

Info Austria / Eurostart Austria The All-Austrian Tourism Information and Reservation System

This article identifies the opportunities and needs of a tourism information and reservation system for the Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) - Austria's national marketing organisation for tourism - and for the Austrian tourism industry as a whole.

As the national marketing organisation for Austrian tourism, the Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) acts as a communication exchange for all of Aus-

** by Leo Bauernberger and
Susanne Reiger
Info Austria*

tria's touristic programmes, and as a marketing organisation for the entire system and its various sub-systems (provinces, regions, resorts, businesses and other operators in the tourist industry). Within the framework of its communication policy, ANTO sees its most important role in implementing a consistent policy of high-quality ('brand name policy') for Austria. Apart from developing typically Austrian brand names, ANTO supports all levels of tourism in the creation and promotion of regional or business-specific brand names. By providing support in terms of organisation and information, ANTO helps touristic operators and the regional and local tourist boards to market and promote their programmes.

ANTO consistently implements the aims it has set for itself within its very own scope of action and seeks to act as a model, stimulator and service provider in touristic marketing as such. ANTO's core responsibilities are:

- the expansion of know-how services,
- the provision of a compact organisation service,
- overall co-ordination of marketing activities,
- identification of and access to new markets.

ANTO as a Provider of Information

High-quality touristic information is one of the key factors of success and has a decisive impact on the quality of customer relations. The provision of tourism-related information to all major players on the market (final users, multipliers, media representatives) is one of ANTO's central tasks. ANTO's field offices process some 1.4 million queries each year; this figure is on the increase. ANTO delivers its information task through a range of different measures, with the dissemination of information in a printed form (brochures, market reports, advertisements, mailings, etc.) still playing a predominant role. Above all, the information required by the final

users, which is gathered and processed in all-Austrian surveys that are addressed to the different touristic levels, requires a considerable investment of time and effort. In the future, the role of face-to-face counselling will become less important and will be gradually attuned to the requirements of the markets. At the same time, the quality of telephone-based information services needs to be improved, with the aim of offering customised service that responds to individual needs and requirements. The provision of information to the touristic providers (tourist associations, hotels) on the market itself (marketing and management information) is the basis which allows the various touristic levels to conduct their marketing activities efficiently. ANTO currently communicates these data to the providers through the Bulletin (monthly trade information) and specialised market bulletins.

Difficulties Encountered by ANTO in Gathering Information

The successful provision of information by ANTO to the final consumer depends on the provision of information by the tourist organisations in the provinces, regions and resorts. ANTO addresses its survey-type enquiries to the provinces, which in turn pass them on to the regions and resorts for completion. From there, the information is returned to ANTO again via the provinces. This system bears the following inherent weaknesses:

- timeliness and quality of information (one enquiry run might last up to three months),
- enquiries are time-consuming and labour-intensive,
- response time to new market conditions is unsatisfactory,
- no uniform and consistent computerised processing and availability of data (all levels record information electronically and pass them on on paper),
- responsibility of gathering information lies with ANTO, instead of the resorts, regions and provinces being obliged to provide data at their own initiative,
- environmental concerns (flood of brochures and paper).

The possibilities offered by electronic data processing and modern-day telecommunication facilities could improve

the flow of information between the touristic levels substantially.

EuroStart Austria

In addition to more differentiated specialisation and corporate networking, Austrian tourism needs a fresh technological impetus to retain its competitiveness on the increasingly globalised markets. These strategies will pave the way for the development of new markets and enable a link-up with (global) electronic marketing channels. Against this background, the full integration of touristic programmes in one standard Austrian system is a prerequisite for maintaining the product called 'Holidays in Austria' competitive. The task is to join as many resorts/regions/provinces as possible and their touristic providers under a uniform 'electronic umbrella', in presenting and marketing Austria's touristic portfolio both at home and abroad.

The installation of INFO AUSTRIA / EuroSTART all over Austria requires a sizeable co-ordinating effort in terms of a harmonised approach by all provinces to installation, guidance for the development of the organisational structures required, and a pooling of system-related marketing activities. The Austrian National Tourist Office is currently negotiating with a consortium of companies which are developing an integrated information and reservation system that is to contain the following elements:

Information and communication

- destination information
- calendar of events
- management information
- address management
- enquiry processing
- mailbox

Sales functions

- queries of vacancies
- queries of bookings
- bookings and cancellation
- monitoring of payments
- document print-out

Use of the Software Modules

The system-specific modular structure allows to respond to the individual requirements of touristic providers and to account for different development stages in electronic marketing. The following providers will use the software:

- tourist organisations in the resorts, regions and provinces as well as ANTO itself,
- incoming agencies,