

Chapter XVIII

Morethailand.com: Online Travel Intermediary

Pongsak Hoontrakul

Sasin of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Sunil Sahadev

University of Sheffield, UK

ABSTRACT

The case study showcases morethailand.com, an e-intermediary in the tourism industry. Based out of Thailand, the firm is in the process of finding a niche for itself through innovative online and off-line marketing strategies with the constraint of limited resources. The case study attempts to focus on the e-business challenges in the travel and tourism sector especially in a developing country like Thailand. It specifically highlights the clash between the traditional and modern form of intermediaries in the travel and tourism sector and how it is bound to evolve in the future. A comparison between different approaches to search engine marketing offers an interesting perspective to the literature pertaining to online e-commerce. An economic view on the case is also presented.

INTRODUCTION

It was a challenging task to grow by more than 10 times a year. That was the objective set by Mrs. Nontana Thanabatchai, the founder and managing director of morethailand.com for the coming two years. Morethailand.com was at a turning point in terms of its future performance.

While the present increase in the visitor rate and enquiry conversion rate were quite creditable, to emerge as a dominant player in its field, a growth of over 10 times a year was absolutely important. Yet it was achievable if the latest efforts in improving, dynamic pricing, and searching engine optimization bear fruit. The opportunities were immense; the need was to implement a coherent

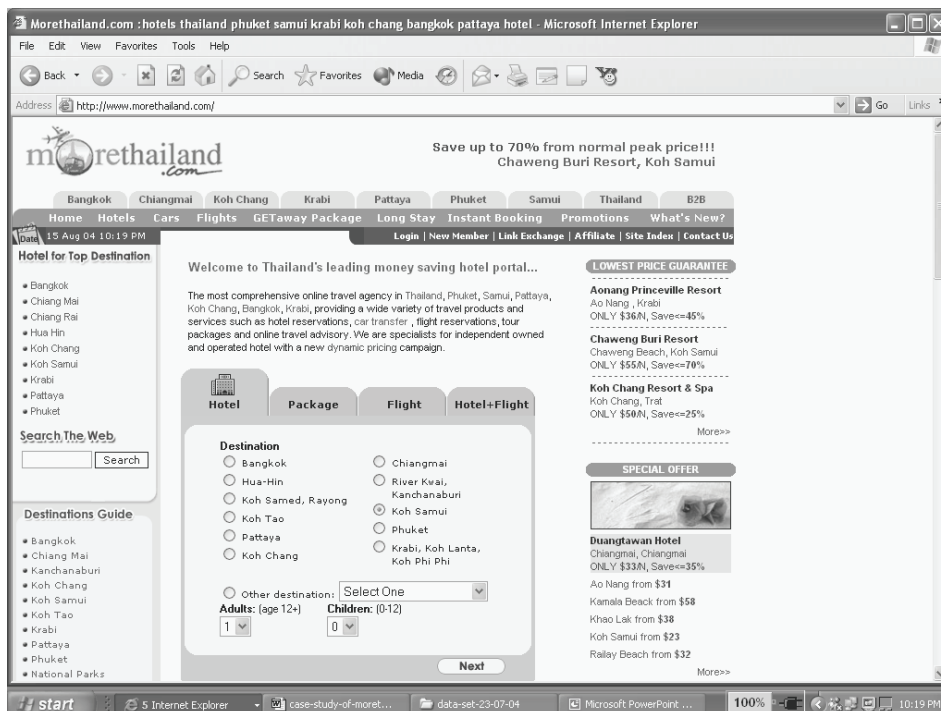
set of strategies that would attract more customers and generate a high transaction rate.

Morethailand.com is an online travel intermediary based in Bangkok, Thailand. The company acts as an intermediary that helps customers around the world book rooms in Thailand hotels through the Internet. Morethailand.com was founded in the year 2002 after the need was felt for setting up a Thailand-based online travel intermediary. The company has a clutch of interconnected Web sites that together provide potential travelers a means for searching for and booking hotel rooms in Thailand. These Web sites also enable potential tourists to book tour packages as well as airline tickets. The Web site displays a list of hotels which are part of the network. A potential tourist can enquire about the availability of rooms as well as to book accommodation in the hotels listed in the Web sites. Provision for tour packages, airline booking, and travel related products are also available. The sites normally

get around 5,000 hits a day. Attachment 1 gives a screenshot of the Web site.

Having established itself as a B2C (business-to-consumer) site, morethailand.com is looking forward to strengthening its position in its primary line of activity, that is, online travel intermediation. The primary area of focus was in increasing site traffic by attracting more and more potential tourists to its Web sites. The company was also keen to strengthen its supply side by forging partnerships with more and more independently owned and operated (IOO) hotels in Thailand. This would in turn enable morethailand.com to offer rooms to its customers at more competitive rates than the off-line travel agents who presently occupy the dominant position in the market. The biggest challenge in this endeavor was to compete with large travel wholesalers in gaining acceptance and support from the hotels. This was an extremely difficult task as most of the hotels in Thailand presently depend heavily on large travel

Attachment 1. Morethailand.com, screenshot



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