–private company active in the field of technology and tourism at the regional level and he is fellow researcher at webatelier.net, a research and development laboratory of
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Università della Svizzera italiana. His field of interest is communication technologies and tourism and his research interests are User Experience, Web Reputation, Web2.0, and Cultural Tourism Online Communication.

Christoph Brühlhart is Online Marketing Manager at Switzerland Tourism. Christoph Brühlhart got his master’s degree from the University of Zürich and has been working for the Swiss Tourist Board since 2002. He joined the Portal Management team in 2005, working on the production side of MySwitzerland.com; at the same time he became the delegate for the ETC Marketing and Technology Network. In 2007 Christoph took the role as Online Marketing Manager, responsible for the online campaigns of MySwitzerland.com.

Prof. Lorenzo Cantoni is scientific director of webatelier.net, professor and Dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano, Switzerland). He graduated in Philosophy and holds a Ph.D. in Education and Linguistics. He is also scientific director of NewMine Lab (New Media in Education Lab) and of eLab (eLearning Lab). His research interests are eLearning, New Media in Tourism Communication, Usability and Quality. Prof. Lorenzo Cantoni has been chair for the ENTER2011 conference and he is currently a member of the board of directors of IFITT (International Federation of IT in Travel and Tourism).

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