



Winter Issue 2011



Business Name

President Message

Denise Miller, Strategic Marketing & Research



When is Research a Bad Thing?

The past couple of years have certainly reinforced the importance of research. Things that we thought we “knew” have changed, and there certainly has been a shift from what we in the industry had accepted as the normal. On top of the economic situation, technology continues to reshape the marketing environment and provide organizations with an almost overwhelming number of marketing options.

The good news is that this environment has sharpened most organizations appetite for research. More and more often organizations are using research to make decisions about how much to invest in different options and programs – and using the evaluation of these programs to improve their efforts. People are asking for the “research” to back up explanations of what has been happening, projections for the future and claims about the effectiveness of marketing options being promoted.

The bad news is that not all the “research” being cited is accurate, credible and applied correctly. With the call for numbers and research being so widespread, lots of people are generating research – or putting together numbers and calling them research. In some cases, studies are designed to support a specific product or tool – often by the people selling the product. In other cases, consultants promoting their services select specific numbers or findings from a research study that support their point of view, but fail to present those that don’t. And in many cases, results are misinterpreted or misrepresented – for example, attitudes are represented as behavior (if 80% of the people agree with a statement that they often look for deals, this is presented as 80% having used a deal for their last trip), or findings among a small, non-representative sample are reported as applying universally.

Our duty as researchers is to help people understand how to interpret and use this plethora of numbers confronting them. As travel and tourism researchers, we need to be relentless in asking questions about how the research was done, who was surveyed, how the questions were asked and how the results are being applied and interpreted. We need to be advocates for accuracy and we need to make sure that presenters and results highlight the difference between what is a finding from the research, versus an opinion based on the research findings.

As an organization we must continue to discuss how to ensure that the research we do and report is accurate, meaningful and useful. As technology is changing travel and tourism marketing, it is also changing survey techniques and options. We need to make sure we are searching for the best practices and identifying the problems and pitfalls with various options, as well as helping our members to use the most up-to-date, accurate and projectable techniques.

Our goal must be to make sure that “research” doesn’t become another term for hype, sales pitch or opinion – and that we help people throughout the industry understand when the “research” they are using is really a bad thing. I look forward to working with all of you to achieve this critical goal for our industry – and for TTRA.

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TTRA 2011 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

EXPERTS IN YOUR FIELD MEETING IN LONDON ONTARIO

"Seeing the Forest AND the Trees - Big Picture Research in a Detail Driven World"

June 19-21, 2011 in London, Ontario, Canada

Marlise Taylor, North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development

Early bird special registration will be January 24-March 30. New full day student symposium before the conference!

Registration is now open for TTRA 2011 in London, Ontario! The conference committees have been hard at work planning an exciting conference full of fantastic speakers, lots of networking opportunities and a chance for academics and practitioners to come together to discuss topics affecting both sides of tourism research in a fun way.

Keynote Speakers

Our keynote speaker will be Steve Rappaport, Director of Knowledge Solutions for the Advertising Research Foundation and principal author of "The ARF Listening Playbook", a go-to guide for understanding the newest and potentially most important advance in market research – listening to customer conversations. Steve will help us in the keynote and then again in a more focused concurrent session find out how best to discover how listening changes the game for people and brands.

Reprising last year's award winning conversation about the economy and tourism trends, Adam Sacks returns to share his thoughts and insights as we look ahead to 2011 and beyond. David Sheatsley, Director of Marketing Research for the US Travel Association will join Adam in this popular session.

Peter Williams and a team of some of the best and brightest TTRA members will lead a highly interactive session using state of the art technology and 'game time' audience participation to identify a global agenda of priority themes and hot topics for tourism research for this second decade of the new millennium.

And those are just a few of the sessions lined up for this year's exciting TTRA Conference to be held in London, Ontario. Stay tuned for more information about concurrent sessions, networking opportunities and fun things to do during your "down" time in London!

TTRA members and friends!

Registration for the 2011 TTRA **International Conference** is **NOW OPEN!** "*Seeing the Forest AND the Trees - Big Picture Research in a Detail Driven World*" will be held in London, Ontario Canada from June 19-21. Register now to receive the Early Bird discount of \$50!

To register visit: www.ttra.com/Conference Registration — clicking the Register Now! link will take you to the login page. If this is the first time you've logged in since February 1st, you'll be prompted to enter the generic password of ttrapass and then to change it to one of your choice. Once you have logged in, click the Conference Registration link on the left menu bar.

Taking Care of Business!

Denisa Georgescu , President ,TTRA Canada Chapter

This year is far from being a “sleep and snooze” year for the Canadian Board of Directors. In June, Canada is hosting the TTRA International annual conference, which every six or seven years comes to our country. For this reason, we do not host our own Chapter conference, which usually is held during the fall.

This year, we are taking this opportunity to roll up our sleeves and work on advancing some aspects of our Chapter. During our January Board meetings, we discussed how to sustain and grow the Chapter, and how to ensure its relevance to a more diversified membership while at the same time trying to improve the value we are offering to our members.

Having examined its goals and objectives for 2011, the Board has created new task forces and initiated a number of activities to deal with timely issues such as:

- Potential changes in the organizations responsible for key elements of Canada’s tourism statistical system (e.g., the Tourism Satellite Account, the International Travel Survey and the Travel Survey of Residents of Canada); and
- The review of the TTRA Strategic Plan, in order to determine what actions of its own the Chapter can initiate in order to complement the goals and activities of the International Strategic Plan.

Some of the current action items of the Board include: improving the existing Student Award process; upgrading our membership database and making improvements in the member profile page; developing an Operational Manual to improve the overall functionality of the Board; and a set of “green policies” for our annual conference and Board meetings.

Finally, the Board is working with the International Conference Committee in supporting this year’s conference in London, Ontario for a successful event, particularly in terms of the Student Forum, Chapter members’ participation, and sponsoring partnerships.

We are happy to work hard and party hard as well. See you in Canada in June!



DON'T MISS THE
TRAVEL & TOURISM RESEARCH ASSOCIATION'S



2011 TTRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

JUNE 19-21, 2011
LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA

Join the worldwide travel community in Canada's beautiful "City of Trees" and *get the big picture in a detail-driven world* at the TTRA 42nd Annual International Conference.

This conference provides opportunities to participate in a unique network that brings together the academic and practitioner sectors of our industry in an informal, friendly fashion that promotes the kind of relationships that provide a number of valuable and long-lasting opportunities.

Hear experts on such topics as: Understanding Digital Life and Social Media, Managing Sustainable Tourism, Surviving the Economy, Utilizing Creative Research, Crisis Response, Meetings Travel and more.

INVEST IN YOUR FUTURE!

THIS IS A CONFERENCE
YOU WON'T WANT
TO MISS!

Tourism London is excited to be the host of the 2011 TTRA International Conference. They have many great things waiting for the conference delegates. Visit www.londontourism.ca to learn more about our host city.



Keep Up
on the Latest
Travel
Trends!

Find
Out More at
www.ttra.com

New!
Half Day
Student
Symposium
Before the
Conference

Rub Elbows
with the Best
& Brightest in
your Field!

*We have many interesting
& thought-provoking sessions
planned for this year's
conference. Visit ttra.com
for the most up to date
conference information.*

Over
60 Academic
Paper
Presentations

Registration ends June 15.
Register online at
www.ttra.com
or call 248-708-8872
Email: ttra@ttra.com



2011 TTRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE SESSION DETAILS

GENERAL SESSION INFORMATION

"ESSENTIALS OF LISTENING"

Steve Rappaport, Advertising Research Foundation

Listening changes the game for people and brands; it brings the promise of true consumer-centricity forward. Let's not cover before the "tyranny of the installed market research base", but figure out how best to discover, listen to and act on the conversational "dark matter" that is all around our brands. The ARF Listening Playbook is the go to guide for understanding the newest and potentially most important advance in market research - listening to customer conversations.

Steve Rappaport of the Advertising Research Foundation provides an authoritative voice that organizes and synthesizes what is known about listening and presents it in a way that is useful for making brand decisions.

"ECONOMIC AND TRAVEL LOOKOUT! SESSION"

Adam Sacks, Managing Director, Tourism Economics &

David Sheatsley, Director of Marketing Research, US Travel Association

Reprising last year's award-winning conversation about the economy and travel and tourism trends, TTRA is pleased to have Adam Sacks, Managing Director of Tourism Economics, return to the TTRA stage to share his thoughts and insights with us as we look ahead to 2011 and beyond. This year, the role of Dr. Suzanne Cook will be filled by an excellent understudy in the form of David Sheatsley, Director of Marketing Research for U.S. Travel. Join us for this totally unscripted, unrehearsed and unnerving session.

"RESEARCH THAT MATTERS: DEVELOPING A GLOBAL TOURISM RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE SECOND DECADE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM"

Peter Williams, Simon Fraser University & Team of TTRA Members

This highly interactive session uses state of the art technology and 'game time' audience participation to identify a global agenda of priority themes and hot topics for tourism research needed by decision makers in the second decade of the new millennium. Peter Williams and a team of some of the best and brightest TTRA members will lead an interactive, audience participatory session to walk attendees through the appropriate steps to creating a research agenda that is both robust and realistic for all. Perspectives of academic, government, non-government, and private sector tourism stakeholders will be used to help shape the discussion leading up to the session's dialogue and research priority setting agenda.

OTHER SESSIONS

ACADEMIC/PRACTITIONER NETWORKING ROUNDTABLES

Come and join fellow research members as they meet and discuss topics that will help to bridge the gap between academics and practitioners.

BUSINESS CARD EXCHANGE

This "speed dating" concept will allow you to meet and exchange business cards and information with other researchers and vendors.

More
Speakers &
Sessions are
Currently Being
Finalized

Check on www.ttra.com for
the most up to date
information.

Plus Over
60 Academic
Paper
Presentations

New!
Half Day
Student
Symposium
Before the
Conference



Registration
ends June 15.
Register online at
www.ttra.com
or call
248-708-8872
Email:
ttra@ttra.com



TRAVEL & TOURISM RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
2011 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

JUNE 19-21, 2011 • LONDON, ONTARIO

DELEGATE REGISTRATION FORM

Join the worldwide travel community and get the big picture in a data-driven world at the TTRA 42nd Annual International Conference.

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL: Register before March 30, 2011 & deduct \$50 from the regular attendee rates!
You can also register on-line at www.ttra.com



NAME _____

NAME TO APPEAR ON BADGE _____

ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE/PROVINCE _____

ZIP/POSTAL CODE _____ COUNTRY _____

PLEASE INCLUDE ALL COUNTRY & ACCESS CODES FOR PHONE AND FAX NUMBERS

PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

CHAPTER _____

Is this your first TTRA conference? Yes No

Do you want to receive a copy of the conference proceedings CD? Yes No

Please list any special dietary needs:

Vegetarian Diabetic

Food Allergy (Please Describe) _____

Please Provide Reasonable ADA Accomodation

HOTEL INFORMATION:

HILTON LONDON ONTARIO
 300 King Street, London, ON Canada N6B 1S2
 Phone: 519-439-1661
www.Hilton.com/LondonOntario

Book before May 15, 2011 to receive the hotel rate of \$129 CAD.
 Use group code TRA to receive this discounted price.

Please make your room reservations directly with the hotel.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION PRICING

	Early Bird Rate Feb. 1-March 30	Regular Rate April 1-May 30	Late Rate June 1-June 15
<input type="checkbox"/> Premier Member	\$495	\$545	\$595
<input type="checkbox"/> Pro Org Members	\$495	\$545	\$595
<input type="checkbox"/> Standard Members	\$595	\$645	\$695
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Achievement Members	\$495		
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Members	\$845		
<input type="checkbox"/> One Day Only	\$270		
One day attending date: <input type="checkbox"/> June 19 <input type="checkbox"/> June 20 <input type="checkbox"/> June 21			

STUDENT RATES

- Non-Member Students \$400
- Member Students \$400
- Students Volunteers \$200
- I understand that I am required to volunteer 10 hours to qualify for this rate

All categories are listed in U.S. funds.

PAYMENT

Check Enclosed. Make checks payable to: TTRA

CREDIT CARDS WELCOME

MasterCard Visa American Express Discover

NAME ON CARD _____

I authorize TTRA to charge my credit card the amount of \$ _____

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE _____

ACCOUNT NUMBER _____

AUTHORIZATION CODE _____ EXPIRATION DATE _____

BILLING ADDRESS FOR THIS CARD _____

PLEASE SEND YOUR COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORMS TO:

Travel & Tourism Research Association • 3048 W. Clarkston Rd., Lake Orion, MI 48362 USA
 Phone: 248-708-8872 • Fax: 248-814-7150 • email: ttra@ttra.com • www.ttra.com

For cancellation policy, check www.ttra.com.



Benefits of Membership

You can benefit from TTRA if you are interested in developing and exploring updated research trends, issues and methodologies; determining the effectiveness of your promotional campaigns; forecasting; gathering competitive intelligence and benchmarking your product; networking with colleagues in all sectors of the travel and tourism marketing research industry; or using research data to make sound strategic, tactical and marketing decisions.

Higher Standards: TTRA is a leading advocate for higher standards in travel and tourism related research and analysis. Membership in TTRA says to the global community that you strive to meet the same exceptional standards.

Networking: TTRA events - the annual International Conference and annual Chapter Symposiums - provide opportunities to participate in a unique network that brings together the academic and practitioner sectors of our industry in an informal, friendly fashion that promotes business networks – the kind of relationships that provide a greater number of long-lasting business opportunities. Member contact information is maintained in an online “Members Only” database.

Mentoring: In addition to traditional peer and colleague networking, TTRA provides great mentoring opportunities. Between the great academic minds offering wisdom to the next generation and the ability to pick up the phone knowing that the answer to your research challenge is just a call away, TTRA exposes you to some of the greatest mentors in the travel and tourism community.

Diversity: TTRA is the ONLY travel research association that brings together the practitioner and academic sectors of our community at national and global level promoting the cross-pollination of ideas between the two worlds. This benefit of membership will only become more valuable as our association continues to grow.

Collective Memory: As an association with more than 40 years of history, TTRA and its members represents an impressive body of travel industry related knowledge. Historical trends, ground-breaking research and important studies are all housed in the TTRA compendium of knowledge.

Member Education: TTRA’s annual conference provides a wide array of academic and practitioner education sessions at a reduced rate for members. The educational opportunities at our conferences prepare our members for success and generate discussions for future research needs. TTRA provides live teleconference-based Educational Webinars for a unique opportunity to share and learn with leading experts and peers in the travel research community.

Chapter Structure: TTRA, though international in scope, understands that many of the greatest business collaborations come from those people in the global community who work a little closer to home. TTRA’s chapter structure provides you with an additional venue for networking and communication with a local focus and many great opportunities for involvement.

Global Potential: TTRA, through its international dimension, facilitates members to reach out to each other across the continental divide, to network and to gain access to the latest developments and best practices within the business and academic fields globally.

The Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) is a non-profit professional association whose major purpose is to increase the quality, value, effectiveness and use of research in travel marketing, planning and development. Our association strives to be a leader for the global community of practitioners and educators engaged in research, information management and marketing in the travel, tourism and hospitality industries.

Join TTRA today!

Apply online at www.ttra.com



Membership Information

The Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) is a non-profit professional association whose major purpose is to increase the quality, value, effectiveness and use of research in travel marketing, planning and development. Our association strives to be a leader for the global community of practitioners and educators engaged in research, information management and marketing in the travel, tourism and hospitality industries.

Choose the membership type that is perfect for your level of participation!

Premier Membership is designed for the highly active member with a wide variety of needs. For those seeking educational resources, membership includes the Journal of Travel Research and the best rate for the annual conference.

Professional Organization Membership has the same benefits as the Premier Membership, but with discounted pricing for having multiple members from the same organization - the first membership fee is \$575 (for two members); additional members from the organization may join for \$150. Pro Org membership is the only category of membership that may be transferred to a different person. If you are an educational institution and hold a Professional Organization Membership with TTRA, your students will get 50% off their Student Membership Fees!

Standard Membership is an affordable option for those seeking basic membership. The standard membership allows access to all services and benefits at a reduced rate, allowing you to pick and choose the services that best meet your needs.

Student Membership allows students to gain exposure to the industry and network with professionals and other students. Individuals must show proof of enrollment in a current degree granting program in order to be eligible.

Type	Annual Membership Dues*	Regular Registration Conference Fee*
Premier	\$345.00	\$525.00
Pro Org	\$575.00 (2 Individuals)	\$525.00
Standard	\$150.00	\$625.00
Student	\$50.00	\$400.00

Chapter Membership Fees:

Chapter	Annual Dues*	Website
Canada	\$0.00	www.ttracanada.ca
CenStates	\$30, \$15 for Students	www.censtatestra.com
Europe	\$0.00	www.ttra-europe.org
Greater Western	\$35, \$10 for Students	www.gwlftra.com
Hawaii	\$25.00	www.ttrahawaii.com
SETTRA	\$25.00	www.settra.org
Texas	\$25.00	www.ttratexas.org

*Dues and fees listed above are in US dollars. TTRA International accepts funds in Canadian Dollars, US Dollars and in Euros. For current Canadian and Euro exchange rates, please contact accounting@ttra.com.

For more membership information, call 248-708-TTRA or join online at www.ttra.com

COMING SOON! TTRA'S Educational Webinar Series

The TTRA Educational Webinar Series are live teleconference-based sessions presented by leading experts from around the world. Members and non-members are invited to participate in this unique opportunity to share and learn with leading experts and your peers in the travel research community. All you need is an internet connection to participate with other industry experts on current travel issues without leaving your home base. It's easy and we'll show you how.

Webinar Session Fees:
TTRA Members \$20.00,
Non-members \$50.00

To Register, Go to www.ttra.com
Click on "Resources", then "TTRA Educational Webinars"



TTRA EDUCATIONAL WEBINARS (TTRA.COM/RESOURCES)

Trends on Outbound Chinese Travel

Tourism & Transport consult International

March 9th repeated on March 10th, 2011
Presenter: Dr. Xiang "Robert" Li

March 23rd repeated on March 24th, 2011
Presenter: Noel Sweeney

SPRING ELECTION

DeeAnn McKinney, Missouri Division of Tourism

It's about to be spring in TTRA Country! For the TTRA International board that means that the board election is just around the corner. Please make sure your membership is current and dues paid by March 1st in order to receive a ballot and participate in this year's election.

GWTTRA Symposium: What is the New Normal for Tourism?

John Hope-Johnstone, HPR Social Media

All TTRA members, academics and tourism practitioners are invited to the Greater Western Chapter's annual Symposium March 17-19th 2011 in Santa Fe New Mexico. Join the discussion and hear leading industry and academics present on the "new normal" for tourism.

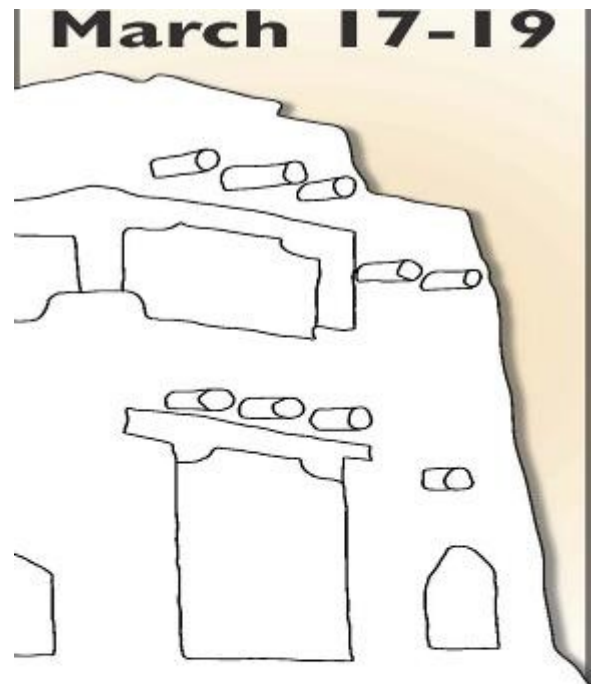
Help us develop a TTRA white paper on the "New Normal" for post recession tourism. What is the new tourism consumer going to look like? What will the new economic reality be for airlines, lodging, attractions, DMOs, State Tourism Offices. Will we return to our profligate ways, or is there a new reality we must accept?

Join some of tourism's leading researchers, academics and practitioners as we explore the new normal for each segment of the tourism industry. For more information and program highlights:

<http://www.gwttra.com/symposiums.htm>

Explore the "New Normal" for Tourism, Join Tourism's Top Researchers At
The Lodge in beautiful Santa Fe, NM

March 17-19



Join leading tourism professionals
in exploring the
changing tourism consumer.

**Register now for the
Early Bird Special at:**

<http://www.gwttra.com/symposiums.htm>



Greater Western

STS Spring Meeting 2011 & SETTRA Symposium 2011

Duane Vinson, SETTRA President



SETTRA Symposium

March 28-30, 2011

Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort

9300 Emerald Coast Parkway West

Destin, FL 32550-7268 / (850) 267-8000

For additional details visit: www.settra.org

TTRA Europe News

Frederic Dimanche, TTRA Europe President

TTRA Europe Board Update

TTRA Europe Board met on January 15 in the historic building of the Cnam, a school created in 1794 in the center of Paris. This was the opportunity for new board member **Carlos Lamsfus** to attend his first board meeting. Carlos is a Senior Researcher at the Competence Research Centre in Tourism (<http://www.tourgune.org>) since March 2007. His current activity is focused on the study of the theory of context in tourism and in new ways of modelling and implementing tourists' reality in order to provide services in route. He is the head of the Human Mobility and Technology unit.



TTRA Europe Annual Conference Update

Hosts **Isabelle Frochot** and **John Swarbrooke** (both board members) are working hard to propose another European quality conference! The 2011 TTRA Europe conference will take place in France (Archamps, near Geneva) in collaboration with César Ritz Colleges Switzerland. The theme "Creativity and innovation in tourism" has attracted world-wide interest with the submission of 80 abstracts from 25 nationalities. Fifty five of those were retained for presentation at the conference. Several keynote speakers will be participating, including **John Swarbrooke**, **Alan Clarke**, researcher in "co-creation" and **Bernard Cova**, author of the book "Innovate in Marketing". Industry speakers will also participate such as Richard Green, founder and CEO of Tour Operator Madame Vacances, and the leader of the Annecy 2018 Winter Olympic Games' application.

On their first dinner, participants will have the opportunity to visit the site of Vitam' Park, a major leisure center recently opened by the Swiss supermarket company Migro. The conference dinner will take place along Geneva Lake, at the César Ritz campus in Le Bouveret, including Swiss wine tasting and a cooking demonstration by César Ritz' chefs.

Participants will be able to participate to a pre-guided tour of the old town of Annecy (Monday morning) and a post-tour of the Mer de Glace (Sea of Ice) in Alpine Mecca Chamonix (Wednesday afternoon). Those tours will be free for TTRA members! You can register for the conference on <http://www.ttra-europeconference-2011.com/>

2011 TTRA Europe Chapter Conference will be held next April 11-13, 2011 in Archamps, France (near Geneva, Switzerland). For more information visit <http://www.ttra-europeconference-2011.com/>

2011 TTRA Central States-USA Chapter Conference

Cathi Wineland, CenStates Executive Director

2011 TTRA Central States-USA Chapter Conference to be held September 21-22, 2011 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, USA. For more information visit: <http://censtatesttra.com>

News from CenStates Chapter

The new year brings new members to the CenStates board of directors. Joining the board for 2011-2012 are Mindy Allen, Account Manager for Ruf Strategic Solutions, and Bob Hain, recently retired from the Missouri Division of Tourism. Also, Bob Frohoff, Vice President of Media and Research, MMG Worldwide, was re-elected to the board for another term.

The returning officers of the CenStates Chapter are:

- Chairman – Dan Erkkila, University of Minnesota
- President – Patty Becraft, Becraft Web Design
- Vice President – Alisha Valentine, Strategic Marketing and Research, Inc.
- Treasurer – Lorinda Cruikshank, Missouri Division of Tourism

Members of the CenStates board who are midway through their terms are:

- Laura Negron - Kentucky Tourism, Arts & Heritage Cabinet
- Bob Purdy – Robert Purdy & Associates
- Pat Remming – St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission
- Carla Santos – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

CenStates would like to thank retiring board members Terry Berggren, Ruf Strategic Solutions, and Christian Hornbaker, Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism, for their contributions to the chapter.

The CenStates Chapter is very excited to announce that the Annual Conference will be held on September 21-22, 2011 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Following up on the case study event at Bass Pro Shops during the conference in Springfield, Missouri in 2010, plans are underway for attendees to learn how a local attraction uses research to drive tourism strategy and then experience the attraction first-hand.

Conference committees are forming now so any chapter members who have suggestions for the conference and would like to help should contact Alisha Valentine at avalentine@smari.com. For more information about Cedar Rapids, visit www.cedar-rapids.com. Watch the CenStates website (www.censtatesttra.com) for details about the conference.

Chapters

Canada (www.ttracanada.ca)

Europe (www.ttra-europe.org)

Hawaii, USA (www.ttrahawaii.com)

Central States, USA (www.censtatesttra.com)

Southeast States, USA (www.settra.org)

Texas, USA (www.ttratexas.org)

Greater Western-USA (www.gwttra.com)

California Pennsylvania (www.cup.edu/index.jsp)

Asia-Pacific Chapter (s.beeton@latrobe.edu.au)

CalUTTRA (www.calu.edu)

Social Media Blogs in Hospitality and Tourism: Some Emerging Applications and Questions

Vincent Magnini, Virginia Tech

Social media platforms are impacting the tourism and hospitality sectors in a number of ways. Increasingly destination management organizations and businesses are continuing to lose control of the messages being distributed concerning their destination or services. Across a variety of hospitality and tourism communication venues, consumer to consumer, business to consumer, and business to employees, social media are changing the ways in which we communicate and, increasingly, the nature of our research examining those communications. Perhaps the most interesting of this universe are the millions of blogs that have been created for the purpose of sharing information. According to some estimates, as many as 15 million blogs exist and nearly 25 percent of them focus on food and travel. How do they impact travel decisions, destination management, or tourism marketing?

From a consumer-to-consumer perspective, travelers are increasingly detailing their experiences in the form of blogs and are also increasingly considering others' postings when making purchase decisions. In response, tourism researchers are now employing consumers' blog postings as a data source in various research endeavors. A forthcoming article in the *Journal of Travel Research*, for example, co-authored by myself, John Crotts, and Anita Zehrer illustrates how travel blog postings can be text-mined to identify drivers of customer delight within the hotel sector. Several other recent examples also exist, primarily focused on using social media data to examine a traditional research question such as the effects of X on Y. Importantly, however, blog data have the potential to move beyond these traditional problems to examine issues that have traditionally been too expensive or time consuming for traditional survey data, most importantly social media data have the potential to support more longitudinal research. As social media channels influence various aspects of the hospitality and tourism sectors, both theoretically-oriented and pragmatically-oriented questions beg to be addressed.

Since millions of travelers regularly write rich blog postings describing their sentiments regarding various facets of their travel experiences, these blog postings hold significant potential as a valuable source of consumer data. Such blog data can be superior to many forms of survey data because blog data are not prone to some of the response and non-response biases often inhibiting reliable survey research. Blog data, however, are limited in a number of other ways. For instance, our traditional beliefs about sampling theory and methodologies are being challenged. Moreover, we need to better understand how traditional data quality concerns such as validity and reliability are tested using social media data. While linguistic researchers work to develop deception detection techniques for interpreting written language, concern still remains whether a given posting reflects genuine consumer sentiment or some other form of corporate-generated content. Creating large scale, effective, and efficient text mining and content analysis programs is a critical long term challenge, particularly when we recognize and understand the generational differences in meanings; sometimes bad is bad and good is good, but also bad can be good and good can be bad. Relying only on word identification and usage programs greatly complicates research of these data.

From a business-to-consumer perspective, it is becoming more commonplace for hospitality and tourism providers to attempt to communicate with consumers through social media channels. The extent to which firms adopt such strategies currently varies widely throughout the industry. At one end of a continuum, for example, some hotel corporations actively engage in dialogue with consumers and even go so far as to develop independent social media platforms for individual hotel brands and customer segments. At the other end of the spectrum, other corporations have created a "one-size-fits-all" social media platform that only periodically receives corporate updates. Such variation in the extent to which providers embrace the business-to-consumer potential of social media is a reflection of many unanswered questions; for example: which forms of corporate-generated messages are consumers receptive to through social media channels and which do they find intrusive? Also, how can firms accurately gauge the ROI of their business-to-consumer social media strategies?

Increasingly, large hospitality and tourism employers are using social media to communicate with and motivate their workforces. More and more destination management organizations are using social media as a means of working more efficiently with their varied stakeholders. Little research has been done, however, on the effectiveness of social media in such settings or on the various communication strategies and structures.

In summary, there are myriad social media-related issues impacting both our communication strategies and research. Social media are rapidly evolving with applications across a variety of hospitality and tourism domains. The situation is characterized by many different ideas, applications, and methodologies. In an effort to pull together these myriad ideas, Virginia Tech, in conjunction with the College of Charleston and MCI Innsbruck, is sponsoring the **2011 Conference on Social Media in Hospitality and Tourism** to be held in Verona, Italy this October (<http://www.cpe.vt.edu/mpd.htm/socialmedia/index.html>). Similarly, other meetings and conferences are increasingly focusing on both social media strategies and research. As we look to the future, social media have the potential to impact our business, perhaps to the same extent as the development of the personal computer.

Joan Christine Taylor (nee Midwinter)

June 26, 1925 – October 29, 2010

Prepared by: **Scott Meis, President, Scott M. Meis Research Associates**



I'm sorry to report the recent death of Joan Taylor, on October 29, 2010; just two months after the death of Gordon Taylor (TTRA Past President and Life Time Achievement winner), with whom she had been married for almost 63 years.

Joan was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada on June 26, 1925 to Charles and Christina Midwinter. She was the youngest of three children. During the years of the Second World War, Joan completed high school and then attended the University of Manitoba. Her B.Sc. degree in home economics led to a teaching position in Ladner, British Columbia. There she met and married Gordon and started their family, which became her proudest career achievement.

Joan supported Gordon in his career moves across the Canada and together they shared a strong interest in, and love of family, present and past. She also enjoyed travel and for many years accompanied Gordon to numerous national and international TTRA conferences, for which she is fondly, remembered by many life-long friends among TTRA long-time members and past conference attendees. In speaking of his memories of Gordon, Clare Gunn recently mentioned that *"... his memory of Gordon includes the many times that Joan and my wife Mary Alice accompanied Gordon and me in their home and at conferences of TTRA. We shared values and family experiences reserved only for our best of friends."*

Joan is survived by her two daughters, Linda Fields and Eileen Winterwerb, four grandchildren and five great grandchildren (with a sixth one on the way).



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The Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA), founded in 1970, is a nonprofit professional organization committed to improving the quality, value, effectiveness and use of travel and tourism research and marketing information. TTRA seeks to improve the industry through education, publications and networking activities.

Seeking to improve the travel and tourism industry through education, publications and networking activities

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