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New horizons: Tralliance unveils vertical search engine (08/15/2006)

By Dennis Schaal

Tralliance, which operates the registry for the dot-travel domain, introduced in beta a travel search engine at www.search.travel.

As a vertical search engine, Search.travel is geared to retrieve free results from authenticated travel companies instead of mingling results from travel and non-travel companies.

Tralliance, a subsidiary of theglobe.com, also hopes to earn incremental ad revenue from sponsored links that run along the right side of its search results pages. Tralliance CEO Edward Cespedes said Tralliance partnered with a major search engine to get the ads and certain natural results from the Web, but he declined to identify the search engine.

Here's how Search.travel works, according to Cespedes:

When a user queries "Paris hotel," Search.travel probes the Tralliance database of relevant dot-travel domains and gives them priority placement in its display. That is followed by natural Web results from Tralliance's unnamed search-engine partner.

The authentication process "eliminates the need for consumers to sift through pages of irrelevant results or visit Web sites that may not be reputable," Tralliance stated.

Tralliance also uses sponsored links from the search engine partner, with Tralliance earning revenue on a cost per click basis, when users click on a sponsored link. Advertisers do not have to own or use a dot-travel domain.

Cespedes said Tralliance views Search.travel as an additional service that companies get for registering a dot-travel domain because registered companies get priority displays.

TV and online ad campaigns are under way to support Search.travel, Cespedes said. The television campaign, running through September, is targeted to reach 35 million homes, and Tralliance expects 9 million to 10 million hits from the Web campaign.