

Survey of Visitors to Official Destination Web Sites Reports Billions of Dollars Spent in Destinations

USDM.net Survey Reports an Estimated \$9 Billion
In 2005 Traveler Expenditures in 11 Destinations

(March 7, 2006 – ATLANTA) According to a survey of visitors to 11 destination Web sites operated by official tourism offices, an average 55 percent subsequently visited the destinations in 2005 and during their stay spent an estimated \$9 billion on lodging, dining, shopping, entertainment and transportation.

An estimated \$7 billion in additional revenue may be realized from these visitors in 2006, based on survey respondents that reported they plan to visit these destinations in the next 12 months.

According to the report produced by USDM.net, an interactive marketing agency for the travel industry, the average visitor party size was 2.9, the average number of nights stayed was 3.3 and the average total trip expenditure was \$950 per party.

The report, which includes feedback from 54,079 survey participants, also indicates that the 11 destination Web sites together recorded more than 25.7 million site visits in 2005 and that an average of approximately 20 percent of Web site visitors decided to visit the destination *after* visiting the Web site.

All eleven sites had conversion rates (percentage that visited) above 40 percent and eight of the 11 sites had conversion rates of Web site visitors to destination visitors higher than 50 percent. Subsequently, these visitors' expenditures in individual destinations ranged from a low of \$214 million to a high of \$1.95 billion in 2005, with an aggregate average of \$640 million.

"The volume of people that visit these official destination Web sites and the billions of dollars they reported spending in these markets indicate the importance these destination marketing organizations (DMOs) can have in delivering information to potential visitors," said Leah Woolford, CEO of USDM.net.

"Strategic online marketing strategies have allowed these sites to realize a significant marketing advantage. Interactive marketing strategies that optimize Web site content for ranking in search engines, email marketing to targeted audiences, and interactive e-commerce options are enabling these sites to effectively compete against the multi-million dollar advertising budgets of the large travel Web sites."

"USDM.net's report clarifies the strategic role of destination marketing organizations and underscores the importance and value of the online marketing channel," said Michael D. Gehrisch, President and CEO of Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI). "Consumers use the Internet and use the tourism information found on official destination marketing organizations' Web sites. DMOs like these that invest in an approach that includes continuously updated and search engine optimized content of their Web sites, ecommerce functionality, and ongoing interactive marketing programs through email and eNewsletters can realize a significant return on their interactive marketing investment, and should look more closely at their commitment to these programs," Gehrisch said.

According to the Travel Industry Association of America's 2005 report, *Travelers' Use of the Internet*, a majority of online travelers (78 percent or 79 million Americans) turned to the Internet for travel or destination information in 2005, a significant increase from 65 percent of online travelers in 2004. Almost half of online travel planners use destination Web sites -- such as those maintained by convention and visitor bureaus -- to plan trips.

Survey findings from the TIA report also indicate that 82 percent of travelers who plan their trips online now also book reservations online, with more than 64 million Americans purchasing or reserving an airline ticket, hotel room, rental car or package tour online this past year -- up from 70 percent in 2004.

According to Dr. Suzanne Cook, Senior Vice President of Research for the Travel Industry Association of America, "The USDM.net Destination Web Site Survey Report findings are in line with other research that shows Americans are turning to the Internet to plan and book their trips in greater numbers than ever before. Consumers appreciate the ease and convenience the Internet provides for online travel research, planning, and booking," said Dr. Cook.

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About the 2005 Destination Web Site Survey Report

The report is based on 54,079 survey responses. Data was analyzed and projections calculated by Majority Opinion Research of Atlanta. The average sampling error across the 11 markets surveyed for the report is +/- 1.53 percent.

The destinations represented in the survey are Arlington TX, Atlanta GA, Atlantic City NJ, Beaches of South Walton FL, Bloomington MN, Fort Worth TX, Memphis TN, Miami FL, Pigeon Forge TN, Raleigh NC and Tunica MS.

The Web sites are owned and operated by local Convention & Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) or Departments of Tourism for a city or county, each locally empowered to act as the official destination marketing organization (DMO).

For more information on the study findings, visit www.usdm.net

About USDM.net

Since its inception in 1993, USDM.net's deep travel industry experience, innovative Internet marketing tactics, and adaptive technology solutions have propelled it to become the leading interactive agency for the travel industry, endorsed by the Travel Industry Association of America, Destination Marketing Association International, and the Southeast Tourism Society. Incorporated as U.S. Destination Marketing Inc., and headquartered in Corpus Christi, Texas, USDM.net (www.usdm.net) provides comprehensive Internet strategy, planning and turnkey Internet marketing and technology services to more than 150 Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), Hotels and Resorts, and other hospitality and tourism companies. USDM.net owns and manages www.officialtravelguide.com, the travel portal of more than 1,250 destinations worldwide. For more information about this survey or to request future surveys, contact Jeff Woolford, Director of Research at (361) 653-2377.

About Majority Opinion Research

Majority Opinion Research, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, is a specialized marketing research firm that delivers actionable results to assist clients in making sound marketing decisions. Using sophisticated design, high level analytics and a full arsenal of research tools, abilities and expertise, the company focuses on providing high quality tailored solutions which enable clients to get maximum value from their research investment. Travel and tourism research is a specialty of Majority Opinion Research and offerings include: Destination Awareness, Visitation and Imagery Studies; Advertising Recall, Effectiveness, and Impact; Economic Impact; Product Definition; PRIZM Profile Analysis; Visitor Satisfaction; Non-Visitor Perception; Positioning and Branding; Post-Event/Disaster Impact Assessments; Communication Evaluations; Tourism Barometers; New Attraction Concept Evaluation; Price Elasticity; and, Website Usability. For more information, visit www.majorityopinionresearch.com or contact Jeff Shusterman, President at (404) 314-2593.