

New technology puts advertising waste ON THE RADAR

By Ian McMahon

ALL MARKETING executives are familiar with the adage: “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the problem is I don’t know which half.”

But now, it is claimed, travel marketers can use technology to identify the areas where they are wasting their advertising budget and where they can shift their spend to get better results.

Making the claim is former Harvey World Travel general manager Mark Cario who now runs his own consultancy The Marketing Revolution.

He is promoting a version of technology developed by Sydney-based marketing technology services company, Potentiate, that has been tailored to the needs of the travel industry.

This travel industry version of the technology is being marketed as TravelRADAR.

Already the Jetset Travelworld Group has decided Cario’s claims are sufficiently credible to sign on as a TravelRADAR “foundation partner”.

Cario is spreading his net widely, aiming to win business not only from agency groups but also wholesalers, online travel agents, cruise lines, rail operators, coach companies, car rental, hotels and resorts, and major tourism operators around Australia such as theme parks.

Also in his sights are state and national tourism organisations, travel insurance, foreign exchange for the leisure traveller, and other businesses

targeting the travel consumer like duty free operators, and traveller health services.

Earlier this month Cario, accompanied by Potentiate’s market development director Annette Nazoroff was spruiking the benefits of TravelRADAR to wholesalers attending the Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) annual general meeting in Sydney.

Noting that leisure travel is an infrequent purchase, Cario posed a series of “What ifs?” to the wholesalers. They included:

■ “What if we knew when people came back into the market to start shopping around for their next holiday?”

■ “What if we knew precisely where people were looking to go, when they were shopping around for their next holiday?”

■ “What if we could capture prospects earlier in the shopping process when they are doing research for their next holiday – before they have decided where to book and with whom to book?”

■ “What if we could advertise direct to only those people who were actively interested in learning more about our products?”

■ “What if we knew when was the right time to advertise in each market? What if we knew when was the wrong time?”

He depicted TravelRADAR as “a powerful new technology” capable of delivering these benefits.

He claimed the technology, which complies with all industry and government online privacy requirements, is able to measure web browsing behaviour “live” 24/7 across more than 200,000 URLs.

He said the “very new” technology is unavailable elsewhere and offers “first mover advantage” to those signing up.

They will be able to ensure that their advertising aligns with what consumers are currently looking for, he said.

Alluding to the slump in New

with “some of the most sophisticated data visualisation technology available” so users can “quickly and easily understand where in the world people are looking to travel and how they want to travel; so that quick business decisions can be made”.



Mock-up of a TravelRADAR ‘dashboard’ screen. Final version will contain modifications and will have higher production values.

Zealand tourism reported two months after the Christchurch earthquake, Cario said: “TravelRADAR could have told us this the day after the February 22 earthquake.

“More importantly it could have told us where people were planning to travel to.”

The core claim for TravelRADAR is that it captures crucial browsing data across multiple categories including travel destination, product type, visitor type and holiday type.

And it combines this information

Central to the visualisation will be a number of “dashboard” screens.

According to Cario: “The smart graphic applications are simple enough for a busy CEO or executive to use.

In fact, TravelRADAR is easy enough for anyone to use, with first-time users being proficient within minutes.

“Today, travel search behaviour is driven by the internet, and with this new technology TravelRADAR will deliver travel marketing into the 21st Century.”

Travelport hospitality push 1: GDS sharpens focus on hotel, car content

TRAVELPORT has outlined plans to invest in a new, in-house support function for its hotel and car supplier customers as part of an ongoing commitment to grow GDS bookings in these non-air sectors.

Two new dedicated help desks will be established in Dublin, Ireland, and Parsippany, New Jersey, to work closely with over 230 hotel and car customers "to ensure that their content is distributed as widely and effectively as possible to travel retailers across the globe".

The announcement followed other recent hospitality-focused updates from Travelport, including news that

a newly created team of dedicated hospitality business development managers have been recruited to support travel agencies in key travel countries.

They include Serene Tan in Singapore and Ajay Verma in India who will work with Sydney-based Stephen Garton, liaising with travel agents to help them realise the potential of the hospitality sector.

They will also provide on-the-ground training and educational support to help agents earn new incremental revenue from these sources.

Travelport president and managing director Asia Pacific, Simon Nowroz,

commented: "The establishment of a specialised global hotel and car help desk affirms our commitment to creating value for our hotel and car partners."

"The appointment of two new dedicated business development managers in the region will also ensure our travel agency customers receive the dedicated, localised support they deserve."

Travelport says it generated a 12.1 per cent growth in hotel bookings through its GDSs, Galileo and Worldspan, last year.

And recent industry figures provided in the latest Pegasus View report,

indicate that corporate hotel bookings made through the GDS channel, will continue to grow by more than 20 per cent through the second quarter of 2011, according to Travelport.

■ A strategic partnership with UK-headquartered Hotelzon is a recent demonstration of Travelport's increased focus on hospitality content.

Also involving Travelport's joint venture, eNett International, the Hotelzon deal has provided the GDS company with what is claimed to be "one of the largest truly online inventories of over 140,000 hotels worldwide". (See story below)

Travelport hospitality push 2: vNett 'virtual MasterCard' adds to Hotelzon pact



THE Australian-developed provider of travel industry payment solutions, eNett International, has contracted with UK-headquartered online hotel booking operator, Hotelzon to use its new vNett system.

The announcement of the deal follows last month's global launch of vNett based on single-use MasterCard virtual account numbers to facilitate payments to suppliers.

The vNett launch statement described the virtual cards as "a secure and widely accepted way for IATA and non-IATA travel agencies to pay their travel suppliers. A 16 digit single-use MasterCard virtual account number is issued for a specific transaction, eliminating the possibility of misuse".

The vNett solution reduces the risk arising from service default, streamlines the accounts payable function and delivers comprehensive web-based reporting in real-time, according to eNett.

Virtual account numbers can be generated in all major currencies, eliminating the need to pay foreign transaction fees, and this is a "unique" feature, the company claims.

The launch statement said vNett can be

accessed via a web portal at www.enett.com or web service (XML) "and seamlessly integrates with GDSs, websites and other booking tools".

"Two years in development, our latest product innovation is now being deployed to the global travel industry," said eNett International executive director Rob Bishop.

Area director Europe, Middle East and Africa for eNett International, Brian Staunton said work with a number of travel agencies in Europe has "demonstrated the strength and flexibility of the virtual card platform".

Integration of the vNett solution into Hotelzon's booking system is the latest instance of eNett's growth globally since it formed a joint venture with Travelport.

According to a joint eNett-Hotelzon-Travelport statement: "The state-of-the-art vNett virtual card platform will extend Hotelzon's booking tool by enabling travel management companies (TMCs) and other corporations to securely pay their hotel suppliers using a single-use MasterCard virtual account number."

Hotelzon International's chief executive Jani Kaskinen said: "The platform enables our customers to set the date and amount of

the virtual card transaction and also allows multiple authorisation messages, which is a unique feature of the solution." Staunton said Hotelzon customers can register to use the vNett solution at www.enett.com "and quickly begin generating virtual cards to facilitate payments to their hotel suppliers."

Travelport's president and managing director for Europe and Brazil, Jason Clarke, said the eNett deal means his company is adding "further business value to our strategic partnership with Hotelzon".

The partnership is a multi-year co-operation deal that got under way earlier this year.

This saw Hotelzon integrate its online booking tool with Travelport technology and hotel content "to provide richer choice as well as streamline sales and booking processes for its travel agents and corporate clients", according to Travelport.

Hotelzon claims its strategic partnership with Travelport provides "one of the largest truly online inventories of over 140,000 hotels worldwide". It says its corporate client base exceeds 15,000 customers and it processed more than 1.5 million room nights in 2010.

SCVC uses CeBIT conference to showcase conference technology



1000 CeBIT delegates in the SCVC's auditorium watched the launch aided by a 44-foot video screen

THE launch of the Federal Government's National Digital Economic Strategy provided the Sydney Convention and Visitors Centre (SCVC) with an appropriate event to demonstrate its cutting-edge conference technology.

Announced at the CeBIT conference earlier this month, the strategy launch was broadcast from the Centre via the venue's high speed Digital Video Network (DVN) link to a major rural telehealth conference in Cairns.

The centre's technical production and design team also coordinated a simultaneous 30-minute webcast of the launch by Federal Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy from the venue's Parkside Auditorium, as he outlined the benefits of creating a digital economy through the National Broadband Network (NBN).

Meanwhile, close to 1000 CeBIT delegates in the auditorium watched the launch aided by a massive 44-foot video screen – one of the biggest inhouse screens in Australia.

CeBIT Australia 2011 was billed as the biggest and most expensive business technology conference in the country, attracting more than 30,000 business professionals over three days.

As well as assisting with the Federal Government launch, the SCVC's information and communication systems team provided extensive IT support on the floor of the CeBIT exhibition.

The team established five separate and secure networks for organisers and exhibitors as well as a separate wireless network to carry regular CeBIT Twitter feed and 40 individual internet connections.

C&K pushes ezeego1 as the online 'travel agency for travel agents'

IN A long-foreshadowed move, Cox and Kings (C&K) has officially launched its online travel supermarket, ezeego1, in Australia.

Dubbed "the travel agency for travel agents", ezeego1 effectively acts as an internet-enabled consolidator of global travel product.

C&K claims ezeego1 uses "the most innovative technology platform in the Australian travel industry" to connect to "a world of products and services including domestic and international flights, hotels, transfers, sightseeing, cruises, holiday packages and destination dossiers".

Said Cox & Kings chief executive Steve Reynolds: "There is no comparable online product consolidator of this scale currently available to the trade in Australia.

"Ezeego1 has a business-to-business focus and will provide partners with a great vehicle for both brand awareness and sales."

He claimed ezeego1's travel meta-search engine "makes agents' decisions easy by scanning multiple global suppliers to instantly find the lowest available rates for clients."

This eliminates the need to compare



prices across websites, according to Reynolds. "And all of this is backed by a 24/7 customer support team," he added.

As widely reported at the time Cox & Kings moved into the Australian market with the acquisition of Tempo Holidays and Bentours, ezeego1 was launched in India more than four years ago.

C&K claims that it is India's "most successful online travel website in the country", receiving up to two million unique visitors a day.

The company says the Australian version features "a host of unique selling points" including an emergency SMS service which allows clients to text "SOS" to an emergency contact number from anywhere in the world.

An ezeego1 customer service executive will call to assist the traveller within 15 minutes, according to a statement issued by C&K in conjunction with this month's ezeego1 launch.

Ezeego1 is also offering flexible payment terms which allow clients to pay up to 30 days prior to departure once a booking is confirmed.

"Ezeego1 has been a while in the making, however this has given us time to refine the system to make it Australia's best one-stop travel shop," Reynolds said.

"We are very excited about ezeego1 and confident it will become an invaluable tool for travel agents."

He specified the benefits of using the online travel supermarket as:

- Savings – ezeego1 claims to provide access to the best available rates on all products.
- Local support – Agents have the support of a dedicated ezeego1 team based in Melbourne.
- Professional training – provided by an ezeego1 business development manager.
- Assistance – Agents are promised a 24/7 help line and online chat support during office hours.

New Sabre Red graphical view on the way

SABRE Travel Network plans new graphical workflow for agents using the company's Sabre Red platform to book, ticket and manage travel.

The GDS has expanded its beta-test of graphical view to more than 50 agencies around the world, with plans to begin

its global market release later this year. Building on Sabre Red's existing graphical elements, the system aims to allow agents to book air, hotel, car and other suppliers using a fully-graphical workflow requiring fewer keystrokes.

"When Sabre announced Sabre Red

in June last year, we promised customers we'd keep developing and delivering new and innovative tools they need to succeed and stay ahead of the market," said Sabre Pacific general manager product, marketing and distribution Richard Morgan.

"Graphical view is just one example."

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ZUJI Australia signs up as Twitter sponsor

ZUJI Australia says it is the first Australian travel group to utilise Twitter's new sponsored tweet functionality.

Zuji's social marketing strategist, Maura Tuohy, of Reprise Media, said the partnership with Twitter will enable the online travel agency to listen to its customers in real time and to release special travel offers at record speed.

"Additionally, with technology as a core pillar for Zuji, we felt it was appropriate for the organisation to be among the very first companies to trial the new functionality in Australia," she said.

Managing director of Zuji Australia, James Gaskell, said the partnership will not only help the company build on a rapidly growing social media presence, but also allow it to interact more candidly with their existing and potential customers.

"Our tweets will provide travellers with insider trip information, hot tips and the latest flight, holiday and hotel deals," he said. "More than anything, it's a fun way for our customers to get acquainted with our brand, our personality and what we stand for here at Zuji."

iPad, iPhone apps emerge as new travel marketing forces

ENTERPRISE Marketing, the long-established travel marketing company founded by travel industry veteran Joe Cristaudo, has provided the latest Australian example of the use of iPad applications in travel marketing.

Enterprise, in conjunction with its online arm, fuse digital, this month launched the first iPad application for P&O Cruises in the iTunes store.

The free app features 360 degree views, interactive ship deck plans, videos, vivid image galleries and clickable pages to P&O Cruises website.

"It provides an exciting view of the P&O Cruises experience," said Cristaudo, claiming the product is "one of the first major iPad apps for the Australian tourism industry".

He said: "This app allows viewers to experience products at their own time, and jump online for instant availability and reservations.

"It will certainly be a 'must have' distribution channel for operators."

The P&O Cruises iPad app will be used by the P&O Cruises' sales force and Cristaudo said: "It will be useful for travel agents to have an iPad in-store to demonstrate the cruise experience



to customers. It's an exciting, low cost, interactive sales tool for travel agents."

Group general manager said the P&O Cruises iPad app was developed in-house using the Adobe® Digital Publishing Suite, which has just been released in the Australian market.

"Our technical and industry knowledge is available to give tourism companies an edge in this rapidly changing tourism environment," she claimed.

A US pointer to the potential for iPhone and iPad apps to play an increasingly important role in travel

marketing – and further erode travel agency bookings, particularly for local sightseeing tours – is provided by Viator last month releasing apps offering a selection of global tours and activities.

Indicating the increasing influence of consumer comment in clients' travel choices, Viator says its product offerings are supported by more than 260,000 traveller reviews and photos.

Viator says it will be offering "exclusive" deals and promotions, bookable in five currencies (\$US, \$AUS, \$CAN, GBP and euro) and backed by "a low-price guarantee".

"Today's travellers are more self-directed and less reliant on concierges and stale guidebooks than in the past and our apps – like Viator.com – cater to their needs with the added flexibility to find and book tours and activities on the go anytime, anywhere," claimed Viator Inc president and chief executive Barrie Seidenberg.

Seidenberg said travellers can use the app to make last-minute bookings directly from the device.

She said the majority of Viator tour operators now accept mobile e-vouchers to book and check-in with the app.



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With ARENA, agents can beat online direct sellers, claims TDS

TRAVEL Distribution Systems (TDS) says travel suppliers from around the world are now adding content to its recently launched ARENA booking system.

TDS says ARENA will allow travel agents to book directly with service suppliers around the world.

"ARENA will change the way bookings are made today and lower costs" said TDS chief executive Norm Collins.

"We believe that (bricks and mortar) industry outlets should remain as the major distribution channel for travel services and that agents should have a system that allows them to be price-competitive with the many online booking services that bypass travel agents."

TDS is currently offering free access to ARENA for travel suppliers and agents with a nominal reservation transaction fee being charged to suppliers for the cost of distribution.

The first stage of the system allows for the inventory management of travel content and TDS is offering to assist suppliers in loading their content.

The second stage of the system will provide for reservations, which is due for release in July, 2011.

Collins also revealed that TDS has plans to release a mobile booking facility, as an integrated service to the main ARENA application.

"The service will provide a unique booking



service for the clients of travel agents and maintain client loyalty and place Australian travel agents at the forefront of mobile booking technology," Collins said.

TDS is making ARENA available only to industry members and Collins says the company has "a large number" of agents waiting to use the system.

Agents can register at www.tdsworld.com and each registration requires approval, Collins said.

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Kerri Primrose, Joint Managing Director, MP Travel Pty Limited



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Next gen Tramada claims productivity gains for TMCs, leisure agents

LAUNCHED in July last year after four years R&D and around 100,000 hours of development, Tramada's next generation mid-office software has delivered "significant productivity gains to corporate and leisure agents alike", according to a statement issued by the company on the eve of the launch's first anniversary.

The statement, issued by Tramada chief executive Jo O'Brien, said the software was released to a range of agents.

"Some were corporate, some were leisure, some were large, some were small," the statement said.

"And now that the dust has settled the feedback has been nothing short of amazing."

Tramada boasts the new product has "taken mid office technology to the next level".

According to the company this claim is true for "the actual technology platform but also in terms of the functionality available and process and productivity improvements".

In the case of functionality O'Brien's statement claims: "The cloud based open architecture means that Tramada

can integrate with any number of providers of specialist products to the travel industry.

"This includes payment providers, mobile applications, and carbon tracking services to name a few.

"The fact is new innovative providers of travel agency services have declared they will not work with server based mid office applications. It simply doesn't make sense to do so.

"Systems that are server based are out of step with modern technology and cannot keep up with the rapid changes required to operate successfully in the current environment.

"Users of Tramada have no need to make hefty capital expenditure in computer hardware; they just require a good speed internet connection and the full functionality and data security are delivered to them."

Tramada claims its investment in leading-edge technology has resulted in "newly developed partnerships and integrations with businesses like Jetset Travelworld's Air Tickets (*travelBulletin*, April), Cornerstone Information Systems, conTgo and eNett".



"And watch this space for a plethora of innovative products coming online soon," says O'Brien.

"Next gen enhancements will include touchless integrations with booking engines for both the leisure and corporate market as well as an end to end solution for online travel agents.

"It sets a very high benchmark to aspire to for all providers of travel technology in Australia and New Zealand."

She claimed early adopters are already achieving significant productivity gains "and these gains flow straight through to the bottom line".



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