



Are Online Communities Friend or Foe?

At the Global European Marketplace, organised by the European Tour Operators Association (ETOA) on November 9th in London, the leaders of the inbound tourism industry will be debating the question: “Are Online Communities Friend or Foe?”

Online communities have become the empowering tool for consumers on the internet. Before, they relied on the word of an expert or on a hotel classification system. Now they can access an array of opinion from the experts who appear to really matter: other consumers. It is good to have well-informed clients, but the industry often finds its choices questioned by customers armed with assertions drawn from other customers' experiences.

Consumers do not just lodge opinions on hotels and restaurants, they network and share concerns online. New communities are thus created, often around specific interests or locations.

Are these websites easy for the unscrupulous to exploit?
Are the people who contribute to such websites a representative cross-section?
How do companies prevent misinformation spreading?
Are they a unique means to access niche markets?

An interactive discussion will be moderated by ETOA's Chairman of Ecommerce Soren Langelund. The panel of experts includes:

- Nathan Clapton, Director, Brand Distribution, Tripadvisor,
- Jerome Touze, Director & Peter Ward, Co CEO, WhereAreYouNow,
- James Dunford Wood, MD, Worldreviewer.com

ENDS

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About the Global European Marketplace

ETOA's Global European Marketplace is the most important gathering of the European inbound tourism industry. It takes place on Friday November 9th, at the Brompton Hall, Earls Court, London, immediately before World Travel Market in London and all the major players participate, including Accor, Amadeus, American Express, British Airways Holidays, Cosmos, Ebookers, Eurostar, Expedia, Globus, Gullivers, Hilton, Historic Royal Palaces, InterContinental, Kempinski, Kuoni, London Eye, Marriott, Sixt, Sol Melia, Starwood, Tauck World Discovery and Tussauds Group.

The event comprises a conference, workshop, exhibition and black tie dinner at the Café Royale with entertainment provided by the Moulin Rouge. The conference is attended by over a hundred top executives, high-level consultants and the media. The workshop facilitates approximately 7,500 one-on-one meetings between senior-level buyers and sellers, with the buyers seated at tables and sellers circulating to meet them. The exhibition surrounds the coffee area for both events.

About ETOA

Since its foundation in 1989, ETOA has grown exponentially to include over 400 member organisations, of which more than a hundred are Tour Operators. Collectively, ETOA represents over €7 billion spending on accommodation and travel services annually.

ETOA provides representation at the European government level for companies involved in bringing tourists to Europe. The Association promotes greater awareness of the benefits provided by the group travel industry in Europe - particularly increased income and employment. ETOA also influences European tourism policy and legislation.

Areas of specific activity include:

- Promoting Europe as a tourism destination
- Establishing codes of conduct and guidelines for its members
- Establishing commercial opportunities between buyers and sellers
- Working with other travel & tourism associations to raise the industry's profile