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Outlook **E-commerce**

## Growing tourism business via online reservations

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WITH more people opting for online reservations, YTL-Travel Centre records a six-figure sales revenue monthly through its site, according to Meraj Karim Huda, principal consultant of Forumline Consulting, which provides management consultancy services for the travel and tourism sector.

Besides the international toll-free phone numbers, YTL-Travel Centre also processes reservations from three Web sites - yltravel.com, pangkorlautresort.com and tanjongjararesort.com.

Meraj says the most popular destination is Pangkor Laut Resort although Tanjong Jara Resort is steadily attracting customers there too.

About 50 per cent of YTL-Travel Centre's customers are

Online reservations is gaining greater prominence in the tourism industry as in the case of YTL-Travel Centre, an online reservations centre for YTL Hotels and Properties. By leveraging on such a system, the centre finds that business has been growing steadily and is expected to mark further increase next year.

from Malaysia while the highest number of international visitors are from the United Kingdom, Singapore, Japan and Germany.

"YTL-Travel Centre is a unique online operation as it focuses solely on fulfilling Internet-generated reservations for resorts and hotels. The objective is to manage online (Web-based) and phone-based enquiries, and reservations received from around the world. Currently, 50 per cent of all enquiries are international."

Meraj says the centre is es-

tablished to accommodate the expected volume generated from an aggressive international advertising campaign.

"As a result, forumline identified the need to address

both information technology (IT) issues and staff resource. On the IT side, forumline integrated and enhanced the existing Web-based reservation system using MySQL and interfaced it with the customer relationship management."

This, he adds, provides the YTL-Travel Centre an ability to segment and identify the customer base for its marketing programmes and management reports. "We also recruited and trained the staff with appropriate skill sets to deliver a high standard of cus-



**Meraj:** Deliver customer service via an IT environment.

tommer service using an IT environment."

Set up in June 2001, YTL-Travel Centre has an office at the JW Marriott Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. It presently has a manager and two customer service executives who manage a six-day, 9am-to-10pm operation. The centre makes sure all enquiries are responded to within 24 hours.