

Table 3 summarises what the suppliers judge are the 10 main pluses and minuses associated with targeting MICE buyers via the internet.

Advantages

- * *'reaching large numbers, cost effectively'*
- * *'allows the buyer to access a lot of information, including more photographs and testimonials'*
- * *'24-hour service ... and a good first approach tactic'*
- * *'constant and updateable'*
- * *'fast, direct, focused, modern'*
- * *'pre-selection is easier'*
- * *'interactive engagement with clients'*
- * *'it's what clients now expect and use'*
- * *'potential to reach unknown clients – particularly those who are too busy to join site visits'*
- * *'sustainability and CSR'*

Disadvantages

- * *'not very personal'*
- * *'marketing activity is very generalised'*
- * *'much of the promotion can be viewed by buyers simply as spam'*
- * *'not enough confidence is created amongst buyers to persuade them to buy'*
- * *'the result is not a real image. Face-to-face vastly increases the confidence of buyers'*
- * *'the reality is that this industry is still heavily reliant on personal relationships and trust'*
- * *'cold, distant'*
- * *'none of the human factor that is vital in the agency world'*
- * *'buyers don't know how to filter so much information'*
- * *'brochures on tables are longer lasting'*

Any such disappointments aside, survey participants were able to identify a considerable range of successful e-campaigns. Such specific initiatives have included: newsletters; picture galleries depicting recent events; the use of webinars; constantly updated reports from congresses; plus various projects (such as a virtual

marketplace), that are integrated alongside more traditional techniques (e.g. journal advertising; exhibition attendance).

tips

Ten tips offered by the suppliers for the more effective use of the internet in marketing are:

- *'target your information to the correct category of client'*
- *'don't think of the internet as a product, but as a channel'*
- *'personalise your work'*
- *'don't become spam'*
- *'seek online alliances'*
- *'keep it easy to use and fun'*
- *'keep the messages simple and aim for decision-makers'*
- *'SDC – short, direct, clear!'*
- *'online and off-line should be integrated'*
- *'don't overdo the newsletters'*

Finally, the research suggests that respondents are gradually improving their internet marketing skills, and typically rate themselves somewhat more practised than those questioned 12 months ago (**Table 4**):

	2007/8 Europe, Nordic Countries + Russia	Selected countries (Far East; Latin America; North Africa)	2008/9 Europe	Selected countries (Latin America; Far East; USA)
* Highly competent	6%	5%	14%	6%
* Probably average	55%	41%	56%	58%
* Would like to learn more	39%	54%	30%	36%

* * *

IMEX would like to thank those suppliers who responded so thoroughly and professionally to this research.