1. Introduction

There are different routes for academic research, such as the library, newspapers, and

the Internet. The most common media for academic research nowadays, is the

Internet.

There are billions of web pages on the Internet, and lots of web pages can be found that

are related to the subject, whilst conducting doing academic research. Therefore,

students have to identify them and compare the resources provided by each website

before use, to find the most useful web pages related to the subject.

For hospitality and tourism, there are many relevant web pages. After researching, the

following two web pages are chosen for evaluation:

Lonely Planet (http://www.lonelyplanet.com/)

Columbus Guides (http://www.columbusguides.com)

2. Findings

2.1 Columbus Guides web (http://www.columbusguides.com)

2.1.1 Description of the web page

Columbus Guides website providing general information, such as the population,

area, government, language spoken, religion, time, electricity voltage and

communication for most of the cities in the world and has short descriptions of the

country. A World map is provided. It also provides travel, airport, cruise, tours, and

attraction guides and images of the countries. It also provides links to the hotels, which

are located in the countries or cities chosen. In addition, the website provide information

on other languages such as French, German and Spanish.

2.1.2 Accuracy of the web page

Accessed by the link 'about us', provides information about the author of the web

page. The web page publisher is B2B Publisher, Highbury Columbus Travel Publishing

Limited (http://www.columbusguides.co.uk -about us). The web master is the technician

team of the company. Down to point nine of about us, the contact details of the

company are provided:

Email: newmedia1@nexusmedia.com

Phone number: 0207 608 6545

Address:

Highbury Columbus Travel Publishing

New Media Group

BR8 8HU

United Kingdom

(http://www.columbusguides.co.uk -about us)

Whenever there is a problem with or enquiries about the website, visitors can contact

the author for more details.

2.1.3 Authority of the web page

The 'about us' section provides information about the author. The publisher of the

website is the B2B Publisher, Highbury Columbus Travel Publishing Limited, which

has been producing the World Travel Guide Books for over twenty-two years

(http://www.columbusguides.co.uk -about us). The company is an international print

and online publisher company (http://www.hcc.co.uk).

There are many words of praise listed for the company, including quotations from

newspapers and leading travel organizations, and visitor feedback.

Below are some of the endorsements listed on the web:

"The World Travel Guide is the most complete source of information for a travel agent.

It is always on my desk." (Marco Agustoni, Secretary General, World Association of

Travel Agents).

"How did we ever manage without it? A mature publication for a maturing industry"

Colin Trigger, President, Association of British Travel Agents.

"The World Travel Guide is a comprehensive world wide reference book for all

segments of the travel and tourism industry." (Jeanne Epping, President, American

Society of Travel Agents).

(http://www.columbusguides.co.uk -about us)

They have trademarks and are copyright registered. The documents are published in

Kent, United Kingdom, and the web host (URL domain) is the Hyve group, its website is

http://www.hyve.com. (http://www.columbusguides.co.uk -web hosting)

2.1.4 Objectivity of the web page

The objectivity of the website are mainly travellers, as there are a lot of travel agency

website links, online bookstores and online travel insurance company links. The minor

targets of the websites are the companies who want to create a website to attract

customers. It shows this on the 'about us' page at point two, where it states:

'2. Services offered

Not only do we produce high quality balanced travel content for third parties but we

also assist with the implementation of this into your site in order to help you attract and

retain more users and maximise sales.' (http://www.columbusguides.co.uk -about us)

There are no pop up advertisements on this website, which most people find annoying.

In addition, there is no holding back of information to persuade visitors to buy their

travel guidebooks.

2.1.5 Currency of the web page

There are no dead links on the web page. The web page is updated at least weekly, as

they have the weather of each city for the week (http://www.columbusguides.co.uk

-weather).

2.1.6 Design and User Friendless of the web page

The information is organized into groups of the continents to which the countries

belong. They are clearly laid out in boxes, or just by clicking on the map of the world.

Whilst they provide general information about cities freely, they also provide images of

the cities.

Some of them provide short online video introductions of the city as well. Images of

each city are shown, the information is clear and easy to read. Texts are in a readable

size. Other than English, there are other choices for the web page language, French,

Spanish and German.

Therefore, visitors find it easy to understand and can find out the information that they

need quickly and easily.

2.2   Lonely planet (http://www.lonelyplanet.com/)

2.2.1 Description of the web page

On this website information about most of the cities around the world can be found by

accessing the 'Worldguide'. Information is provided on areas, such as population, time

zone, telephone codes, events, attractions and definitions of each tourist destination.

Additionally, a city map is provided as well as a world map, travel advisor, journals

and health issues of countries.

2.2.1 Accuracy of the web page

The author- Lonely Planet Publication only provides an online question form for visitors

to contact, by access to 'contact us'. There is no email address, telephone or address

provided. Also, there is no information shown about the Webmaster

(http://www.lonelyplanet.com/ -contact us).

2.2.2 Authority of the web page

The publisher of the website is Lonely Planet Publication, and the documents are

published around the world at the head office of the company as it is a worldwide travel

guidebook company. They have trademarks and are copyright registered.

By accessing 'about LP', then accessing the 'press room' in the right column, and

finally accessing 'news'. The user can find an 'awards' link to show their awards,

achievements and words of praise about the company. The latest awards are:

Gold in the Internet Publication/Web Site category 2004; Lonely Planet USA (Jeff

Campbell, et al) was awarded Silver in the Guidebook category 2004; and The Kindness

of Strangers (edited by Don George) won Bronze in the Travel Book category 2004

(http://www.lonelyplanet.com- press room-news-awards).

There is nothing shown about their URL domain, but the search engine on their website

is by Inktomi, Verify Company Limited (http://lonelyplanet.com - advanced search).

2.2.3 Objectivity of the website

The website is trying to persuade visitors to buy their books, targeting all travellers.

There are lots of advertisements about their books. Parts of the journals or articles are

held back to persuade visitors to buy their books. They wrote this website to attract

people who want to learn more about different cities and people who tend to go on

holiday. They provide an online shop for visitors to buy their books on their web page.

They also sell global phone cards on their web page.

2.2.4 Currency of the web page

There are no dead links on this website. The links are updated daily as the right hand

corner of the website shows the date of the last update. All the information in the

website is up-to-date (http://www.lonelyplanet.com).

2.2.5 Design and User Friendliness

Their information is organized into groups of world guides, travel tickets, health and on

the road. In the world guide, choosing a destination can display the information. When

pointing to a continent, a little note about the main attraction of the continent will come

up. Images of each city are shown, the information is clear and easy to read. Texts are

of readable size. Information is provided free of charge. Simple local maps of cities are

provided. Warnings about each city are also provided.

Other than English, visitors have an option of changing the web page language: French,

Spanish and Italian. Therefore, visitors can easily understand the information and can

find it quickly, and with ease.

3   Conclusion

From the information provided by the two web pages, they both offer similar

Information and the information is up-to-date, but the Lonely Planet web page has more

detailed information by each point than the Columbus Guides web page. Journals and

articles can also be found on the Lonely Planet web page. On the other hand, the

Columbus Guides covers more cities in the world than the Lonely Planet.

Although the Lonely Planet web page has more advertisements than the Columbus

Guides web page, but its background is more colourful and attractive, which encourages

visitors to read on and use it.

The Lonely Planet travel guidebooks are more popular worldwide. It has longer

experience and has gained more achievements than the Columbus Guides. Therefore, it

is probably more reliable to use the Lonely Planet web page than the Columbus Guides.

Overall, the Lonely Planet web page is more useful for academic research than the

Columbus Guides.

References:

Highbury Columbus Travel Publishing Limited. http://columbusguides.com - accessed

7/12/04

Lonely Planet Travel Publishing Limited. http://www.lonelyplanet.com - accessed

9/12/04