

FACT FILE II:

THE MAIN NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS IN BRITAIN AND GERMANY

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Background information on the main national information, reservation and booking systems in the British and German travel and tourism industry, two of the world's key travel and tourism markets, is presented in this fact file. The travel and tourism electronic market systems (EMs) portrayed are Istel and Fastrak in Britain, and START, Merlin/Robin and StiNET in Germany. This fact file is the second part of which the first was published in the last issue of the EM Newsletter.

AT&T ISTEL LIMITED

LONDON, ENGLAND

ISTEL

In 1994, AT&T Istel with its Istel X.25 network was the market leader for viewdata network services in Britain with > 2,000 direct connections to travel agents. It was

estimated that 73% of travel agents in Britain had access to Istel in 1993. AT&T Istel also operated TravelGuide, a database for travel and tourism information accessible by travel agents. AT&T's Internet service WorldNet was launched in the USA in February 1996 and in Britain in October 1996.

IMMINUS LIMITED

PETERBOROUGH, ENGLAND

FASTRAK

Imminus was founded as Travinet Limited in the early 1980's, and renamed Midland Network Services (MNS) after a takeover by the Midland Bank PLC, before being given its current name in 1993. Imminus owned the Fastrak network, which was used by tour operators as well as some ferry companies, hotel operators,

car hire companies, scheduled airlines and other travel related services providers, and non travel and tourism related companies such as the Halifax Building Society, Infocheck, Royal Insurance and Toshiba. Travel agents in Britain had access to the Fastrak network either through dial-up, using a viewdata terminal and a modem to connect to the public switched telephone network (PSTN), or through Fastlink or Chameleon Linkmaster. Fastlink and the newer Chameleon Linkmaster were extensions of Fastrak, which instead of dial-up connections provided access to Fastrak on dedicated X.25 circuits to one of 85 viewdata access points and thus offered greater speed and had priority, instant and guaranteed access to reservation systems compared to dial-up connections. In addition, through an alliance with the US telecommunications company Sprint International (Sprint Corporation), Imminus tendered additional services for communication with tour operators, resorts, hotels and airports worldwide. Although Imminus had less direct connections than AT&T Istel, it claimed a similar market share in 1994 when counting direct and dial-up connections to travel

THE EUROTOP PROJECT

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The EUROTOP project was described by Lüttich (1992). EUROTOP was a joint venture of GSI Transport Tourisme, France (19.9%), IBM France (19.9%) and EUCOM (60.2%), itself a partnership of Deutsche Telekom and France Télécom. Further partners in the project were the seven British, French and German tour operators Club Med, Cosmos, Fram, Kreuzer Touristik, The Thomson Travel Group, TUI (in particular Seetours International) and Voyatel, as well as AT&T Istel. The aim of the EUROTOP project was the electronic presentation of travel and tourism catalogues on screens in travel agencies, thus increasing flexibility (especially through speed, quantity and individuality) in the

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presentation of package holiday information. For this purpose, the tour operator systems were to be directly connected via ISDN lines to an IBM 3090 host, which in turn was to be connected via ISDN lines to the distribution networks START in Germany, Esterel in France and viewdata (videotex) in the United Kingdom. However, while EUROTOP reflected the wishes of tour operators to present catalogue information electronically, the project itself was not successful and eventually abandoned in 1993. Instead, new European electronic travel and tourism marketing platforms have been emerging since, most of all TIM, SAM and SAMSON (Byerley and Ewers, 1996; Connell, 1996; Kärcher, 1996).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Istel

Shareholder	American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T), USA	100%
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START

Subsidiaries	DER-Data Informationsmanagement GmbH, Frankfurt am Main (59.9% DER; acquired in late 1992)	40.10%
	Accon GmbH (Accounting and Consulting), Neuss (founded on 1 October 1994; 50% DER-Data Informationsmanagement GmbH and 50% Reisebüro Verwaltungsservice GmbH (RVS))	20.05%
	START Amadeus Vertrieb GmbH, Frankfurt am Main (5% Amadeus Global Travel Distribution S.A., Spain)	95.00%
	START in Berlin GmbH, Berlin	100.00%
	START Informatik GmbH, Frankfurt am Main (50% Amadeus Global Travel Distribution S.A., Spain)	
	START Media Plus GmbH, Frankfurt am Main and Worms (until October 1996 START Telematik GmbH; created in December 1994 through the merger of Institut für Bildschirmtext und Telematik GmbH (founded in 1979) with START Btx Reiseberatung GmbH (founded in 1983 as Btx Reisebüro Reiseberatung GmbH but renamed in 1990); 12.5% DER-Part Reisevertrieb GmbH)	50.00% 87.50%
	START Ticket Vertrieb von Veranstaltungskarten GmbH, Frankfurt am Main (founded in early 1991; 24.5% Teleticket Holding GmbH)	75.50%
Shareholders	Deutsche Bahn AG, Berlin and Frankfurt am Main Lufthansa Commercial Holding GmbH (LCH), Köln (Deutsche Lufthansa AG; acquired 33.33% from TUI on 30 June 1996) <i>(START was originally owned by Deutsche Bundesbahn, Lufthansa and TUI (each with 25%), together with Amtliches Bayerisches Reisebüro GmbH (abr), DER and Hapag-Lloyd AG (each with 8.33%; these stakes were sold in 1990).)</i>	33.33% 66.66%

Merlin and Robin

Subsidiary	Infox Electronic Datasystems GmbH, Hamburg (founded in 1993; 50% Infox System Gesellschaft für Information, Werbung und Technik mbH, Bonn (100% Infox Verlags GmbH))	50%
Shareholders	Thomas F. Dillon NIB GmbH	74% 26%

StiNET

Shareholders of SDTS	Stinnes AG, Mülheim an der Ruhr Atlas Reisen GmbH, and First Group (First Reisebüro GmbH & Co. KG / B S & K Beteiligungs GmbH & Co. KG / Reisebüro Verwaltungsservice GmbH (RVS))	55% 45%
Shareholders of TS	Stinnes AG, Mülheim an der Ruhr (100% VEBA AG, Düsseldorf, a major electricity generation, chemical, construction, transportation, oil, trading and various services group of companies)	100%

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

agents. It was estimated that 73% of travel agents in Britain in 1993 had access to Fastrak, the same percentage as Istel's. Imminus also offered a Banks Automated Clearing Service (BACS) for automated payments processing with banks or building societies within three days.

START HOLDING GMBH FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY

START

The Studiengesellschaft zur Automatisierung von Reise und Touristik (START) (Society for the study of automation in travel and tourism) was founded in 1971, but renamed START Datentechnik für Reise und Touristik GmbH in 1976, and was again renamed in 1990, becoming START Holding GmbH. The system START became operational on 13 June 1979 and has since then been the dominant national travel and tourism reservation system in Germany. In July 1996, > 33,000 terminals in > 15,000 travel agent outlets worldwide (though mainly in Germany) were connected to START. By late 1994 / early 1995, the entire START network was using X.25 technology. The START network was linked to the START host (three Siemens mainframes) which was located in Frankfurt am Main, and 30 regional gateway computers, each being able to handle up to 1,000 connected terminals. In early 1996, START signed a close alliance with Amadeus Global Travel Distribution S.A., which included the transfer of all of START's international subsidiaries to Amadeus.

DILLON COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS GMBH (DCS)

HAMBURG, GERMANY

MERLIN AND ROBIN

DCS was founded in 1990. DCS operated the Robin computer centre, which, since 1991, offered an umbrella-access, mainly for tour operators, to the reservation systems START, Galileo International, SABRE and Worldspan. DCS also operated a 64

NEWS – TOURISM **SOURCES OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM** **INFORMATION**

The Commercial Information Library of the British Tourists Authority (BTA) in London, England, offers several commercial services to researchers in the travel and tourism industry, two of which are detailed in the following. First, the extensive library is open to BTA external researchers upon prior appointment and for a modest charge.

Secondly, researchers can subscribe to the library's Acquisition List, which is published quarterly and details all new literature acquired by the library during the most recent quarter. This list is a useful service for researchers wanting to stay up-to-date on travel and tourism publications.

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Glasgow, Scotland.*

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kilobit per second communication network, DCS-Net, which had 250 access points in Germany. In addition, the PC-based reservation software Merlin was offered to travel agents, allowing them to access START via an imitated TOMA-mask on Windows, or to directly access the umbrella-system Robin. Merlin had been developed by Bewotec M. Becher, Bergisch-Gladbach, and TOI Software GmbH (Touristik Innovativ), Darmstadt. DCS also operated the on-line database Elektronik Infox since August 1993, which was accessible via Merlin, START, SABRE and Selbstbedienungs(SB, i.e. self-service)-Terminals, displaying last-minute tour operator holiday packages.

TOURISTIK SYSTEME GMBH (TS) AND **STINNES-DATA TOURISTIK SYSTEME GMBH** (SDTS)

(BOTH FORMERLY STINNES-DATA-SERVICE GMBH)
MÜLHEIM AN DER RUHR, GERMANY

STINET

Stinnes-data-Service GmbH (SDS) (100% Stinnes AG) was founded in 1969. It has been offering services, especially in accounting and information technology, and hardware/software products such as the back-office RBS (Reisebürosystem / travel agent system), to the travel and tourism industry since 1989. Since March 1994, SDS has been operating the computerised reservation system StiNET, which utilised satellites using television transmissions (teleCast) and the X.25 corporate data network I.N.A.S. by International Network Application Service GmbH (INAS) (100% VEBA AG). In contrast to START, StiNET did not hold data centrally, but instead directly connected principals', tour operators' and travel agents' systems. SDS has also been operating tourDB (tourism database) since the end of 1994. On 1 July 1996, SDS was split into the two companies Stinnes-Data Touristik Systeme GmbH (SDTS) (responsible for back-office systems, especially RBS) and Touristik Systeme GmbH (TS) (responsible for front-office systems, especially StiNET and tourDB).