

May 15, 2006

Japan Tourism Marketing Co.

Media Release

Summary of Surveying the Japanese-language Websites of 45 Foreign Tourist Offices

With a checklist with 21 survey items, Japan Tourism Marketing Co. examined the individual Japanese-language websites which are hosted by 45 member organizations of the Association of National Tourist Office Representatives in Japan (ANTOR-JAPAN).

§1 61% linked to Websites of Japanese travel agencies with tour packages

§2 Blogs released by 14%, while mail magazines distributed by 36%

Japan Tourism Marketing Co. (Head Office: Chuo-ku, Tokyo / CEO: Kazuhisa Maeda) announced the results (as of March, 2006) of its survey about the Japanese-language websites hosted by foreign tourist offices in Japan. For this study, JTM examined Websites of 45 member organizations of the Association of National Tourist Office Representatives in Japan (ANTOR-JAPAN)*.

The checklist for this survey began with the availability of Japanese-language websites of each organization; whether it offers any Japanese-language site. Then, the Japanese-language sites were explored with the themes including; the accessibility to the Website, the contents and freshness of the provided information, links between each of these websites and other Websites that lead consumers to book tour products, interactivity with the consumers and the usability.

* ASEAN-Japan Centre, a member of ANTOR-JAPAN, was excluded in this survey as the organization represents multiple ASEAN member countries in its Website.

- Highlight of the general findings -

Among the ANTOR-JAPAN members, 98% hosted their own Japanese-language websites

Among 45 member organizations of the ANTOR-JAPAN, all the foreign tourist office but Italian State Tourism Board operated their official Japanese-language websites. **

** All the percentages mentioned below are the proportion among the 44 Japanese-language websites.

- Highlights of the theme-specific findings -

59% appeared at the top of the search result both on two major search engines

Investigation was conducted on how accessible the Japanese-language website of each ANTOR-JAPAN member was. “The name of the member country in Japanese” and “*kanko* (‘tourism’ in Japanese)” were entered to be searched on Yahoo! and Google, the two most widely used search engines in Japan. In case of searching the websites of the provincial tourist offices, the name of the city most well-known to the Japanese in the province was used as the keyword in place of “the name of the member country”.

26 websites (59%) among the 44 Japanese-language websites were displayed at the top of the list of search result on the two major search engines, while 37 (84%) and 38 (86%) ANTOR-Japan member Websites were included in the top 10 list on Yahoo! and Google, respectively.

Information provision varied across the websites:

Sections for travel trade, the usage of video, the information concerning barrier-free.

Regarding the information contents provided on the Japanese-language websites of the ANTOR-Japan members, the checklist included five survey items.

Airport access; the information on the access from gateway airports was identified on 40 websites (91%).

Map; 41 websites (93%) provide the information on the location of major states/provinces and cities in the nation-wide map.

Compared to these two survey items, the following three survey items revealed that the information contents varied across the Japanese-language websites of the ANTOR-JAPAN members in some respects.

Exclusive information for travel trade; 28 websites (64%) were found to have pages specially designed for the use by travel trade.

Movies; 20 websites (45%) offer online movies to convey the local images to visitors.

Accessible tourism; only 13 websites provide the information on facilities and services available for the convenience of handicapped and aged visitors to the destination.

Following are a few good examples of contents provided by the Japanese-language websites. New Zealand tourist office has a section called “Travel Trade Site”, and offers remarkably extensive information including training tools for the travel trade. France posts a TV commercial video on its Website to give a lively image of the country. Belgium’s Japanese-language website offers rich information for handicapped travelers.

Was there little concern about the information freshness and site updating?

The ‘freshness of information’ was examined by the last date of update and the provision of information on events such as seasonal festivals and concerts. 31 websites (70%) keep information updated within the past one month. On some other websites, updates obviously have been made within the past 30 days, but no specific updating timings were found on the pages. These websites were considered as having had no updates within the past one month in this research, since the consumers can hardly know how fresh the information was.

86% (36 websites) of the ANTOR-Japan member Japanese-language websites offer event information. On some of these websites, however, there still remained the event information for 2005, and/or no specific year for the events. Further efforts should be made to keep event information as fresh as other destination information.

Some 61% were linked to tour packages of Japanese travel agencies

Examination was made whether the Japanese-language websites of the ANTOR-Japan members were linked to the web pages of: (1) Japanese travel agencies, (2) the hotel reservation services and/or hotels, and (3) tours and activities organized locally in the foreign countries. 25 websites (57%) had all these three types of links.

27 websites (61%) were linked to the Websites of Japanese travel agencies which offer tour packages from Japan. This figure was lower than 39 websites (89%) which were linked to the online hotel reservation services and/or hotel Websites. 37 websites (84%) provide the information on tours and activities organized by local suppliers.

Blogs were released by 14%, while mail magazines were distributed by 36%

The interactivity between the consumers and organizations which host the Websites was also examined. Mail magazines were distributed by 16 organizations (36%). 6 organizations (14%) had linked their official blogs to their Japanese-language websites, while 4 of these 6 blogs had a trackback function.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication), including RDF and XML, all of which are designed to share the updated information with the consumers, have been introduced on only two organizations’ websites. The websites of 4 ANTOR-Japan members (9%) feature either itinerary planning, or “my guidebook” functions, while CRM (Customer Relationship Management), which may be required for the itinerary planning function, have been adopted by 5 Japanese-language websites.

36% of the surveyed websites offer search within site service.

As ‘user-friendly’ measures, within-site search function and printer-friendly design of pages were examined. Only 7 websites of the ANTOR-Japan members met both of these two criteria for user-friendliness. 16 (36%) websites

had a within-site search function, and on as many as 23 (52%) of the Japanese-language websites, some of the main texts did not properly appear on A-4 portrait pages when printed (i.e., some part of the right hand side cut-off).

As many travelers who search destination information on Websites are likely to print the pages with useful information and take them with them on their trip, the tourist offices should be more concerned about the printer-friendliness of their sites.

For further information please contact;

Masato Takamatsu, Vice President, Marketing

Hajime Nozawa, Senior Consultant

Japan Tourism Marketing Co.

Phone: +81-3-5299-6500, Fax: +81-3-5299-6512

e-mail: info@tourism.jp