



# Have book, will travel

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# Trends in travel and publishing

- Huge increase in trips taken
  - Number of visits abroad by UK residents has tripled since 1985 (ONS)
- Majority of these trips booked independently
- The internet is driving this growth
  - Online travel sales are increasing year on year by 35% (Centre for European Tourism Research)
- The internet is also a powerful research tool for planning trips (and to a lesser degree when on them)
  - 80% of UK travellers use the net to research trips (American Express)
  - Trip Advisor has reviews and info about over 212,000 hotels and 74,000 attractions in over 30,000 destinations worldwide (Trip Advisor)
- More travellers should equate to more guidebook sales BUT free content on-line is eroding the *perceived* value of guidebooks
- Should this seminar be titled:  
**I'm travelling... I might buy a guidebook?**

# Travel Publishers' Response

- Improving useability
  - Adding best of lists at beginning of chapters (eg RG, LP)
- Repackaging
  - Creating sub-guides from existing series (eg DK Top Ten)
- Cutting costs
  - Digitising production processes, printing overseas
- Diversifying the brand
  - Forays into TV (eg RG)
- Consolidation
  - DK and RG now part of Penguin group
  
- Is this working?

# Life at the coal face

- As a travel writer, I'd say NO
- Rates of pay for writers remain low
  - Too low to make a decent living (and have a life)
- It's an incredibly tough market
  - The challenge to me is to be more creative with my content and to convince publishers I'm worth more
- I'm taking pictures, shooting video, repackaging my work and seeing little increase in earnings. This is a common story
- The next logical step is to become a brand myself and command greater rates of pay for who I am
  - The writer as a co-brand to the publisher could be an interesting concept?
- Pay peanuts... get monkeys
  - Not all travel writers go to hell, but those that don't have other sources of income

# Challenges for publishers

- Invest in quality
  - Regular travellers are brand loyal – much of the internet fallout from Thomas Kohnstamm's book highlighted how people felt that LPs are no longer as well-researched as they were. True or not, there's a perception that needs countering.
  - (Good) Writers aren't stupid. We make very clinical decisions about what needs research and what there simply isn't time to do given the budgets we work to.
- Offer writers other revenue opportunities
  - Today's breed of writer is media savvy and creatively engaged. They aren't just copy monkeys
  - Share the risks and rewards with writers. It's time to introduce royalties. Incentivise your writer to make the guide the best they can – the better it is, the more they earn. We're in this together (or we should be.)
- Counter the net
  - If you're investing in quality content – contrast this with unpaid content online. Go out there and be aggressive

# Ideas for Travel Publishers

- Think hard about your product
  - How guidebooks are used today. Do you need: A list of 40 hotels which will be out of date swiftly – the internet will always be better at this
  - Or details of whether a shop takes credit cards?
  - When was the last time you did any user research?
  - The guidebook of the future could I think look very different
- Think hard about your pricing
  - There's nothing like offering something for less and less to make it clear you don't value it
- Use the content you have more creatively
  - One example from LP – allowing customers to download just sections of the guide they want. This could be more lucrative than selling full priced guides. (Want does this mean for retailers?)

# Ideas for Travel Publishers 2

- Harness the interactive power of the net
  - Take the community sites on with communities of your own. (Yes, this requires investment!)
- Use that brand loyalty.
  - Buy 10 guides get one free
  - Meet the authors
  - Get your pics published
- Develop new sales channels and partnerships
  - Book an easyJet flight to Barcelona and they offer you hotels, insurance and car hire... what about a guidebook too?
- Ultimately it's no longer about publishing guidebooks... It's about delivering the travel content readers want - when they want it and in the format in which they want it